

Robin Cook: Resignation Speech as UK Foreign Secretary, 2003

The British Labour party politician [Robin Cook](#) (1946 – 2005) was the the UK Foreign Secretary from 1997 to 2001 under Prime Minister Tony Blair. Cook resigned dramatically from the cabinet in March 2003 in protest against [the invasion of Iraq](#).

The transcript can be downloaded from [the BBC website](#). The video is from [Youtube](#).

Robin Cook:

This is the first time for 20 years that I have addressed the House from the back benches.

I must confess that I had forgotten how much better the view is from here.

None of those 20 years were more enjoyable or more rewarding than the past two, in which I have had the immense privilege of serving this House as Leader of the House, which were made all the more enjoyable, Mr Speaker, by the opportunity of working closely with you.

It was frequently the necessity for me as Leader of the House to talk my way out of accusations that a statement had been preceded by a press interview.

On this occasion I can say with complete confidence that no press interview has been given before this statement.

I have chosen to address the House first on why I cannot support a war without international agreement or domestic support.

The present Prime Minister is the most successful leader of the Labour party in my lifetime.

I hope that he will continue to be the leader of our party, and I hope that he will continue to be successful. I have no sympathy with, and I will give no comfort to, those who want to use this crisis to displace him.

I applaud the heroic efforts that the prime minister has made in trying to secure a second resolution.

I do not think that anybody could have done better than the foreign secretary in working to get support for a second resolution within the Security Council.

But the very intensity of those attempts underlines how important it was to succeed.

Now that those attempts have failed, we cannot pretend that getting a second resolution was of no importance.

France has been at the receiving end of bucket loads of commentary in recent days.

It is not France alone that wants more time for inspections. Germany wants more time for inspections; Russia wants more time for inspections; indeed, at no time have we signed up even the minimum necessary to carry a second resolution.

We delude ourselves if we think that the degree of international hostility is all the result of President Chirac.

The reality is that Britain is being asked to embark on a war without agreement in any of the international bodies of which we are a leading partner – not NATO, not the European Union and, now, not the Security Council.

To end up in such diplomatic weakness is a serious reverse.

Only a year ago, we and the United States were part of a

coalition against terrorism that was wider and more diverse than I would ever have imagined possible.

History will be astonished at the diplomatic miscalculations that led so quickly to the disintegration of that powerful coalition.

The US can afford to go it alone, but Britain is not a superpower.

Our interests are best protected not by unilateral action but by multilateral agreement and a world order governed by rules.

Yet tonight the international partnerships most important to us are weakened: the European Union is divided; the Security Council is in stalemate.

Those are heavy casualties of a war in which a shot has yet to be fired.

I have heard some parallels between military action in these circumstances and the military action that we took in Kosovo. There was no doubt about the multilateral support that we had for the action that we took in Kosovo.

It was supported by NATO; it was supported by the European Union; it was supported by every single one of the seven neighbours in the region. France and Germany were our active allies.

It is precisely because we have none of that support in this case that it was all the more important to get agreement in the Security Council as the last hope of demonstrating international agreement.

The legal basis for our action in Kosovo was the need to respond to an urgent and compelling humanitarian crisis.

Our difficulty in getting support this time is that neither the international community nor the British public is

persuaded that there is an urgent and compelling reason for this military action in Iraq.

The threshold for war should always be high.

None of us can predict the death toll of civilians from the forthcoming bombardment of Iraq, but the US warning of a bombing campaign that will "shock and awe" makes it likely that casualties will be numbered at least in the thousands.

I am confident that British servicemen and women will acquit themselves with professionalism and with courage. I hope that they all come back.

I hope that Saddam, even now, will quit Baghdad and avert war, but it is false to argue that only those who support war support our troops.

It is entirely legitimate to support our troops while seeking an alternative to the conflict that will put those troops at risk.

Nor is it fair to accuse those of us who want longer for inspections of not having an alternative strategy.

For four years as foreign secretary I was partly responsible for the western strategy of containment.

Over the past decade that strategy destroyed more weapons than in the Gulf war, dismantled Iraq's nuclear weapons programme and halted Saddam's medium and long-range missiles programmes.

Iraq's military strength is now less than half its size than at the time of the last Gulf war.

Ironically, it is only because Iraq's military forces are so weak that we can even contemplate its invasion. Some advocates of conflict claim that Saddam's forces are so weak, so demoralised and so badly equipped that the war will be over in a few days.

