

Blood, Toil, Tears, and Sweat

- Date** ■ May 13, 1940
Place ■ Westminster Palace, London, UK
Type of Source ■ Speech (originally given in English)
Author ■ Prime Minister Winston Churchill
Historical Context ■ Following the German invasion of Norway in April 1940, the British government under Neville Chamberlain rapidly lost support. On May 10, just as Germany invaded its western neighbors, the cabinet agreed to name Winston Churchill, then First Lord of the Admiralty, as the next prime minister. Churchill had been the most consistent and outspoken opponent of Germany before the war and was trusted by the opposition parties. After three days, Churchill had obtained agreement on key members of the new War Cabinet. Nearly overwhelmed by events, Churchill made a short speech to the House of Commons announcing the new government. It became one of his most famous.

Mister **Speaker**, on Friday evening last I received **His Majesty's commission** to form a new Administration. It was the evident wish and will of Parliament and the nation that this should be **conceived** on the broadest possible basis and that it should include all parties, both those who supported the late Government and also the parties of the Opposition...

Sir, to form an **Administration** of this scale and complexity is a serious undertaking in itself, but it must be remembered that we are in the preliminary stage of one of the greatest battles in history, that we are in action at many points in Norway and in Holland, that we have to be prepared in the Mediterranean, that the air battle is continuous and that many preparations have to be made here at home. In this crisis I hope I may be pardoned if I do not address the House at any length today. I hope that any of my friends and colleagues, or former colleagues, who are affected by the political **reconstruction**, will make all allowances for any **lack of ceremony** with which it has been necessary to act. I would say to the House, as I said to those who have joined the government: "I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears and sweat."

We have before us an ordeal of the most grievous kind. We have before us many, many long months of struggle and of suffering. You ask, what is our policy? I will 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 and **lamentable catalogue** of human crime. That is our policy. You ask, what is our aim? I can answer in one word: 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. Let that be realized; no survival for the British Empire, no survival for all that the British Empire has stood for, no survival for the **urge and impulse of the ages**, that mankind will move forward towards its goal. But I

Speaker

The Speaker of the House of Commons

His Majesty's commission

The power to form a new government. Although it issued by the monarch, the person who receives it is usually chosen by the leading political party in Parliament.

conceived

planned, formed

Administration

Cabinet of Ministers and other department heads

reconstruction

the re-organizing of the government

lack of ceremony

not following the usual procedure

lamentable

sad, depressing

catalogue

list

urge and impulse of the ages

progress to a more just and free world

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take up my task with **buoyancy** and hope. I feel sure that our cause will not be suffered to fail among men. At this time I feel entitled to claim the aid of all, and I say, "Come then, let us go forward together with our united strength."

buoyancy
cheerfulness, optimism

Source: Winston Churchill, "Blood, Toil, Tears, and Sweat," *The History Place: Great Speeches Collection*, n.d., <<http://www.historyplace.com/speeches/churchill.htm>> (May 9, 2011).