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"YESTERDAY'S ENEMY IS TODAY'S FRIEND"

I was conceived just before the end of the First World War in which my father served as an Engineer Lieutenant in the British Royal Navy throughout the war from 1914 to 1918. He was torpedoed three times. I was born on 8 May 1919, a beautiful time of the year to be born in England or in Japan.

My mother graduated in 1916 in the middle of the war and within a few months most of the men who had graduated with her had been killed as infantry officers on the Western Front in France. I was the eldest of her three sons all of whom grew up just in time to serve in the Second World War. I remember as a little boy the ex-servicemen back from the First World War wearing their war medals, some blinded, some with only one arm or one leg on crutches selling matches or begging. They nearly all had no pensions or other financial means of support. It was difficult or impossible for them to find a job. Even as a little boy I remember the terrible sadness of that time. The fathers of many other little boys who were my friends had been killed during the war.

The First World War began for Britain when Germany declared war on France and invaded Belgium whose neutrality Britain had guaranteed. The War lasted for over four years. Some ten million lives were lost and twice that number wounded. A total of some 25 million people died including those by the influenza epidemic which followed the war. It was called the Great War, and hopefully "The War to End All Wars." It was the first time that millions of civilians had fought in a war, previous wars having been fought by small armies of professional soldiers and sailors. Despite the terrible casualties, so great was the patriotism that Britain was able to rely on volunteers for the first two years of the war. In due course other countries became involved in the war including the United States and Japan on the side of Britain and France. Japanese naval craft patrolled the Mediterranean Sea. As part of the peace settlement the Mariana, Caroline and Marshall Islands, which had belonged to Germany, were given to Japan as one of the victorious powers under a League of Nations Mandate in 1919.

The Treaty of Versailles 1919, the peace treaty between the Allies and Germany and its Allies, established the League of Nations and, mostly at the insistence of France, sought to disarm and punish Germany, and to weaken it with reparations. German industrial assets, plant and machinery were taken by the French making Germany even more vulnerable to the Great Economic Depression which swept the world and Japan in 1929. Huge inflation wiped out the savings of the German people breeding hatred and bitterness, which, with the British and French policies of appeasement in the early 1930s, led to the rise of Hitler and the Nazi party in Germany, culminating in the Second World War.

The Second World War began when Germany invaded Poland in September 1939 causing Britain, Australia, Canada, British Commonwealth countries and France to declare war on Germany. The United States and other countries joined the Allies against Germany, Italy and Japan. The turning points of the Second World War came when Germany attacked Russia and Japan attacked the United States, Britain, Holland, France and allied countries. The heroic Russian defence at Stalingrad began the defeat of Germany. When Japan attacked the United States at Pearl Harbor I believed for the first time that with the great resources of the United States we were certain to win the war.

The two World Wars started in Europe. The British Empire in 1939 compromised almost one fifth of the world's land area. Belgium, France, Germany, Holland, Italy, Japan, Portugal and the United States all had overseas territories. I like to think that the British did some good in the countries we occupied, including the use of English as an international language. But no one wants to be a second class citizen in their own country and I shared their wishes for their independence. I can totally understand the people of the occupied colonial countries hating the white men who ruled them, and considering most of them arrogant, though many worked devotedly in the countries in which they served.

Some 55 million people, military and civilians, died during the Second World War, including my brother and some 25 million Russians whose casualties and sacrifice were by far the worst.

Despite the terrible loss of life I look back on what happened as a result of that war with thankfulness that unlike the First World War much good followed. Because of harsh reparations, inflation, unemployment, hatred and bitterness after the First World War, the Second World War began only 21 years later.

Much greater wisdom was shown after the Second World War, learning from the mistakes of what happened after the First World War. The defeated countries, Germany and Japan, which had been largely destroyed, were helped to rebuild themselves. The Americans gave huge help with the Marshall Plan to help rebuild Europe. The MacArthur period in Japan, whatever faults it may have had, greatly helped Japan, which had suffered so terribly from American bombing, to rebuild its country as a democracy.

I am glad that the former colonial countries gained their independence and that we, the former, colonial powers, no longer have to fight colonial wars to keep our former empires in subjection. I am glad that black and coloured people in the United States are so much better treated and that their position in many parts of the world has been improved. I am thankful that there has been a major improvement in the position of women in many countries. I am wonderfully relieved that the Cold War between the former Soviet Bloc and the Western Powers, which was the last great threat to world peace for over 40 years, came to an end in 1989 with the historic meetings between Mr. Gorbachev and President Regan. Above all I rejoice that the reward for all the sacrifice of the Second World War has already been 57 years free from world war during which our children and grandchildren have grown up in peace and the standard of living has risen enormously.

I shall die with the belief that the Second World War, the most terrible in history, in which we served will be the last world war. Since then we have proved that empires are not necessary to ensure a high standard of living. Japan and Germany have shown the world how defeated nations through their own brains and hard work can recover to become world leaders through imitational trade.