We cannot base our military strategy on the assumption that Saddam is weak and at the same time justify pre-emptive action on the claim that he is a threat.

Iraq probably has no weapons of mass destruction in the commonly understood sense of the term – namely a credible device capable of being delivered against a strategic city target.

It probably still has biological toxins and battlefield chemical munitions, but it has had them since the 1980s when US companies sold Saddam anthrax agents and the then British Government approved chemical and munitions factories.

Why is it now so urgent that we should take military action to disarm a military capacity that has been there for 20 years, and which we helped to create?

Why is it necessary to resort to war this week, while Saddam's ambition to complete his weapons programme is blocked by the presence of UN inspectors?

Only a couple of weeks ago, Hans Blix told the Security Council that the key remaining disarmament tasks could be completed within months.

I have heard it said that Iraq has had not months but 12 years in which to complete disarmament, and that our patience is exhausted.

Yet it is more than 30 years since resolution 242 called on Israel to withdraw from the occupied territories.

We do not express the same impatience with the persistent refusal of Israel to comply.

I welcome the strong personal commitment that the prime minister has given to middle east peace, but Britain's positive role in the middle east does not redress the strong sense of injustice throughout the Muslim world at what it sees

as one rule for the allies of the US and another rule for the rest.

Nor is our credibility helped by the appearance that our partners in Washington are less interested in disarmament than they are in regime change in Iraq.

That explains why any evidence that inspections may be showing progress is greeted in Washington not with satisfaction but with consternation: it reduces the case for war.

What has come to trouble me most over past weeks is the suspicion that if the hanging chads in Florida had gone the other way and Al Gore had been elected, we would not now be about to commit British troops.

The longer that I have served in this place, the greater the respect I have for the good sense and collective wisdom of the British people.

On Iraq, I believe that the prevailing mood of the British people is sound. They do not doubt that Saddam is a brutal dictator, but they are not persuaded that he is a clear and present danger to Britain.

They want inspections to be given a chance, and they suspect that they are being pushed too quickly into conflict by a US Administration with an agenda of its own.

Above all, they are uneasy at Britain going out on a limb on a military adventure without a broader international coalition and against the hostility of many of our traditional allies.

From the start of the present crisis, I have insisted, as Leader of the House, on the right of this place to vote on whether Britain should go to war.

It has been a favourite theme of commentators that this House no longer occupies a central role in British politics.

Nothing could better demonstrate that they are wrong than for this House to stop the commitment of troops in a war that has neither international agreement nor domestic support.

I intend to join those tomorrow night who will vote against military action now. It is for that reason, and for that reason alone, and with a heavy heart, that I resign from the government.

Aung San Suu Kyi: Acceptance Speech, Oxford, June 2012

On 20th June 2012, [Aung San Suu Kyi](#), Chairman of the Burmese National League for Democracy and member of the Burmese parliament, addressed the University of Oxford where she had studied years earlier and received an honorary doctorate in civil law.

The transcript is from the [Oxford Mail website](#). The video can be seen on the [University of Oxford](#) website.

Aung San Suu Kyi

Today, many strands of my life have come together. The years that I spent as a student at St Hugh's; the years I spent in Park Town as a wife and mother; the years I spent under house arrest – when my university, the University of Oxford, stood up and spoke up for me.

During the most difficult years I was upheld by memories of Oxford. These were among the most important inner resources that helped me to cope with all the challenges I had to face.

The memories were in fact very simple ones. Some are days like these, when I went on the Cherwell with friends in a punt, or sat reading on the lawn at St Hugh's, or in the library – not looking at a book, but out of the windows.

But these were very precious memories – because I had lived a happy life. And this made me understand so much better the young people of Burma – who wanted to live a happy life and who had never been given an opportunity to lead one.

When I see Oxford now, when I see the students of Oxford now, when I met some of them at St Hugh's yesterday, I saw myself again as a young student: carefree, happy, nice. We were nice, the students now are nice. They have been given a chance to be nice.

It's a very simple word, but it's an important one. When you look at their faces, you don't see any hidden agenda there. They were so open, as we were open – because we had been given a chance to be open. We were not afraid – there was no reason for us to be afraid – and this opened us to the world.

