

Sermon GAPAN Sunday 25th July 2010...

A warm welcome to some of my fellow liverymen from The Guild of Air Pilots and Air Navigators. This is a significant year – the 70th anniversary of the Battle of Britain. I do hope our dear Prime Minister mugs up on the history of that momentous struggle before the celebrations of our victory really get going. The other day in America he announced that we are the junior partner in an alliance in which America is senior. He added: *Just as we were when fighting the war in 1940*. For his information, America, this so called *senior partner*, did not even enter the war until the end of 1941.

I have been reading about the decade that preceded the Battle of Britain and the facts that emerge are truly shocking: I mean the spinelessness of the European democracies among which our country alas! was the worst offender. Even the French government was in favour of attacking Hitler when he entered the Rhineland with a handful of ceremonial troops in 1936. As for Britain – well, we sacked our ambassador in Berlin for upsetting Hitler by reporting that concentration camps had been set up and that storm-troopers were beating people to death in the streets. A new ambassador was appointed and ordered to keep his mouth shut.

Our Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin was in favour of scrapping the RAF as useless in modern warfare because, as he said, *The Bomber will always get through*. Tell it to Park and Dowding, Sir. Germany was rearming furiously and we helped by selling them 118 Merlin aero engines. When Churchill objected to this he was told by Baldwin and Chamberlain that any attempt to stop this sale would amount to an interference with free trade. I don't think the citizens of the East End, of Hull, Liverpool and Coventry would have been too concerned about stopping trade with the Nazis – if this had reduced the number of German bombers overhead. When Churchill was being mentioned as the best man to head our national defence, Baldwin refused, saying, appeasingly, *If I appoint Winston, Hitler will be offended*.

In Mayfair, fashionable ladies were wearing swastikas on their bracelets and bright young men were parting their hair like Uncle Adolf. There was a prominent Nazi sympathiser in Buckingham Palace, King Edward VIII, who subsequently went off to Germany on his honeymoon with *that woman* and raised his arm in *Zieg heils* in the street. Lloyd-George described Hitler as *the most impressive man in Europe*. And – and I am not making this up – Lloyd-George, Butler and Halifax were still anxious to sue for peace with Hitler even *after* the Battle of Britain was won.

I think it is not an exaggeration to describe Baldwin as a traitor. In 1934 he reluctantly promised parliament that we would match Germany in aircraft production. When, two years later in the House of Commons, Churchill cornered him about why this had not been done, guess what Baldwin replied? He told the House: *I cannot think of anything that would have*

made the loss of the election from my point of view more certain. Talk about party before country. Talk about degraded self-interest.

You must wonder why I'm going into all this historical stuff. It is because history is not merely about the past: we study history to help us understand the present. Done properly, historical study is as fine a tool for understanding the contemporary world as mathematics.

Unfortunately, as Lord Acton said, *The only thing that men learn from history is that men learn nothing from history.* The times we are living through now bear remarkable similarities with the 1930s. The key word is *appeasement*. It was appeasement then. And it is appeasement now. Churchill said back then that we would have to fight – and he always chose his words carefully – we would have to fight, he said, to save *Christian civilisation*.

And that is our predicament today. But, whereas in the 1930s we were only appeasing the Nazis, today appeasement – let us call it rather *pre-emptive self-abasement*, is on at least three fronts.

While we take for granted our freedom to meet for worship each Sunday, Christians are enduring persecution worldwide. As I speak, the authorities in Libya are torturing four men for converting to the Christian faith. Before the Sri Lankan parliament there is a bill to make Christian conversion a criminal offence. Recently a seventy-five year old woman in Saudi Arabia was given forty lashes for socializing with her men friends. Christianity is illegal in Saudi – one of our most important middle-eastern allies with whom we do massive trade in weaponry. If you are caught in that country with a Bible, or with the Cross around your neck, you will be arrested by the religious police and thrown into prison.

In Pakistan, a thirteen year old girl was taunted for being a Christian by five Muslim youths who then raped her. The rapists were not charged. Churches are burned down every week in Pakistan. This week two priests were shot dead in Faisalabad for “blasphemy.” A man is on trial for his life in Egypt for converting to our faith. In China a house church pastor has been slung into prison for, and I quote, *utilising superstition to undermine the law*. There have been ancient and established Christian churches all over the Middle East since the time of St Paul. Now these are breaking up as never before in 2000 years as hordes of Christians try to leave to escape persecution. Many are being slaughtered as they do so.

In the face of endemic violence from the radical Islamists, the archbishops and bishops, in the true spirit of Munich and the Anglo-German Friendship League, have set up an everlasting talking shop to promote *Christian-Muslim dialogue*, and they issue vacuous communiqués from time to time. The uselessness of this project arises from the fact that it is only “liberal” Christians engaging in polite chit-chat with “moderate” Muslims. All ignored by the militants, naturally. I have some experience here. I was once asked to help the Muslim, Professor Akbar Ahmed who told me, *I have more trouble with my own extremists in Bradford than with any number of Christians*

Ah but surely all these atrocities are taking place in far off countries of which we know little? Almost brings Czechoslovakia 1938 to mind, doesn't it? But let's come a bit nearer home:

In England a Muslim girl who converted to Christianity from Islam has been removed from the home of her carer after she chose to be baptised. She was placed in a foster home because her father beat her and threatened to send her to Pakistan for a forced marriage. Her carer, who has fostered more than eighty children, did nothing to encourage her to convert

In Sheffield, a primary school head teacher, described by her colleagues and pupils' parents as *marvellous*, has resigned after being accused of racism by parents of Muslim students. The accusation comes after she proposed that the school stop holding separate assemblies for Muslim children and replace them with assemblies which would include all pupils.

Also in England, three Coptic Christian children have been placed by social services with a Muslim foster family after their parents divorced. They were originally placed in the custody of the city mosque. The authority has refused to return the children to the custody of the Coptic Church.

The second strand in our appeasement policy is connected to the first. We do not permit the extradition of terrorists such as Abu Hamza because we *cannot* permit it – since we have surrendered our national sovereignty to the bureaucratic totalitarianism of the officially atheist European Union. A third strand in our appeasement policy is our refusal to defend Europe's historic Christian civilisation against rampant and aggressive secularisation.

The immediate and principal danger is nuclear proliferation, beginning in North Korea, Pakistan and Iran and spreading to innumerable terrorist groups anywhere in the world. Countless authorities have warned us again and again that it is not a question of *if* we might come under nuclear attack from one of these groups, but *when*. The response of statesmen in the democracies in the Christian west is to do nothing. It is all too difficult, they say. And as they did in the 1930s, they opt for appeasement. But there is a huge battle coming...

When these matters are raised, people only wish the speaker would shut up. The unreal iPhone-Facebook generation, the trivia-obsessed, gadgeteered pantomime, the hideous celebrity giggle-bag, that passes for public life in Britain today is as blasé and unconcerned as the Nazism-chic Mayfair ladies with their swastika bracelets. What is all this to do with preaching sermons? The survival of Christian civilisation, that's what. We won the Battle of Britain. I am using the 70th anniversary of this glorious victory to repeat today the warning which Churchill gave then:

Upon this coming battle depends the survival of Christian civilisation. Upon it depends our own British life, and the long continuity of our institutions.... 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.

