



The Margaret Thatcher Lecture Series

Inaugural Lecture
By Margaret Thatcher

December 7, 1999

With an introduction by
William R. Miller OBE
ESU Chairman

Welcome Speech by William R. Miller OBE

It is my privilege to welcome all of you tonight to this, the inaugural lecture of the Margaret Thatcher Lecture Series. I would especially like to welcome the British Consul General in New York, Thomas Harris, and Mrs. Harris; and Sir Michael Richardson. Sir Michael is a Governor of The English-Speaking Union of the Commonwealth and played an important role in making this evening possible. He has flown over especially for the occasion. Thank you, Michael. Ladies and gentlemen, may I present our Guest of Honor, Baroness Thatcher of Kesteven.

With your indulgence, I'd like to make some brief remarks about The English-Speaking Union itself before this evening's featured program.

Those of you who are acquainted with The English-Speaking Union believe that it is about England and you are right. It was founded in 1920 essentially to cement the friendly relationships developed in World War I between Britain and the United States. We continue to this day providing opportunities to students, scholars and members to strengthen the close ties with the people of the United Kingdom. Exchanges of people, ideas and books with Britain still hold an important place in our educational outreach. Our 13,000 members in 76 branches throughout this country, 17 of which are represented here tonight, enjoy programs and lectures at home that illuminate contemporary British life and are assured of a special sense of welcome and hospitality at our sister organization's headquarters, Dartmouth House, when they travel to London. So the fellowship and commitment to improve Anglo-American understanding and particularly understanding of Britain today is very much what the "union" part of our name entails.

But since the 70's ESUs on both sides of the Atlantic have increasingly concentrated on the 'English-speaking' part of our name. In this country that has meant that we have developed educational programs that support appreciation and improved command of English among native English speakers and mastery of colloquial English among non-native speakers. The need for such initiatives is abundantly evident to any of you who overhear conversations among teenagers on a city bus or who took a cab to The Plaza tonight. In a city where grade level reading scores among third graders struggle to reach 40 % and where one in every four citizens is the child of immigrants, the vineyard for an organization with a primary concern for the English language is vast.

We have asked representatives of several of our programs to share this evening with us tonight. They are alumni and participants in our Treadwell British University Summer School Scholarships for American Teachers; our English in Action program which provides conversational English practice to newcomers to the country; our Secondary School Exchange for British and American teenagers who spend a post-high school year in each others' country; our Luard scholarships which provide junior year in the UK for students from United Negro College Fund schools, and our National Shakespeare Competition for American high school students. Could I ask these scholars to stand up now?

The English language though does not belong only to us. It is estimated that a third of the people of the world have some competence in English and more of them speak it as an acquired language than as a first tongue. Due in large degree to the electronic revolution, it's estimated that by 2050 over half of the world's population will enjoy such competence. 78% of all websites are in English and 96% of the websites used for e-businesses are in English. This has opened up a remarkable growth area for the English-Speaking Union and we have responded. I chair its International Council, which now numbers representatives from ESUs in over 40 countries. We in the States have begun to develop programming with the other ESUs that will bring our members together and will broaden the sense of fellowship with those who share our language beyond London to places as far off as Colombo or as unlikely as Paris. We are developing programs that support the learning and use of English through the global ESU network. Annually we send the best of American literature to 35 countries. Next month our western branches will host our first English teacher from Buenos Aires and in April we shall bring together teenagers from the U.S., Moscow, St. Petersburg, Bucharest and Sydney via the internet to direct scenes from Shakespeare. In sharing our language we share not only a tool for communications but also principles that underlie English itself. Robert McCrum, author of *The Story of English*, says that "one of the joys of English is, and always has been, that its spirit is anarchic, unfettered, free. In a very real sense it contains, encoded within it, an innate declaration of independence." The values of individual liberty, a bold sense of adventure and ability to adapt and change are mirrored in this language, four fifths of whose vocabulary was borrowed from other languages.