I remember small things. I remember so often going in a bus, with my very dear friend Ann Pasternak-Slater, sitting side by side, in a bus on the Banbury Road, our four denim-clad knees next to each other; and Ann looked down, and said: 'It's not fair, even knees are different.' And it was true. I'm not sure quite which way it was, but one set of knees was pointed, and one set of knees was round. These were the sort of things we noticed as students, and talked about, and built a whole philosophy on this little fact that we had different sets of knees, our knees were shaped differently.

The world was shaped differently. But we were not afraid of it. The differences meant that we were all the stronger. We learned how to cope with the different problems that we would have to face.

I have to mention one of my fellow honorands at this time,

because when I was under house arrest I was also helped by the books of John le Carré. They were an escape – I won't call it an escape, they were a journey into the wider world. Not the wider world just of other countries, but of thoughts and ideas. And these were the journeys that made me feel that I was not really cut off from the rest of humankind. I was never alone, because there were many, many avenues to places far away from where I was.

And all this I was able to do to a great extent because of the years I spent at Oxford, the friends I made there.

The most important thing for me about Oxford was not what I learnt there in terms of set texts and set books we had to read, but in terms of a respect for the best in human civilisation.

And the best in human civilisation comes from all parts of the world. It is not limited to Oxford; it is not limited to Burma; it is not limited to any other country. But the fact that in Oxford I had learned to respect all that is the best in human civilisation helped me to cope with what was not quite the best.

Because what is not yet quite the best may still, one day, become the best; it may be improved. It gave me a confidence in humankind. It gave me a confidence in the innate wisdom of human beings – not given to all of us, but given to enough of us for the rest of the world to share, and to make use of it for others.

I have often thought that the saddest thing about Burma over the last few decades has been the lack of campus life for our university students. Campus life means a life in which young people can create their own world – or make the world their own. They have the freedom and the facilities to do so. Our young people in Burma have not had this freedom for the last few decades. University life has been shattered because of a

perceived need to keep students in order. That's not possible: everybody knows that students can't be kept in order! So we shouldn't spend our time on such a futile and really undesirable mission. I would like to see university life restored to Burma in all its glory. And I would be so grateful if my old university, the University of Oxford, could help to bring this about once again.

I would like our young people to know what it is to feel that the world belongs to them and they belong to the world. To be able to stand at the threshold of full adulthood in full confidence that they will be able to do their best for the world and in the belief that the world also wants to do the best for them.

Oxford taught me to value humankind, because when I was in Oxford I was the only student from Burma. I think I was only Burmese person resident in the university for the first couple of years. And all my friends were non-Burmese – of course English students, but students from all over the world, from Ghana, from India, from Thailand, from Sri Lanka, from all over the world.

And I never felt that they were different from me. We were all the same: we were all students of this university, which has some magic that makes us feel that nothing separates us – neither religion, nor race, nor nationality, nor even different levels of excellence in academic affairs.

Oxford is a place of tremendous broad-mindedness. Nobody discriminates against anybody else because he or she may be different, or may not have achieved as much as others. Every human being is expected to have a value and a dignity of her kind or his kind.

And that's why throughout the years when I was struggling for human rights in Burma I felt I was doing something of which my old university would have approved. And to feel the approval

behind me has helped me a great deal.

Burma is at the beginning of a road. It is not the sort of road that you find in England: it is not smooth; it is not well-maintained; in fact, it is not yet there. It a road that we will have to carve out for ourselves. This is a road that we will have to build as we go along.

Too many people are expecting too much from Burma at this moment. They think that the road where we are standing is like one of those highways on which I travelled from London to Oxford – and almost got carsick! – very straight and very smooth. Too smooth and too straight perhaps for me, because I not used to such smoothness.

But our road is one which is, as I said, one we have to build for ourselves, inch by difficult inch. And I hope that you will all be with us while we are doing this. I hope that you will understand that this road is there in our hearts and minds, but not actually there yet in real fact. And that we will need your help and the help of others all around the world to make sure that it leads to where we want our country to go.

And where do I want my country to go? My first trip abroad in 24 years but not really this one to Europe, but to Thailand, towards the end of May. And I stayed in a hotel called the Shangri-La. And I think every Oxonian, or most every, knows that in Lost Horizon Shangri-La was described as “something a little like Oxford”.

So where do we want to go to? Where I want to go to, where I want our people to go to, is a place which will enable them to see for themselves how wide open the world can be, and how to find our own place in the world – which is also open enough and wide enough for everybody to be included.

