

VEREENIGDE VERGADERING VAN DE BEIDE KAMERS OP DONDERDAG DEN 9^{DE} MEI 1946 TER ONTVANGST VAN DEN RIGHT HON. WINSTON SPENCER-CHURCHILL M. P.

De heer **de Vos van Steenwijk**, die het Voorzitterschap bekleedt, opent, nadat de leden der Staten-Generaal zich in de Ridderzaal aan het Binnenhof vereenigd hebben, des namiddags te halfvier uur de vergadering.

De **Voorzitter** benoemt de heeren Welter, Wendelaar en van der Goes van Naters tot leden der Commissie, die den Right Hon. Winston Spencer-Churchill M. P. in het gebouw zal ontvangen en uitleiden.

De **Right Hon. Winston Spencer-Churchill M. P.**, vergezeld van zijn echtgenoot en zijn dochter, kort daarna in de Ridderzaal aangekomen, wordt door de Commissie in de vergadering binnengeleid en neemt plaats op den voor hem bestemden zetel.

De **Voorzitter** houdt de volgende rede:

Namens de Nederlandsche Volksvertegenwoordiging heet ik U, Mr. Churchill, welkom in haar midden.

Den beiden Kamers van de Staten-Generaal, in vereenigde vergadering bijeengekomen, is het een buitengemeen voorrecht U hier te mogen begroeten en te huldigen.

Wij zien in U den grooten Staatsman, aan wien — na Gode — niet alleen Nederland, maar het geheel beschaafd Euroop, ja de gansche wereld, het verschuldigd is, dat ten slotte de onafhankelijkheid en de vrijheid der volkeren is bewaard gebleven.

Algemeen is de erkentelijkheid deswege hier te lande.

Uw bezielend voorbeeld, vooral in den moeilijksten, bijna wanhopigen, tijd, na de slagen, die West-Europa in 1940 troffen, heeft ons, naar Milton's woorden, geleerd:

„What reinforcement we may gain from hope;

„If not, what resolution from despair”.

In Mei 1940 heeft Nederland na den verachtelijken, lafhartigen vijandelijken overval, nadat zijn zonen, met opoffering van eigen leven, doorslaande bewijzen hadden gegeven van „moed, beleid en trouw”, voor de geweldige overmacht moeten bukken.

Maar daarna heeft het onder voorgang van Engeland den strijd buiten de landpalen voortgezet en alles gegeven wat het geven kon, aan manskraft en schepen.

In een boodschap van 10 Mei 1941 aan den Nederlandschen Minister-President bracht U zulks in dankbare herinnering.

Later, toen Nederland met Engeland en Amerika aan Japan den oorlog had verklaard, hebben onze strijdkrachten in Nederlandsch-Indië te zamen met Engeland gestreden ter verdediging van Malakka en in de wateren om Java, waardoor de aanval der Japanners op Australië werd vertraagd, hetgeen het oorlogsverloop aldaar gunstig heeft beïnvloed. Wij geven er ons volkomen rekenschap van en erkennen het met groote dankbaarheid, dat mede en in hooge mate aan Englands krachtdadigen bijstand in de latere jaren Nederland het herstel van zijne onafhankelijkheid heeft te danken.

Die te dezen Engeland zegt, zegt Winston Churchill.

Daardoor is een hechte band ontstaan tusschen Uw volk en ons volk. Een band, welke ook in de toekomst van beteekenis moge blijken. Niet uitsluitend beiden, maar der wereld ten profijte.

Een band, die overigens zijne verklaring vindt in ons beider onbedwingbaren drang naar vrijheid en ingekankerden, ingemetselden, afkeer van knechtschap.

Trouwens de Geschiedenis, deze zoo goede leermeesteres, heeft het den Natiën overlang, reeds eeuwen, geleerd en zij hebben het na 1940 nogmaals ruimschoots ervaren, wat de Brit vermag, wanneer hij de tanden op elkaar zet, ze laat zien.

Laatstelijk dan onder de vastberaden leiding van een Lid van het illustre Huis van Marlborough, dat wij de hooge eer genieten in ons midden te hebben.

Immers dank zij Uw zoo wijs inzicht, zeldzame volharding, algeheele toewijding en schier bovenmenselijke werkkraft was het U gegeven den oorlog door te zetten en naar een goed einde den weg te wijzen.