In our first eighty years the English-Speaking Union has helped solidify the special relationship between Britain and the United States, has developed programs that teach English to all this nation's children and has just begun to expand its area of activity worldwide. We believe that with our network of members throughout the United States and throughout the world we are uniquely positioned to make the most of the human dimension of the growth of English as the world language. Although as an organization we have a healthy sense of tradition, our essential character is not nostalgic, venerating a past long gone, but rather dynamic in terms of the lives we can change through English. The scope of our work, tied in with the phenomenal expansion of the English language, is unlimited and will easily take us through the next millennium. Thinking beyond that, we cannot help but recall that English was in fact the first language spoken on the moon or that the message that UN Secretary General Kurt Waldheim sent out to intelligent beings throughout the galaxy was in English!

Our gathering tonight however involves the more immediate future. We begin our 80th year by combining so many elements that have brought the ESU this far – the power of English, the importance of Anglo-American unity, global vision -- as we inaugurate the Margaret Thatcher Lecture Series. Please continue with your first course and we shall begin the program segment of our evening in a little while.

THE RT. HON. THE BARONESS THATCHER, LG, OM, FRS

INAUGURAL PRESENTATION OF
THE MARGARET THATCHER LECTURE SERIES OF
THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING UNION OF THE UNITED STATES

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The Language of Liberty

Mr. Chairman, thank you for that overwhelmingly generous introduction.

For me, I'm delighted to be with you this evening and I would like to make a few comments. First, your decision to honour me with the establishment of this new lecture programme moves me deeply. For I am a staunch believer in the English-Speaking Union and the ideals for which it stands. There is simply no other group that does the same good work in bringing together the English-speaking peoples. Throughout this tumultuous and often calamitous twentieth century, the ESU has been vital in strengthening the important ties that bind us. It is a great honour indeed which you bestow upon me this evening.

Your kindness is also somewhat humbling, for the Thatcher Lectures in the United States will be a parallel programme to the Churchill Lectures in Great Britain. For a British politician, to be associated with Sir Winston Churchill is a very high honor indeed. For he was not only one of our greatest prime ministers, but also an outstanding historian of the English-speaking peoples.

A Union of the English-Speaking Peoples

As we stand on the threshold of a new century – indeed of a new millennium – it behooves us to remember what led to the creation of the English-Speaking Union in the first place. Evelyn Wrench's idea to form a society for the cooperation of the English-speaking peoples came amidst the carnage and chaos of the First World War. He was prescient. He believed then – and history has borne him out – that the security of the world would largely depend on the close cooperation of the English-speaking peoples. How right he was. Europe's first great war had made that much clear; its second, only a little more than two decades later, would confirm it.

It was in the 1930's that Winston Churchill set out to write *A History of the English Speaking Peoples*. Having served as chairman of the English-Speaking Union from 1921-1926, he knew well the importance of drawing together those who had stood their ground against Germany during the Great War. When he was finally able to return to his task in the 1950's, after the defeat of Hitler's tyranny, he was more convinced than ever of what he called the English-speaking peoples' "common duty to the human race." In his commitment to the English-speaking peoples, as in so much else, Churchill displayed what President Ronald Reagan would later describe as "that special attribute of great statesmen – the gift of vision, the willingness to see the future based on the experience of the past."

From its official launch on the Fourth of July, 1918, the ESU has prospered and grown into the international organisation we know today, bringing together in common cause over one billion speakers

of the English language. Through your programmes and publications, your scholarships and exchanges, the ESU does so much to insure that we will remain united and continue to promote the fundamental principles inherent in our English-Speaking cultures. For English is not only the language of politics, diplomacy, and finance, of international business and travel; it is also – and most important of all – the language of values.

The values of the English-speaking peoples which we celebrate are of ancient origin. In the preface to his *History*, Churchill pointed out that “by the time Christopher Columbus set sail for the American continent” Britain had already come to be characterized by a body of legal principles and institutions including “parliament, trial by jury, local government by local citizens, and even the beginnings of a free press.” I’m thankful we were ahead of you in one or two things. These values which we share as English-speaking peoples have come together in what we call the rule of law.