I would like a bit of Oxonian Shangri-la in Burma.

This is what I would like to work towards: very practical, because it's based on hard work, and knowledge, and modern research, and of course funding. We mustn't forget funding, which is a very important part of building any kind of successful institution these days. And I mention it because I would like all our friends, all our well-wishers, to remember that investing in Burma should be done with a sense of responsibility, and to remind those who are thinking of making use of the new opportunities that Burma is offering to remember that we, the people of Burma, need to benefit from these investments as much as investors themselves.

Please help us to make sure that all investments in Burma – business, development, humanitarian, all these in a sense are investments – that these investments are democracy-friendly and human rights-friendly. That these investments will help to promote in our country the kind of values for which you stand – the kind of values that you taught me.

Today has been a very moving day for me. Moving because I have found that the past is always there, it never goes away, but you can select what is best from the past to help you go forward to the future. In my college, my old college St Hugh's, I found that I could recognise every bit of it: even though there were very many new buildings, yet they had merged in with the old. It was such a harmonious picture of the old and the new standing together as a promise for the future.

I was very proud to be back in my old college, and warmed by the reception given to me and my team by the principal of the college and his family, and by the students. The warmth of the students was wonderful.

I felt that I was back again in my young student days. I didn't feel any different to them. And in a sense I am no different now to the young student who was at Oxford so many years before. But also I am different, because I've had to face different experiences.

But I bring all these experience back to me here at Oxford, and I find that Oxford is big enough and broad enough to contain my new experiences as well.

The road ahead, as I said, is not going to be easy. But Oxford, I know, expects the best of its own. And today, because they have recognised me as its very own, I am strengthened to go forward to give of my very best in meeting the new challenges that lie ahead.

Arthur Hugh Clough (poet): 'Say not the struggle naught availeth'

In June 2012, newly-elected MP and National League for Democracy leader [Aung San Suu Kyi](#) quoted from this poem in an address to both Houses of Parliament in London. The poem was also used by Churchill to encourage America to join with Britain in World War 2.

The poem is by [Arthur Hugh Clough](#) (1819-1861) and is read by [Tom O'Bedlam in his SpokenVerse channel](#) on Youtube, with hundreds of other poems.

Tom O'Bedlam (Narrator):

Say not the struggle naught availeth,
The labour and the wounds are vain,
The enemy faints not, nor faileth,
And as things have been they remain.

If hopes were dupes, fears may be liars;
It may be, in yon smoke conceal'd,
Your comrades chase e'en now the fliers,
And, but for you, possess the field.

For while the tired waves, vainly breaking,
Seem here no painful inch to gain,
Far back, through creeks and inlets making,
Comes silent, flooding in, the main.

And not by eastern windows only,
When daylight comes, comes in the light;
In front the sun climbs slow, how slowly!
But westward, look, the land is bright!

Aung San Suu Kyi: Address to Houses of Parliament, London, 2012

In June 2012, newly-elected MP and National League for Democracy leader [Aung San Suu Kyi](#) visited the UK. In this clip she addressed the Joint Houses of Commons and Lords at [Westminster Hall](#).

The transcript of Aung San Suu Kyi's speech is original. The video is from [Ronald Ellis's website](#). You can also view a [BBC version](#) here.

Aung San Suu Kyi

Lord Speaker, Mr Speaker, Mr Prime Minister, My Lords, and

Members of the House of Commons

Thank you for inviting me to speak to you here in this magnificent hall. I am very conscious of the extraordinary nature of this honor. I understand that there was some debate as to whether I would speak here in this splendid setting or elsewhere in the Palace of Westminster. I welcome that debate and discussion. It is what Parliament is all about.

I have just come from Downing Street. It is my first visit there, and yet for me it is a familiar scene. Not just from television broadcasts, but from my own family history. As some of you may be aware, the best-known photograph of my father, Aung San [[Wikipedia](#), [Youtube](#)], taken shortly before his assassination in 1947 was of him standing in Downing St with Clement Atlee and others with whom he had been discussing Burma's transition to independence.

He was pictured wearing a [large British military-issue greatcoat](#). This had been given to him by Jawaharlal Nehru en route to the UK to protect him against the unaccustomed cold. And I must say that not having left my tropical country for 24 years, there have been the odd moments this week when I have thought of that coat myself.

A couple of hours ago I was photographed in the same place where my father was photographed, together with Prime Minister David Cameron, and it was raining. Very British!

