

'Bold words' from Het Parool (6 March 1946)

Caption: On 6 March 1946, commenting on the address given by Winston Churchill in Fulton, Missouri, the Dutch daily newspaper Het Parool considers the question of Soviet expansionism.

Source: Het Parool. Vrij Onverveerd. Réd. Chef Van Heuven Goedhart, G.J. 06.03.1946, n° 354; 6 Jg. Amsterdam: Het Parool. "Boud gesproken", p. 3.

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Bold words

The coach is creaking but the old coachman, swearing, is once again laying the whip over the horses. The term old coachman is appropriate because Churchill is still a political force, not only on account of his personal prestige but also because, in the eyes of many, and certainly in the eyes of conservatives, he represents something more important than a cabinet, namely the existing order. That is also why Truman was present for his speech. Speaking here was the representative not of a government but of a regime. British capitalism was offering its hand to American capitalism, or rather was asking for America's hand. This is the second time that Churchill has come up with a proposal to extend citizenship. The first time was in 1940 and involved France. Now it is 1944 and involves the United States. Europe's huge loss of power is expressed fully in this change.

In brief, his speech may be summarised as follows: Russia is developing into a great power which is seeking natural expansion. We must counter this by forming a bloc which, in an equally natural manner, upholds the existing situation. A new balance of power must be created in which we must have the upper hand. However, this can be achieved only by extending Anglo-American unity to create a military alliance. The conservative or, if you will, class nature of his address came to the fore in his attack on Communism. In it he probably gave an inaccurate description of Russian diplomacy, but in any event he triggered the possessive instincts of his audience, as was his intention. We doubt whether he did his cause any good, because a bloc to counter Russia can come about only if the workers are willing to go along with it, and they will hardly be won over by such an approach. However, this was the Churchill of election campaigning and election defeat.

It was certainly strong language, but did Russia not deserve it? Some time ago Churchill was succeeded by Bevin, who, although led along by the old hands at the Foreign Office, has his own approach and in any event speaks on behalf of a government which wants a strong progressive policy. He has not exerted the slightest influence on Stalin and Molotov. If at all possible, they have been harder on Bevin than on Churchill. In no respect at all has Russia tried to accommodate winning over British socialists in its own foreign policy, for example by drawing Bevin towards it by means of socialist diplomacy, and this more than anything else demonstrates how indifferent to the outside world and how nationalistic the Russians have become. However, the result is that Russia is uniting the various classes in Europe and the time will come when Churchill can again speak on behalf of the entire nation.