And in all my dealings with those countries who are trying to move from Communism to a civilized society, I have slowly come to realize that the missing link is the rule of law. They don’t understand it at all. It doesn’t just come. With us it grew. It grew from the decisions of marvelous judges. It became not merely the law but the rule of law dependent upon equity, fairness and justice. But then in a Communist society, you don’t have equity, fairness and justice. When the collapse came in Russia and they came to liberty, they couldn’t cope with it. Because they had never known liberty in their lives. And they had never had that link between liberty and freedom and democracy, which is the rule of law. And throughout the world, if we can teach the rule of law to countries that have lived in tyranny and want to come to liberty, that will be our destiny.

Law-Governed Liberty

Our abiding commitment to the rule of law is really the very bedrock of civilization. It is that which makes all else possible, from the flowering of the arts to the steady advance of the sciences. The idea that men must govern themselves not by the arbitrary commands of a ruler but by their own considered judgement is the means whereby chaos is replaced by order, violence by the peaceful resolution of differences, and tyranny by freedom. The rule of law – and the institutions of representative democracy that make it possible – is what stands between civilization and barbarism. As John Locke pointed out so long ago, “where there is no law, there is no freedom”; and “where law ends, tyranny begins.”

It is through law-governed liberty as spread by the English-speaking peoples that mankind has been able to achieve so much. But it has not been simply by positive law itself – the Nazis had law, the Fascists had law, the Communists had law, every petty tyrant has law – but it is by a law rooted in, and springing from, the deepest values of the Judeo-Christian tradition. As Edmund Burke put it: “There is but one law for all, namely, that law which governs all law – the law of our Creator, the law of humanity, justice, equity, the law of nature and of nations.” It was the moderating influence of this belief that gave rise to both the English common law and to the American constitution, those two great beacons of hope to oppressed peoples throughout the world.

What unites the English-speaking peoples is not mere political expediency or immediate economic interests. What links us is far more fundamental than either of those things. For we share a hallowed moral ground. We take seriously the sanctity of the individual; we share a common tradition of religious tolerance; we are committed to democracy and representative government; and we are resolved to uphold and spread the rule of law. In short, we believe, as Thomas Jefferson put it in the *Declaration of*

Independence, “that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, and that to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.” It is this moral commitment, above all else, that has made us, and will continue to make us, distinctive.

It is, of course, the English language itself that makes it possible for us to stand together and pledge ourselves to those principles we deem permanent. For English is a language soaked in values; it is the language of liberty. It enables us to share those ideals of justice and fairness that lie at the heart of our political philosophy. Our common tongue allows us to come together in civic purpose; and it enables us to live together peaceably.

As we prepare to embark on a new century we must ask ourselves how we may rise to Churchill’s challenge to perform our “common duty to the human race.” What role must the English-speaking peoples play in the years ahead? And how might we effectively accomplish our objectives? We must begin our answers to those questions by recalling all we have accomplished so far.

Defending Freedom

Twice this century it fell to the English-speaking peoples to defend world peace against wars of European origin. The great British-American alliance led the way – morally as well as militarily – in both world wars. And in the wake of the Second World War, it was again our duty to face down the “evil empire” that was the Soviet Union. Two World Wars, one Cold War – won by the English-Speaking peoples. This year we celebrated the tenth anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War. There could be no greater symbol than that, of what the English-speaking peoples together can achieve. Barbed-wire tyranny crumbled and was carted away by a new generation inspired by the values we hold so dear. Our history during this century proves one thing clearly. As Churchill urged us, “We must never cease to proclaim in fearless tones the great principles of freedom and the rights of Man which are the joint inheritance of the English speaking world.”

This is of greatest importance lest we now lose sight of the true horrors of the Cold War. While our joint victories over the Axis powers were sealed in the blood of our fellow-countrymen, our victory in the Cold War was just that – “cold”; and so it lacks in some ways the passions that were unleashed during the world wars. This is fertile ground for those whose ideological interests would be served by revising history. We have an obligation never to let that happen. We must keep alive the memory of the scale of the threat to us and the depths of the suffering endured by generations in those countries which were enslaved by the Soviet system. We must never forget, or allow future generations to forget. In sheer numbers those who lost their lives as a result of Communism far outstrip those who died as a result of Nazism – and Communism, despite the fall of the Soviet empire, has not yet been eliminated from the world.