My father was a founding member of the Burmese Independence Army in World War 2. He took on this responsibility out of a desire to see democracy established in his homeland. It was his view that democracy was the only political system worthy of an independent nation. It is a view of course that I have long shared.

[General Slim](#), commander of the 14th Army, who led the Allied Burmese campaign, wrote about his first encounter with my father in his memoir 'Defeat until Victory.' The meeting came

towards the end of the war, shortly after my father had decided that the Burmese Independence Army should join forces with the Allies. General Slim said to my father "You've only come to us because we are winning."

To which my father replied "It wouldn't be much good coming to you if you weren't!"

Slim saw in my father a practical man with whom he could do business. Six decades later, I strive to be as practical as my father was.

And so I am here, in part, to ask for practical help. Help as a friend and as an equal. In support of the reforms which can bring better lives and greater opportunities to the people of Burma who have been for so long deprived of their rights and place in the world.

As I said yesterday in Oxford, my country today stands at the start of a journey toward I hope a better future. So many hills remain to be climbed, chasms to be bridged, obstacles to be breached.

Our own determination can get us so far. The support of the people of Britain and of peoples around the world can get us so much further.

In a speech about change and reform, it is very appropriate to be in Westminster Hall, because at the heart of this process, must be the establishment of a strong, parliamentary institution in my own country.

The British Parliament is perhaps the pre-eminent symbol to oppressed peoples around the world of freedom of speech. I would imagine that some people here, to some extent, take this freedom for granted.

For us in Burma, what you take for granted, we have had to struggle for long and hard. So many people in Burma gave up so

much, gave up everything in Burma's ongoing struggle for democracy, and we are only now just beginning to see the fruits of our struggle.

Westminster has long set a shining example of realizing the people's desire to be part of their own legislative process.

In Burma our parliament is in its infancy, having been established only in March 2011. As with any new institution, especially an institution which goes against the cultural grain of 49 years of direct military rule, it will take time to find its feet and time to find its voice.

Our new legislative processes, which undoubtedly are an improvement on what has gone before, are not as transparent as they might be.

I would like to see us learn from established examples of parliamentary democracies elsewhere, so that we might deepen our own democratic standards over time.

Perhaps the most critical moment in establishing the credibility of the parliamentary process happens before parliament even opens, namely the people's participation in a free fair inclusive electoral process.

Earlier this year, I myself participated in my first election as a candidate. To this day however, I have not yet had the chance to vote freely in any election. In 1990 I was allowed to cast an advanced vote while under house arrest.

But I was prevented from contesting as a candidate for my party, the National League for Democracy. I was disqualified on the grounds that I had received help from foreign quarters. This amounted to BBC broadcasts that the authorities considered to be biased in my favour. What struck me most ahead of this year's by-elections, was how quickly people in the constituencies around Burma grasped the importance of participating in the political process. They understood first hand that the right to vote was not something given to all.

They understood that they must take advantage when the opportunity arose, because they understood what it meant to have that opportunity taken away from them.

During the years that I lived in the United Kingdom, I never had the right to vote myself. But I can remember, even during my university days, that I was always trying to encourage my friends to exercise their right to vote. It was never clear to me if they followed these instructions. But it was very clear to me even then that if we do not regard the rights we have, we run the risk of seeing those rights erode away.

To those who feel themselves to be somehow above politics I want to say that politics should be seen neither as something that exists above us, nor as something that happens beneath us, but something that is integral to our everyday existence.

After my marriage, I constantly preached my gospel of political participation to my late husband, [Michael](#). I still distinctly recall the occasion when a canvasser knocked on the door of our Oxford home during an election campaign. Michael opened the door and when he saw the gentleman poised to deliver his campaign pitch, said "It's no use trying to win me over. It's my wife who decides how I should vote. She's out now. Why don't you come back later?"

The canvasser did come back later, mainly I think to see what a wife who decided how her husband should vote looked like.

It has been less than 100 days, since I together with my fellow National League for Democracy candidates was out on the campaign trail across Burma. Our by-elections were held on April 1st, and I conscious there was a certain skepticism that this would turn out to be an elaborate April Fool's joke. In fact, it turned out to be an April of new hope.

The voting process was largely free and fair and I would like to pay tribute to [President Thein](#) for this and for his commitment and his sincerity in the reform process.

