

# Winston Churchill and the Fourth of July

by Lewis E. Lehrman

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Near the end of World War I, Winston Churchill spoke on the "142nd anniversary of American independence." The occasion was a Liberty Day rally in London on July 4, 1918. For the first time in history, Britain and America were allies in war. While recognizing the Anglo-American political tradition in fighting tyranny, Churchill used his speech to celebrate the union of long-held principles embodied in the Declaration of Independence by which America had explained its reason for breaking off from the British crown.

"A great harmony exists between the Declaration of Independence and all we are fighting for now," said Churchill, whose mother was American. "A similar harmony exists between the principles of that Declaration and what the British Empire has wished to stand for and has at last achieved, not only here at home, but in the great self-governing Dominions through the world. The Declaration of Independence is not only an American document; it follows on the Magna Charta and the Petition of Right as the third of the great title deeds on which the liberties of the English-speaking race are founded."

Churchill, who was then Minister of Munitions in the wartime British Cabinet, declared: "The political conceptions embodied in the Declaration of Independence... spring from the same source; they come from the same well of practical truth."

Churchill, the future author of *The History of the English-Speaking Peoples*, said: "Wherever men seek to frame polities or constitutions which are intended to safeguard the

citizen, be he rich or be he poor, on the one hand from the shame of despotism, on the other from the misery of anarchy, which are devised to combine personal liberty with respect for law and love of country -- wherever these desires are sincerely before the makers of constitutions or laws, it is to this original inspiration, this inspiration which was the product of English soil, which was the outcome of the Anglo-Saxon mind, that they will inevitably be drawn.”

Thirty-two years after those remarks, out of office, Churchill gave a second Fourth of July speech, again in London, again in the midst of a war in which America and Britain were engaged. "The British and Americans do not war with races or governments as such," the once and future prime minister said of the Korean War. "Tyranny, external or internal, is our foe whatever trappings or disguises it wears, whatever language it speaks, or perverts. We must be forever be on our guard, and always vigilant against it" -- especially "in those realms of thought which are consecrated to the rights and the dignity of man, and which are so amazingly laid down in the Declaration of Independence.”

In 1918 Churchill had spoken of the Allied cause as a just war: “We are all erring mortals. No race, no country, no individual, has a monopoly of good or of evil, but face to face with the facts of this war, who can doubt that the struggle in which we are engaged is in reality a struggle between the forces of good and the forces of evil? It is a struggle between right and wrong, and as such it is not capable of any solution which is not absolute.”

Churchill had then concluded: “No compromise on the main purpose; no peace till victory; no pact with unrepentant wrong -- that is the Declaration of July 4th, 1918; that is the Declaration which I invite you to make in common with me, and, to quote the words which are on every American's lips to-day, "for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance

on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor."

**Lewis E. Lehrman is co-founder of the Gilder-Lehrman Institute of American History and author of *Lincoln at Peoria: The Turning Point* (Stackpole Books, 2008).**