The disintegration of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War have hardly left the world a perfect place. The new world order only means that many of our current problems are new ones – or, rather old ones that now come in new guises. We have looked on in horror as new tyrants have deliberately stirred ethnic hatreds in those countries where Communism once fiercely imposed an artificial order. We have witnessed the rise of repressive regimes whose clerical leaders seek to wrap their brutality in the raiment of ancient religious beliefs. We have watched with concern as rogue states seek to acquire a nuclear

capability by rummaging through the dusty arsenals of the former Communist-bloc states. We have realized, grimly, that the willingness to use terrorism as a political tool has not abated. And we look with dismay at the rise of organized crime and gangsters in many of the emerging democracies now finally freed from Communism's cruel yoke. It is one of the cruelest things that we brought those countries to liberty, but they hadn't the administrative structures or the legal structures or the moral structures in order to translate that liberty into a higher standard of living and a satisfying way of life.

It is in considering these problems that we can see the path we must take in the years ahead. Most of these things can be remedied by the steady spread of the fundamental values of the English-speaking peoples. For by their light the peoples of the world will be able to find their way from chaos and confusion to constitutional order. We can help others to do what we have done for ourselves. We can show them how to create a realm of freedom where they can achieve those virtues which the eighteenth-century French statesman and financier Jacques Necker, saw in the British constitution of his day: "public strength and individual security."

A Message of Hope

This will not come easily or quickly. Liberty is a plant of slow growth and one that demands constant and careful attention. Yet there seems to be inevitability about it, for liberty is man's natural and desired condition. I am reminded of James Bryce's observation in *The American Commonwealth* that "the institutions of the United States...disclose and display the type of institutions towards which, as if by a law of fate, the rest of civilized mankind are forced to move, some with swifter, others with slower, but all with unresting feet."

This is what kept alive the flame of hope in the hearts and minds of all those who suffered the ruthless oppression of the totalitarian dictatorships that were necessary to keep Communism in place. No one would choose to live as they were forced to live during those dark decades. No one would willingly abandon democratic freedom for Communist order. That is why, when the end came for the Soviet Union and its satellites, it came not with a bang but with a whimper. It had decayed from within. To help rear the structures of freedom where the scaffolding of tyranny formerly stood is now the obligation of the English-speaking peoples. That is indeed our "common duty to the human race."

But this is no small task. The challenge is to limit the powers of government and I know from Britain how difficult that was when socialism got stuck in. But we did it. We're English. Yes, the challenge is to limit the powers of government even though the politicians wish to see them expand it. Private property must be secured even though the egalitarians and the socialists are fuelling envy. Taxation must be restrained even though the interest groups want ever greater public expenditure. And above all, the means have to be devised to create and administer an honest and clear rule of law, even though temptations to sell influence, barter privilege and wriggle round constraints are never greater than in times of fundamental change.

There is, of course, a problem even deeper than that of devising the institutional arrangements for freedom – namely the need to change socialist outlooks where they still exist. And few things are more difficult than to inject a sense of personal responsibility in those peoples where the all-pervasive, all-providing, all-controlling state has all but obliterated such qualities. The preference for independence and risk, rather than dependence and security, can only be acquired over time. Indeed, freedom and responsibility have to become second nature before they are truly safe. For in the end, the institutions of

freedom can only rest on the moral commitment to freedom.

Teaching the World

Those of us who enjoy the traditions of freedom have an obligation to teach others. This will be achieved not simply through politics and diplomacy but through civic education. For example, there are many institutions here and in London which are engaged upon that task.

The European Union – Les Liaisons Dangereuses

Anything which stands in the way of that relationship is an obstacle to progress. But even more worrying it could constitute a risk to our security.