As I have long said, it is through dialogue and through

cooperation that political differences can best be resolved, and my own commitment to this path remains as strong as ever. Elections in Burma are very different to those in many more established democracies such as yours. Apathy, especially amongst the young, is certainly not an issue. For me, the most encouraging and rewarding aspect of our own elections was the participation in such vast numbers and with such enthusiasm of our young people. Often our biggest challenge was in restraining the crowds of university students, schoolchildren and flag-waving toddlers who greeted us on the campaign, blocking the roads throughout the length of towns.

The day before the elections, on the way to my constituency, I passed a hillock which had been occupied by a group of children, the oldest about 10 or 11, their leader standing at the summit holding the NLD flag.

The passion of the electorate was a passion born of hunger for something long denied.

Following Burma's independence in 1948, our parliamentary system was of course based on that of the United Kingdom. The era became known in Burmese as the Parliamentary Era, a name which, by the mere necessity of its application, speaks of the unfortunate changes which followed.

Our parliamentary era, which lasted more or less until 1962, could not be said to have been perfect. But it was certainly the most progressive and promising period until now in the short history of independent Burma. It was at this time that Burma was considered the nation most likely to succeed in South East Asia. Things did not however go entirely to plan. They often don't in Burma and indeed in the rest of the world.

Now once again we have an opportunity to re-establish true democracy in Burma. It is an opportunity for which we have waited many decades. If we do not use this opportunity, if we do not get things right this time around, it may be several decades more before a similar opportunity arises again.

And so it is for this reason that I would ask Britain as one of the oldest parliamentary democracies to consider what it can do to build the sound institutions needed to support our nascent parliamentary democracy.

The reforms taking place led by [President Thein Sein](#) are to be welcomed. But this cannot be a personality-based process. Without strong institutions this process will not be sustainable. Our legislature has much to learn about the democratization process, and I hope that Britain and other democracies can help by sharing your own experiences with us.

Thus far I have only spent a matter of minutes inside the Burmese Parliament when I took the oath as a new MP last month. I must say that I found the atmosphere rather formal. Men have to wear formal headgear. There is certainly no heckling. I would wish that over time perhaps we would reflect the liveliness and relative informality of Westminster. I am not unaware of the saying that more tears have been shed over wishes granted than over wishes denied.

Nevertheless, it is when Burma has its own satisfactory equivalent of Prime Minister's Questions that we will be able to say that parliamentary democracy has truly come of age.

I would also like to emphasize the importance of establishing requisite parliamentary control over the budget.

In all this, what is most important is to empower the people, the essential ingredient of democracy. Britain is living proof that a constitution does not need to be written down to be effective. It is more important that a constitution should be accepted by the people, that the people feel it belongs to them, that it is not an external document imposed on them.

One of the clearly stated aims of my party, the National League for Democracy, is constitutional reform. [Burma's] original constitution was drawn up following the meeting between my father [Aung San](#) and [Clement Atlee here in London in](#)

[1947](#). This constitution may not have been perfect, but at its core was a profound understanding of and respect for the aspirations of the people.

The current constitution, drawn up by the military government in 2008, must be amended to incorporate the basic rights and aspiration of Burma's ethnic nationalities. In over sixty years of independence Burma has not yet known a time when we could say that there is peace throughout the land.

At this very moment, hostilities continue between the Kachin forces and the state armed forces in the north. In the west, communal strife has led to the loss of innocent lives and the displacement of tens of thousands of hapless citizens. Since this speech was drafted, I've also heard that hostilities have resumed in the east of the country between Shan troops and the troops of the government.

We need to address the problems that lie at the root of conflict. We need to develop a culture of political settlement through negotiation and to promote the rule of law, that all who live in Burma may enjoy the benefits of both freedom and security.

In the immediate term, we also need humanitarian support for the many peoples in the north and west, largely women and children, who have been forced to flee their homes.

As the long history of the United Kingdom shows clearly, people never lose their need to preserve their national or ethnic identity. This is something which goes beyond, which supersedes economic development. And that is why I hope that in working for Burma's national reconciliation, the international community will recognize that it is political dialogue and political settlement which must be given precedence over short term economic development.

If differences remain unresolved, if basic aspirations remain unfulfilled, there cannot be an adequate foundation for

sustainable development of any kind – economic, social or political.

