

## Churchill's Three Circles

[ ... ] It is for this reason that I deplore and condemn the stupidity which, at a time like this above all others, persists three and a half years after the war, in endless trials of Germans who were connected with the former Nazi regime and has only lately brought itself under the censure of all Parties in this island except the Communists, by subjecting these aged German Field-M Marshals and Generals after this  
5 protracted delay, without the formulation of any charges, to a new, prolonged ordeal. On every ground soldierly, juridical and humanitarian, it is known to be a wrong and base thing to do. But how foolish, how inane—I might almost say insane—it is to make a feature of such squalid long-drawn vengeance when the mind and soul of Germany may once again be hanging in the balance between the right course and the wrong. I trust that even now wiser councils may prevail, and also, on the general question of  
10 post-war vengeance, I strongly urge our American friends to let bygones be bygones! After all three years have passed and the principal criminals have suffered the punishments they deserved. When I survey the misfortunes in which Europe is plunged, I admire the wisdom and statecraft which General MacArthur has displayed in his dealing with Japan. He is making it possible for decent Japanese to say “the future of our countries lies with the United States and their sister nation, our old ally, Britain.” That cannot be to  
15 the disadvantage of the security of the world.

For all these reasons and with such reservations as I have thought it right to make, we support the foreign policy of His Majesty's Government in labouring for peace, in taking a firm stand against the encroachments and aggressions of Soviet Russia, and in not being bullied, bulldozed and blackmailed out of Berlin whatever the consequences may be. We support them in developing the closest possible unity  
20 with the United States on moral issues and in military measures. We support them also in trying to organize the effective defence of Western Europe and making a faithful effort towards a United Europe by all States who are free to choose their path.

The British Government have gained very little credit in any quarter by their handling of this large issue, and petty and personal jealousies, arising from the fact that I revived this idea of a United Europe  
25 two years ago in a speech at Zurich, have clouded the vision of some of them. A wrong-headed desire to reduce United Europe to a United Socialist Europe has misled others. In fact, the Socialist Parties throughout Europe have shown themselves the weakest brethren whenever it has come to making a stand against militant communism and the whole idea of organizing United Europe on a one-Party basis would be destructive of all hopes of taking the great step forward founded upon this grand design which is  
30 desired by so many. I cannot think, and here I come to the issue which I know is much in your minds, that the policy of a United Europe as we Conservatives conceive it can be the slightest injury to our British Empire and Commonwealth or to the principle of Imperial Preference which I so carefully safe-guarded in all my discussions with President Roosevelt during the war. We in the Conservative Party will vigilantly guard and do all in our power to strengthen the ties which unite this Island and all the sister  
35 nations of the British family. The unity of the Empire is the foundation of our Party's political belief to which we shall remain eternally faithful. But there is absolutely no need to choose between a United Empire and United Europe. Both are vitally and urgently necessary to our Commonwealth, to Europe, and to the free world as a whole.

As I look out upon the future of our country in the changing scene of human destiny I feel the  
40 existence of three great circles among the free nations and democracies. I almost wish I had a blackboard. I would make a picture for you. I don't suppose it would get hung in the Royal Academy, but it would illustrate the point I am anxious for you to hold in your minds. The first circle for us is naturally the British Commonwealth and Empire, with all that that comprises. Then there is also the English-speaking World in which we, Canada, and the other British Dominions and the United States play so important a  
45 part. And finally there is United Europe. These three majestic circles are coexistent and if they are linked together there is no force or combination which could overthrow them or even challenge them. Now if you think of the three inter-linked circles you will see that we are the only country which has a great part in every one of them. We stand, in fact, at the very point of junction, and here in this Island at the centre of the seaways and perhaps of the airways also have the opportunity of joining them all together. If we  
50 rise to the occasion in the years that are to come it may be found that once again we hold the key to opening a safe and happy future to humanity, and will gain for ourselves gratitude and fame. (890 words)

Winston S. Churchill, ‘Conservative Mass Meeting: a speech at Llandudno, 9 October 1948’, *Europe Unite : speeches 1947 & 1948*, London : Cassell, 1950, p. 416-418