Europe where the two world wars started is never again likely to menace the peace of the world. The major powers, the United States, China, Russia and the former Soviet countries, Japan, Germany, Britain, France, and Italy and their allies in the two world wars are now on friendly terms and unlikely ever to go to war again with each other. They all know that a third world war would mean the nuclear destruction within minutes of the main cities and important centres and the deaths of millions of people on either side on a far vaster scale than in the whole of the six years of the Second World War.

But, as the great number of minor wars since the Second World War has shown, there is in my opinion an overwhelming need for an effective United Nations organisation with the resources to help bring peace to suffering people. That may involve measures, which include the use of armed forces. I believe that all member nations of the United Nations, especially the major nations, should contribute to those armed forces. At present the United States and Britain seem to be too heavily involved and open to criticism if things go wrong

I know that this is a very sensitive matter in Japan with its hostility to militarism, but so long after the Second World War I think the time has come to permit Japanese forces to play their part in United Nations peacekeeping forces. There is also a need for Japan to play its full part in preventing minor dictators and terrorists unleashing nuclear bombs, biological weapons and other destruction on the world

I do not know-whether it is justified, but there is still criticism of Japan that unlike in Germany where there is great openness, that the true facts of the Second World War, including the good and bad aspects of Japanese conduct, are not sufficiently effectively taught in Japanese schools and educational institutions. In Germany people can be prosecuted for denying that the Holocaust involving the- killing of millions of Jews by Germans took place.

There is great admiration throughout the world of Japan's achievements after the Second World War, of the kindness of its people, that it is one of the safest, tidiest, best educated, tolerant, friendliest, peaceful countries in the world. You are easily the world's second greatest nation economically and can be very proud of your achievements. You do not need to hide the past and can afford to be quite open about it as Germany has been about the Holocaust, and in so doing help win the confidence and friendship of the world community and particularly your neighbors China and Korea.

Unless you are at least 70 years of age you could not possibly be in any way responsible for what happened during the Second World War. I feel better as a British citizen to admit the truth quite openly that we British in the nineteenth century killed more different races in their own countries, including Chinese in China, than any other nation. I was not then born and not responsible but I have a responsibility to tell the truth so far as I can establish it about the past, and I hope that in doing so people will trust me. Establishing the facts and learning from our mistakes or misdeeds, not hiding them, will help us avoid repeating them. The generations which follow must be made aware of these appalling tragedies, particularly shortly before and during the Second World War for which they were not responsible, and be able to discuss them readily and openly with people of other nations, particularly those whose people have suffered. We must be well informed so that we continue to take steps to avoid anything so terrible ever happening again. We talk about the lessons of history and must remember that we make history.

A good home upbringing with caring parents, good education, tolerant religious belief, and many other factors help create law abiding and peace loving people, but all the prayers in the world will not stop a determined man with a gun. We will need the very finest types of men and women in our armed forces and our police forces who will act with judgment and humanity in resisting those who seek to gain their ends by armed force.

The great increase in the standard of living since the Second World War has made possible enormous improvements in higher education and young people are able to travel abroad in huge numbers making international friendships and marriages. The widespread use of the English language, television, radio, the press and huge improvements in communication and cheap, fast travel have brought us all closer together across national frontiers in a way that was unthinkable at the end of the Second World War. We must cherish all that is good in our national life and heritage, but never fall back on the narrow nationalism which led to two World Wars.

In speaking to you today here in Japan, almost a lifetime later, I recall with great sadness the deaths of 22 young Japanese soldiers who died trapped in an ambush in Burma during the Second World War when I gave the order to open fire on them. We killed them all. One shot me through my ammunition pouch at four yards before he died, the bullet ricocheting off the steel tip of a round without exploding my ammunition which would have killed me.

They were young men like me, in no way responsible for the war. I went to sleep that night not thinking we had scored a victory but of the sorrow the deaths of these young men would cause to their parents, wives, sweethearts, brothers and sisters. I recall the terrible suffering of the Japanese troops without food, water or ammunition, in the closing stages of the war in Burma as we hunted them down and killed them. It was a very savage war in which few prisoners were taken. But despite that I never hated the enemy believing they had to obey orders under pain of death and that they were fellow human beings.

The Japanese saying "Yesterday's Enemy is Today's Friend" has been proved true and it has been one of the greatest satisfactions of my life to come to know my former German and Japanese enemies as friends and to know their families. Today members of the All Burma Veterans Association of Japan are among the greatest friends I have ever had. We have been back and walked together over some of our former battlefields in Burma in peace with the determination that we must still despite our ages do all we can to ensure such terrible things never happen again.

I will today be planting a tree here on the University Campus. It is the gift of the British people to the people of Japan. In the days of savage fighting in Burma I never imagined that one day far into the future I would plant on Japanese soil this symbol of what we hope will be eternal peace and friendship between our two nations. Soon those of us from the Second World War will be gone. On present and future generations will fall the responsibility for preserving that peace. You owe it those who fought and died, to ensure that peace and friendship between our two peoples and the nations of the world will forever be the reward for all that sacrifice.

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