

Conservative Central Office

NEWS SERVICE

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Extract from a speech by Winston Churchill, MP, (Stretford) Conservative Party Co-ordinator for Defence and Multilateral Disarmament, addressing the Annual Conference of the Federation of Conservative Students at Loughborough University, on Monday, 5th APRIL, 1982.

On this day when the Royal Navy sets sail to liberate the Falkland Islands and its Dependencies, the men of the Royal Navy and the Royal Marines are entitled to know that they have the full backing and support of Parliament and all the main political parties in the dangerous and difficult task that lies ahead of them. The entire nation wishes them: "God Speed!" and a safe return.

Already the remarkable and rare degree of unanimity demonstrated in Saturday's Emergency Debate in the House of Commons and characterised by the staunch and patriotic speech of the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Michael Foot, is already showing signs of severe strain. Labour's Spokesman on Defence, Mr. John Silkin is shamefully seeking to make this an occasion for putting Party Political advantage before the national interest. It is time that Foot told Silkin to speak for Britain and that when British lives are at stake is no time for Party politics.

Yesterday on television Mr. Silkin on behalf of the Labour Party advanced a very dangerous and wholly untruthful proposition when he suggested that Britain's reverse in the Falkland Islands "proved" the case against Trident and Britain's Independent Nuclear Deterrent. Nothing could be further from the truth. If there is one lesson, above all, to be learnt from the humiliating defeat that we have suffered it is this: The price of Deterrence is infinitely less than the price of war.

The concept of Deterrence is often, wrongly, associated solely with nuclear policy. Argentina's wanton and unprovoked invasion of the Falklands would almost certainly never have taken place had Britain had on station in the South Atlantic even a single nuclear Hunter-Killer submarine and a frigate. But the fact that in recent years successive Governments - Labour as well as Conservative - have seen fit to maintain in the area nothing more than the survey ship Endurance together with a garrison of fewer than 100 Royal Marines has proved an open invitation to aggression - aggression that can now only be dealt with by sending a massive naval task force with the attendant risk of substantial casualties.

If the Labour Party has its way, or indeed if the SDP and the Liberals have their way, Britain's strategic deterrent will be run down or even abolished, laying open these very islands to the threat of nuclear attack or blackmail.

Weakness, whether in the conventional or the nuclear field, invariably invites aggression. Britain has both the duty and the ability to maintain strong forces both nuclear and conventional to safeguard the peace and freedom of all our peoples whether in the Falklands or here at home. It is the present Government's determination to ensure the effectiveness of this policy for the future.

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