



Speakers' Corner Sir Winston Churchill

Kristina Leon:

In the programme today:

Sir Winston Churchill, and his famous speeches to the British nation during the Second World War. Our specialist and political rhetoric doctor Nick Turnbull from Manchester University. Meet Daniel Edmundson from the Debating Society at Parris Wood High School.

This is Speaker's Corner.

Dr Nick Turnbull:

I'm Doctor Nick Turnbull and today we are going speak about Sir Winston Churchill.

Sir Winson Churchill: *

I would say to the House, as I said to those who have joined this government: "I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears and sweat."

Dr Nick Turnbull:

Great speakers are made at momentous times. Rhetoric is at its most important when there's a social upheaval of some kind, a crisis of values. Or in wartime, which is perhaps the biggest crisis for any nation.

Churchill came into power in the time of war. And then his job was not just to tactically organise and run the government, but to inspire the people. At a time of the greatest fear amongst the population, people want a leader who can dispel those fears.

And Churchill was such a person. Outside of wartime he was often rejected as a leader in fact, but during wartime he was ideal. He was an aristocratic person, and some might say he had a very pompous way of speaking. But during wartime this aristocratic way of speaking provided reassurance, provided an extreme level of confidence and he spoke carefully and he spoke very frankly.



He explained to the public what was going on, he acknowledged their fears, he didn't shirk any difficult questions. And he provided them with reasons to hope and with reasons to be positive and envisioned a future in which the war was over, Britain had won and life was restored to normal. And you could speak to anyone in Britain - whether they were alive that time or not everyone understands that way of speaking of his. That reassuring tone, that very calm and dignified way of speaking, which sounds eternal and immovable whatever the threat.

Sir Winston Churchill: *

We have before us many, many long months of struggle and of suffering. You ask, what is our policy? I can say: It is to wage war, by sea, land and air, with all our might and with all the strength that God can give us; to wage war against a monstrous tyranny, never surpassed in the dark, lamentable catalogue of human crime. That is our policy. You ask, what is our aim? I can answer in one word: It is victory, victory at all costs, victory in spite of all terror, victory, however long and hard the road may be; for without victory, there is no survival.

Dr Nick Turnbull:

He was someone who wanted authority and thought there should be strong authority, very strong leader's personality, which made him ideal during the war. He says to the people, I've nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears and sweat: we face an ordeal of the most grievous kind. Long months of struggle and suffering, so very frankly now the idea is not to make people more worried but in fact someone who speaks honestly and therefore reassuringly. So the people then won't be afraid because they know what's coming.

Not again not long after he'd become Prime Minister he was talking about the threat faced by the invasion of the Nazis and what he did was he's explaining the Battle of Britain is about to begin so they saw invasion as imminent and he was dealing the public ready for the threat. As well as invoking British history and British values, what he did was he envisioned a future in which the war was over. So he said that far from anything to be afraid of so people should think of history. But not in the



past, think of how we will look on this event as history. So he said in a thousand years from that date people will look back and they will see how the British people acted. And they will say: This was their finest hour. So he creates a sense of nostalgia for the past even though it hasn't happened yet. The ultimate reassurance I think is giving people such a sense of security that therefore they can go into battle unafraid.

Sir Winston Churchill: **

I expect that the Battle of Britain is about to begin. Upon this battle depends the survival of Christian civilisation. Upon it depends our own British life, and the long continuity of our institutions and our Empire. The whole fury and might of the enemy must very soon be turned on us.

Hitler knows that he will have to break us in this Island or lose the war. If we can stand up to him, all Europe may be free and the life of the world may move forward into broad, sunlit uplands. But if we fail, then the whole world, including the United States, including all that we have known and cared for, will sink into the abyss of a new Dark Age made more sinister, and perhaps more protracted, by the lights of perverted science.

Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duties, and so bear ourselves that if the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will still say, 'This was their finest hour.'

Kristina Leon:

In Parrs Wood High School in Manchester the Debating Society gathers every Tuesday. Our reporter Pamela Taivassalo paid them a visit.

Daniel Edmundson:

For this one by Winston Churchill to me it just feels more familiar because it just kind of mimics the format of what I'd expect to see in a debate. But I think the fact that it begins by signposting is really important, he's... at the very start he says I beg to move that this house welcomes the formation of a government. That's just what you do in a debate, you present what the motion is, what points you're going to offer. And that's what Churchill does at the very start of this.



And it just sets the thing, it sets the tone for the whole speech. And it makes it easy for people who are listening to understand the direction of where the speech is going to go. So that's one of the things I thought was really good. And another thing, there were quite often us to do, is to sort of be engaging in and specifically trying and bring the opposition into our argument when you're accepting a point of information you could say wouldn't you agree with this, and you know it just it does throw your opposition, it makes them think well actually do I agree with this. They have to slightly change the format of what they going to say and it does make you look very confident in what you're trying to say and especially if you integrate them into your argument it shows that you've anticipated what they are going to say, don't really consider it much of a problem and can encounter if you need so, I think that's a really good technique to use and it's certainly quite present in this.

Kristina Leon:

And now, Doctor Nick Turnbull with a few tips on how to give a great speech.

Dr Nick Turnbull:

Great speakers, the ease with which the words come out and the simplicity and naturalness of the words disguises in fact a great deal of effort. In ordinary conversation we don't need to be precise, we use lots of ums and ahs and half sentences and we don't finish our sentences all the time. But when public speaking you really have to practice the words, you need to know what's coming ahead so you can emphasise the right words. So you can vary your pitch in the right way. And even, I like to write, make a note of the emphasis on the particular words, underline certain words, indicate when you want to pause and so on. The more you practise the more natural it sounds.



Pamela Taivassalo:

And I heard rumours that Sir Winston Churchill practised on his dog.

Dr Nick Turnbull:

Is that right, I didn't know that. I'm sure that the dog was a good listener. But you can practise anywhere, you can put a poster on your wall, you can practise with a real person if you want. But going through them several times is always a good idea.

Kristina Leon:

In Speaker's Corner today you've heard Doctor Nick Turnbull, Daniel Edmundson and Sir Winston Churchill. This programme was produced by Pamela Taivassalo, Ingela Håkansson was our sound engineer and my name is Kristina Leon.

* First Speech to the House of Commons as Prime Minister, May 13, 1940

** Winston Churchill - June 18, 1940 (titta på [YouTube](#))

<http://www.winstonchurchill.org/>