That is why I am so concerned about the current attempt to create a new, autonomous European defence structure which must, if taken much further, pose a threat to trans-Atlantic defence cooperation. Of course, superficially, it sounds splendid that the Europeans are now willing to concern themselves more with the continent's defence. As the Kosovo conflict showed, and as the figures for defence spending confirm, European defence capabilities are lagging dangerously far behind those of the United States. Now, it wouldn't have happened in my time. If it had we wouldn't have won the Falklands and we wouldn't have gone with George Bush to the Gulf straight away. I believe the first duty of the government of the day is to defend the liberties of the people and never to put them at risk. And for that you should never let your defence go down. Never let your defences go down either in quantum or in the latest equipment available in the world, and you must always keep ahead as America has in the equipment of defence. And in the strategic things which Ronald Reagan did so magnificently. Ronald Reagan was super, absolutely marvelous.

The problem is, however, that the impulse towards developing a new European defence and separate European armed forces has little to do with the fact that Europe is cutting its defences while America is increasing hers. It has even less to do with any serious European response to the global dangers of proliferation, which can only properly be met by ballistic missile defence. Again, that is what Ronald Reagan proposed, what I supported, because we believed in our liberty so passionately that we were determined to defend it at all costs. No: the real drive towards a separate European defence is the same as that towards a single European currency, which I'm against – namely the utopian venture of creating a single European super-state to rival America on the world stage.

This has been a long-standing French aspiration. The fact that the present British government, in pursuit of a doomed ambition to "lead Europe," has reversed Britain's traditional hostility towards such ideas should worry our American allies and indeed the wider English-speaking world. After all, NATO has worked so well in the past for two reasons – namely, the acceptance of American leadership, and the understanding that, in any crisis within the Alliance, Britain could be relied upon to support America. As we did for example when Ron Reagan telephoned me about the Libyan raid about midnight one night and wanted an answer by seven o'clock the next morning. And I said, "Hey, wait a minute, I'll give you an answer." And we supported him. Of course we did, and it was a very telling raid, that raid on Libya. It needed to be done; it had followed bombs in American Service establishments which had killed American servicemen. And Ron Reagan was determined he'd take steps about it. He rang me and said, "I want to use all our aircraft that are stationed in the British Isles." And I knew that would involve us and it did.

Thank goodness we stood by him. The creation of a separate European defence, whatever the qualifications and assurances, threatens both the conditions that the future of the free world depends on the Anglo-American alliance, and it poses a serious long-term danger to NATO's cohesion and effectiveness.

Professor Robert Conquest has recently argued the merits of a new political alliance that he would call – with thanks to this fine organization – the English-Speaking Union. Such an international alliance, he suggests, would redefine the political landscape and, in the long term, transform “politically backward areas [by] creating the conditions for a genuine world community.” Unlike the European Union, first brought together by common interests in trade and now driven by the ambitions of bureaucrats in Brussels to control almost every aspect of policy within each of its member nations, an English-Speaking Union would be united by those deeper values – our common moral commitments to democracy and freedom tied together by our common language.

Into the Twenty First Century

The twentieth century has been rightly called the American century. And indeed it has been that. Not only has the United States been a great world power, both economically and militarily, but it has been nothing less than a great moral example. And it has been supported in that role by its allies, especially those nations of the English-speaking world – the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. We are the people who save freedom for the world under your leadership. Together we have withstood the forces of evil and tyranny in whatever form we have found them. Together we have shown the world the strength of our democratic beliefs and of our political institutions based upon them. We have no reason to think that the twenty-first century will depend any less upon our commitment to those self-same values that have encouraged the spread of freedom around the world.

As we begin this new century we must devote ourselves anew to those “laws of nature and of nature's God” that have brought us so far. And as we renew that devotion, so, too, must we renew our commitment to meet our “common duty to the human race.” And in meeting our obligation, the ESU will continue to play an important role in promoting around the world that great language of liberty which is the English tongue. And I hope that in the years ahead those who speak to you as part of the Thatcher Lectures will add their voices to our proud and noble chorus of freedom.