Denken wij ons dien zegen in, dan voorwaar past het ons niet, naar het oud-testamentische woord van den profeet,

„eene klagelijke klacht te klagen”,

maar vervullen dankbaarheid en vreugde ons hart.

En toch: de oorlog is voorbij, maar Europa „is ten eenen male verwoest”, moreel verzwakt en stoffelijk verarmd. Materieele opbouw is noodzakelijk, maar geestelijk herstel eerste eisch.

Thans zal Europa zich moeten aangorden om zijne beschaving, op het Christendom gegrondvest, te redden.

Ook te dien aanzien hebben, evenals in den oorlog, het Engelsche Volk en de Nederlandsche Natie eene gelijke, gemeenschappelijke roeping.

Moge het U gegeven worden, naar Gods bestel en onder Zijn zegen welhaast, ook daaraan Uwe beste krachten te wijden.

Dan kunnen wij in vol vertrouwen op den Heere der heirscharen de toekomst rustig tegemoet treden.

Waar het mij bekend is, dat U bereid is in deze historische zaal het woord te voeren, voegt het mij verder te zwijgen, om het U met groote erkentelijkheid te verleen. (¹)

De **Voorzitter** verleent hierna het woord aan den Right Hon. Winston Spencer-Churchill M. P., die de volgende rede houdt:

Mr. Speaker: You do me great honour in inviting me to speak to the States General to-day. I see in all this the regard which you have for my dear country and the relief which you have especially in gaining Liberty against the invaders. I thank you. Personally I have always worked for the cause of Liberty against Tyranny and for the steady advancement of the causes of the weak and poor.

This is not, as you know, the first time I have had the opportunity of addressing august or famous Assemblies. I have already addressed the Congress of the United States of America, the Parliaments of Canada and Belgium, the General Assembly of Virginia, and besides these there is always the House of Commons at home, where, from time to time, I venture still to speak a word or two.

Let me in my turn present you my compliments upon the progress made in this country since the expulsion of the German invaders. Holland has regained stability and strength in Europe with great rapidity. I offer my respectful congratulations to all public men who, without regard to Party or personal interests, have contributed to this achievement. The stability of the Constitution of the Netherlands, centering upon the union of Crown and people, is an example to many countries. I trust that your affairs abroad will prosper equally with those at home. In Britain we know and value the services which Holland has rendered to European freedom in ancient and in recent times. The Four Freedoms which the great President Roosevelt proclaimed have always been cherished in Holland and were carried by his forbears in their blood to the New World. Even in the days of the Roman Empire the Batavian Republic had established a unique position. In the long, fierce convulsions in Europe which followed the Reformation, Holland and England were united as the foremost champions of Freedom. Our ancestors stood together on the bloody dykes, and there are few cities in the Netherlands which do not enshrine the memories of brave resolves and famous feats of arms. Bitter were the struggles of those old days and desperate were the odds you had to face. Looking across the generations, I like to feel how Britain's stand in 1940 and 1941 resembled the glorious hour when William the Silent declared that, rather than surrender, the Dutch would die on the last dyke.

Holland gave us King William the Tird, who led both our countries against the overweening tyranny of Louis XIV. And after him John Churchill was Commander-in-Chief not only of the British but of the far larger armies maintained by the Dutch Republic, when she had risen through freedom and independence to power and greatness 250 years ago.

Her Majesty the Queen and the Government of the Netherlands have made me a gift which will be for me for ever an honour and a treasure. They have presented me with the 613 letters which John Churchill wrote to the Grand Pensionary during the long ten years of the Grand Alliance, which he directed, largely formed and finally crowned with victory. I express again to this meeting of both your Houses my gratitude and that of my family for this extraordinary mark of your kindness to me.

Since the bygone struggles between Protestants and Catholics of the 16th and 17th Centuries, there is at least one profound and beneficent new fact of which all should take account. The Church of Rome has ranged itself with those who defend the rights and dignity of the individual, and the cause of personal freedom throughout the world. I speak of course as one born of a Protestant and Episcopalian family, and I rejoice to see the new and ever-growing unity in lay matters and not perhaps in lay matters only, between all the Christian churches with those liberalizing forces which must ever light the onward march of man.

