




Speech By
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ADJOURNMENT

Battle of Britain; Sir Winston Churchill

 **Mr MINNIKIN** (Chatsworth—LNP) (11.16 pm): It has often been said that history turns on critical moments. This year marks two important historical milestones. It is 75 years since the Battle of Britain and 50 years since the passing of one of the 20th century's greatest leaders, Sir Winston Churchill. I make no secret of the fact that Churchill is undoubtedly the public figure I admire most. His contribution to our way of life endures to this day, as there was a period of time in 1940 when the fate of the Western World and all the ideals that we hold so dearly, such as freedom of speech, robust democracies with free elections, freedom of the press, freedom of association and free enterprise, rested upon his shoulders.

One of the pivotal days in modern history occurred on 28 May 1940, when the British War Cabinet had to make a defining decision. Should Britain fight on or make a pact and appeasement deal with Nazi Germany? The geostrategic consideration confronting the British War Cabinet had to be put in context. Britain was alone. The United States at that point had not entered the war and would not do so until that other fateful day at Pearl Harbour. The Russians had signed the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact. Britain was indeed alone and the only bastion of a free Western democracy in Europe—the only light of freedom. The war cabinet had been meeting around the clock for three days. Finally, Churchill played his masterstroke and summoned his full cabinet of 25 ministers and gave one of his most important speeches, and I quote—

And I am convinced that every one of you would rise up and tear me down from my place if I were to contemplate parley or surrender. If this long island story of ours is to end at last, let it end only when each one of us lies choking in his own blood upon the ground.

So Britain stood alone during that summer of 1940 and eventually won the Battle of Britain, again with one of Churchill's famous quotes summing up like no other when he said—

Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few.

The advance of Nazi tyranny was halted and ever so slowly, with the introduction of the United States and Russian troops, they stemmed the tide of war.

Sir Winston Churchill, like every human being before him and after him, was far from perfect. However, during the darkest moment of the modern Western World, during a global conflict that tragically claimed approximately 60 million lives, he rallied and led people like no other before or since. I abhor war like every other member of this chamber and like any rational person, but there are times when oppression and tyranny need to be confronted. The European summer of 1940 was one of those pivotal moments in time. When many were seeking appeasement, one man's courage and determination was to define history. Sir Winston Churchill was buried 50 years ago in January this year, but his contribution to humanity will live forever.