Let me pay my tribute to the part borne by Holland in the overthrow of Hitler's hideous tyranny. After your troops and water defences had been overwhelmed by the sudden, treacherous onslaught, which happened six years ago to-morrow, the Dutch people had no longer the means to maintain organized armies in the field, but the willpower and firmness of character shown during the grim years of foreign oppression and occupation were definite factors in the ultimate downfall of Naziism, and the Resistance Movement, for which so many thousands of patriots gave their lives, played an even more important part. In Britain we understand how you must have suffered in these years of torment of soul and mind, to which starvation and bombardment were lesser afflictions. All honour to those who perished for the Cause. May their memory cement the unity of all true Dutchmen. I thank you on behalf of Great Britain for your work. And also I am glad to meet here my friend, Professor Gerbrandy, the former Prime Minister, who was in Britain with us in all the dark days and who was so vigilant and faithful a champion of the rights and interests of the Netherlands.

Speaking here to-day, where my words may carry far and wide, it is my first duty to affirm the sanctity of the rights of smaller States. In affirming these rights, I base myself upon that grand figure of Victorian Liberalism Mr. Gladstone. Mr. Gladstone, in his third Midlothian speech, said on November 27th, 1879:

„The sound and the sacred principle that Christendom is formed of a band of nations who are united to one another in the bonds of right; that they are without distinction of great and small; there is an absolute equality between them — the same sacredness defends the narrow limits of Belgium (and of course Holland) as attaches to the extended frontiers of Russia, or Germany, or France. „I hold”, said Mr. Gladstone these long years ago, „that he who by act or word brings that principle into peril or disparagement is endangering the peace and all the most fundamental interests of a Christian society.”

The duty, Mr. Speaker, of the large powers of the modern world is to see that those rights of every nation are jealously and strictly protected. The purpose of the United Nations Organization is to give them the sanction of international law, for which Holland and Grotius are so justly famous, and also to make sure that the force of right will, in the ultimate issue, be protected by the right of force.

I will now, Mr. Speaker, if you will permit me, if I do not trespass too long upon your courtesy and goodwill, speak of nationalism. Is it an evil or is it a virtue? Where nationalism means the lust for pride and power, the craze for supreme domination by weight or force; where it is the senseless urge to be the biggest in the world, it is a danger and a vice. Where it means love of country and readiness to die for country; where it means love of tradition and culture and the gradual building up across the centuries of a social entity dignified by nationhood, then it is the first of virtues. It is indeed the foundation of a progressive and happy family of nations. Some of our shallow thinkers and false guides — and there are many to-day — do not distinguish between these two separate and opposing conceptions. They mix them together and use all arguments according as their fancy or their interest prompts them. They condemn nationalism as an old-world obsession and seek to reduce us all, both countries and individuals, to one uniform pattern with nothing but material satisfactions as our goal. Or again, or sometimes with almost the same breath, they pervert the noble sentiments of patriotism to the hideous, aggressive expansion of old-world imperialism, and to the obliteration by force or by wrongful teaching of all the varieties and special cultures, all those dear thoughts of home and country without which existence, however logically planned, would be dreary and barren beyond thought or imagination.

After the end of the great conflict from 1914 to 1918 it was hoped that the wars were over. Yet we have witnessed an even more destructive world-wide struggle. Need we have done so?

I have no doubt whatever that firm guidance and united action on the part of the Victorious Powers could have prevented this last catastrophe. If the United States had taken an active part in the League of Nations, and if the League of Nations had been prepared to use concerted force, even had it only been European force, in order to prevent the re-armament of Germany, there was no need for further serious bloodshed. Let us Sir profit at least by this terrible lesson. In vain did I try to teach it before the War.

Mr. Speaker, the tragedy of Europe shocks mankind. Well as you said in your address, „Europa is ten eenen male verwoest”. The tragedy darkens the pages of human history. It will excite the amazement and horror of future generations. Here in these beautiful, fertile and temperate lands, where so many of the noblest parent races of mankind have developed their character, their arts and their literature, we have twice in our own lifetime seen all rent asunder and torn to pieces in frightful convulsions which have left their mark in blackened devastation throughout the entire continent. And had not Europe's children of earlier times come back across the Atlantic Ocean with strong and rescuing arms, all the peoples of Europe might have fallen into the long night of Nazi totalitarian despotism. Upon Britain fell the proud but awful responsibility of keeping the Flag of Freedom flying in the Old World, till the forces of the New World could arrive.

But now the tornado has passed away. The thunder of the cannons has ceased, the terror from the skies is over, the oppressors are cast out and broken. We may be wounded and impoverished. But we are still alive and free. The future stands before us, to make or mar. Two supreme tasks confront us. We have to revive the prosperity of Europe; and European civilization must rise again from the chaos and carnage into which it has been plunged; and at the same time we have to devise those measures of world security which will prevent disaster descending upon us again. In both these tasks Holland has an important part to play. The restoration and rebuilding of Europe, both physical and moral, as you have pointed out in your address, Mr. Speaker, is animated and guided by the kindred themes of Liberty and Democracy. These words are on every lip. They have cheered us and helped to unify us in the struggle. They inspire our rejoicings in the hour of victory. But now that the fighting is over, it is necessary to define these glorious war cries with a little more fullness and precision.

You will pardon me I trust if I come a little closer to the conception of free democracy based upon the people's will and expressing itself through representative assemblies under generally accepted constitutional forms. There are certain simple, practical tests by which the virtue and reality of any political democracy may be measured. Does the Government in any country rest upon a free, constitutional basis, assuring the people the right to vote according to their will, for whatever candidates they choose? Is there the right of free expression of opinion, free support, free opposition, free advocacy and free criticism of the Government of the day? Are there Courts of Justice free from interference by the Executive or from threats of mob violence, and free from all association with particular political parties? Will these Courts administer public and well-established laws associated in the human mind with the broad principles of fair play and justice? Will there be fair play for the poor as well as for the rich? Will there be fair play for private persons as well as for Government officials? Will the rights of the individual, subject to his duties to the State, be maintained, asserted, and exalted? In short, do the Government own the people, or do the people own the Government? There is the test. Here are some of the more obvious tests by which the political health and soundness of any community may be ascertained.

Now let us think of our other supreme task, the building of a world instrument of security, in which all peoples have a vital interest, and assuredly none more than those in these sorely-tried Low Countries, which have sometimes been called the Cockpit of Europe. The more closely the largest Powers of to-day are bound together in bonds of faith and friendship, the more effective will be the safeguards against war and the higher the security of all other States and nations. It is evident of course that the affairs of Great Britain and the British Commonwealth and Empire, are becoming ever more closely interwoven with those of the United States, and that an underlying unity of thought and conviction increasingly pervades the English-speaking world. There can be nothing but advantage to the whole world from such a vast and benevolent synthesis. But we also in Britain have our Twenty Years Treaty with Soviet Russia, which in no way conflicts with other associations,

but which we hope may prove one of the sure anchors of world peace. We trust that in due course the natural unity and alliance between Great Britain and France will find reaffirmation in a new Instrument. We welcome every step towards strength and Freedom taken by the French people. We rejoice to see France moving forward to her old place in which, if there was a void, Europe would be vitally wounded. We hope that the Western democracies of Europe may draw together in ever-closer amity and ever-closer association. This is a matter which should be very carefully considered and if found wise, should be pressed from many angles with the utmost perseverance.

Special associations within the circle of the United Nations, such as those of which I have been speaking or like the great unity of the British Empire and Commonwealth, or like the association which prevails throughout the Americas, north and south, far from weakening the structure of the supreme body of the United Nations Organization, should all be capable of being fused together in such a way as to make the United Nations Organization indivisible and invincible.

Above all, there must be tolerance, the recognition of the charm of variety and the respect for the rights of minorities. There was a time when the Age of Faith endeavoured to prevent the Age of Reason, and another time when the Age of Reason endeavoured to destroy the Age of Faith. Tolerance was one of the chief features of the great liberalizing movements which were the glory of the latter part of the 19th Century, by which states of society were reached where the most fervent devotion to religion subsisted side by side with the fullest exercise of free thought. We may well recur to those bygone days, from those standards of enlightenment, compassion and hopeful progress, the terrible 20th Century has fallen so far.

I say here, as I said at Brussels last year, that I see no reason why, under the guardianship of the world organization, there should not ultimately arise the United States of Europe, both those of the East and those of the West, which will unify this Continent in a manner never known since the fall of the Roman Empire, and within which all its peoples may dwell together in prosperity, in justice and in peace.

De Voorzitter: Namens de Vereenigde Vergadering van de beide Kamers der Staten-Generaal zeg ik U hartgrondig dank voor de zoo belangwekkende mededeelingen en uiteenzettingen, haar geschenken. Uw optreden hier is voor de Nederlandsche Volksvertegenwoordiging van blijvende historische waarde.

De Right Hon. Winston Spencer-Churchill M. P., uitgeleide gedaan door de Commissie, verlaat de vergaderzaal.

De Commissie keert daarna in de zaal terug.

De heer Welter: Mijnheer de Voorzitter! De Commissie van in- en uitgeleide heeft zich van haar taak gekwet.

De Voorzitter: Der Commissie zeg ik dank voor den door haar verrichten arbeid.

De Voorzitter sluit de Vereenigde Vergadering.

(1) Engelsche vertaling:

SIR,

In the name of the States-General I extend to you a cordial welcome. Both Chambers of the States-General, met here in joint assembly, deem it a great privilege to greet and honour you in their midst.

In you we see the great statesman to whom — next to God — not only the Netherlands but the whole of civilized Europe, nay, the whole world, is indebted for the fact that in the end the independence and the freedom of the nations have been preserved.

The resulting feeling of gratitude in this country is general.

Your inspiring example, more especially in the hazardous, almost desperate, period after the terrible blows by which Europe was smitten in 1940, taught us the truth of Milton's words:

„What reinforcement we may gain from hope;
„If not, what resolution from despair”.

In May 1940, at the time of the contemptible and cowardly German invasion, Holland had to yield to the overwhelming superiority of the enemy forces, after her sons, at the sacrifice of their lives, had given proof of their „valour, sound judgment and loyalty”. *)

But thereafter, the Netherlands continued the struggle beyond their boundaries under the leadership of Great Britain, and contributed all they could in the way of manpower and shipping.

In your message to the Netherlands Prime Minister of May 10th, 1941, you did not fail to recall this fact.

When later the Netherlands jointly with Great Britain and the United States declared war on Japan, our armed forces in the Netherlands Indies joined the British in fighting for the defence of Malaya and the seas around Java, thus holding back the Japanese attack on Australia and causing a delay which had a favourable effect upon the course of the war.

We fully realize, and acknowledge with warm gratitude, that the Netherlands owe the restoration of their independence to the effective assistance rendered by Great Britain in the years that followed.

And when we say Great Britain, we say Winston Churchill. A close tie has thus been established between your people and our people.

May this bond prove its significance also in the future; not only to the benefit of us both, but also of the world. A bond, which has its roots in our mutual indomitable urge for freedom and a deeprooted, inveterate unwillingness to accept servitude.

History, that thorough teacher, has shewn the Nations for centuries, — and they had ample opportunity to see it proved again in 1940 — what the Briton is capable of accomplishing when he sets his teeth.

Thus now again, and this time under the determined leadership of a member of the illustrious House of Marlborough, who now honours us with his presence in our midst.

For, thanks to your wise judgment, extraordinary perseverance, total devotion and almost superhuman energy, it was vouchsafed to you to carry on the war and guide us on the way to victory.

When realizing this blessing, it verily does not behove us — in the words of the Prophet of the Old Testament —

„to lament with a doleful lamentation”

but on the contrary our hearts are filled with gratitude and joy.

And yet: the war is over; but Europe is „utterly spoiled”, morally weakened and materially impoverished. Material reconstruction is necessary, but spiritual recovery is the prime postulate.

Europe will now have to brace herself to save her civilization which is founded on Christianity.

Also in this respect, as in the war, the people of Great Britain and the people of the Netherlands, have the same common duty.

May it be granted to you, Sir, under God's ordinance and blessing, to devote your best efforts also to this end.

Then, putting our full trust in the Lord of Hosts, we may confidently go out to meet the future.

Since it is known to me that you are willing to speak in this historical hall, it behoves me to be silent and gratefully to call upon you to address the assembly.

*) Motto of the „Militaire Willemsorde”, a decoration given for valour, sound judgment and loyalty.