Britain has for so long, under successive governments, including the present Conservative /Liberal Democratic coalition, and the previous Labour government, been a staunch and unshakeable supporter of aid efforts in Burma. I hope that you can continue to help our country through targeted and coordinated development assistance. Britain has been until now the largest bilateral donor to Burma. It is in education in particular that I hope the British can play a major role. We need short-term results so that our people may see that democratization has a tangible positive impact on their lives.

Vocational training and creation of employment opportunities to help address Burma's chronic youth unemployment are particularly important. Longer term, Burma's education system is desperately weak. Reform is needed, not just of schools and the curriculum, and the training of teachers, but also of our attitude to education, which is too narrow and rigid.

I hope also that British businesses can play a role in supporting the democratic reform process, through what I have termed democracy-friendly investment. By this I mean investment that prioritizes transparency, accountability, workers' rights, and environmental sustainability. Investment particularly in labor-intensive sectors when carried out responsibly and with positive intent, can offer real benefits to our people.

One test will be whether new players will benefit from the investment coming in. Britain has played an important role in facilitating the forthcoming visit next month of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative Secretariat. I hope this will be the start of many similar initiatives in the month ahead.

It is through learning, while at Oxford, about two great

British leaders, Gladstone and Disraeli, that I first developed my understanding of parliamentary democracy: that one accepts the decision of the voters; that the governing power is gained and relinquished in accordance with the desires of the electorate, and that ultimately everyone gets another chance.

These are things taken for granted here in Britain, but in 1990, the winner of the elections was never allowed even to convene parliament. I hope that we can leave such days behind us, and that as we look forward to the future, it will be the will of the people that is reflected faithfully in Burma's changing political landscape.

This journey out of Burma has not been a sentimental pilgrimage to the past, but an exploration of the new opportunities at hand for the people of Burma. I have been struck throughout my trip by how extraordinarily warm-hearted and open the world has been to us.

To experience this first hand after so long physically separated from the world has been very moving. Countries that geographically are distant have shown that they are close to Burma in what really matters: They are close to the aspirations of the people of Burma. We are brought into proximity through our shared values, and no geographical distance, no human-made barriers can stand in our way.

During the years of my house arrest, it was not just the BBC and other broadcasting stations that kept me in touch with the world outside. It was the music of Mozart and Ravi Shankar and the biographies of men and women of different races and religions that convinced me I would never be alone in my struggle. The prizes and honors I received were not so much a personal tribute as a recognition of the basic humanity that unites one isolated person to the rest of the world.

During our dark days in the 1990s, a friend sent me a poem by

[Arthur Hugh Clough](#). It begins – I think many of you will know it – Say not the Struggle Naught Availeth. I understand that Winston Churchill, one of the greatest parliamentarians this world has known, used this poem as a plea to the United States to step in against Nazi Germany.

Today I want to make a rather different point that we can work together, combining political wisdom from East and West to bring the light of democratic values to all peoples in Burma and beyond.

I will just read the final verse. (I was advised that the whole poem was far too long)

*And not by eastern windows only,
When daylight comes, comes in the light;
In front the sun climbs slow, how slowly!
But westward, look, the land is bright!*

I would like to emphasize in conclusion that this is the most important time in Burma. That this is the time of our greatest need. And so I would ask that our friends both here in Britain and beyond participate in and support Burma's efforts towards the establishment of a truly just and democratic society

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to address the members of one of the oldest democratic institutions in the world. Thank you for letting me into your midst. My country has not entered the ranks of truly democratic societies but I am confident that we will get there before too long.

With your help.

Therapist: You know, we have to stop...

Austin Powers: Tell us about your childhood

In this clip from the 1997 movie '[Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery](#),' Mike Myers plays Doctor Evil describing his childhood to a therapy group

The transcript is from [FilmSite.org](#), in its fascinating Best Speeches and Monologues section, and the video is from [here](#).

Dr. Evil (Mike Myers)

Actually, the boy's quite astute. I really am trying to kill him, but so far unsuccessfully. He's quite wily, like his old man.

Scott: This is what I'm talking about.

Therapist: OK. Well, we've heard from you, Scott. Now you, tell us a little about yourself.

Dr. Evil: The details of my life are quite inconsequential.

Therapist: Oh no, please please. Let's hear about your childhood.

Group: Yeah, Come on! Of course, Please! etc.

Dr. Evil: Very well, where do I begin? My father was a relentlessly self-improving boulangerie owner from Belgium with low grade narcolepsy and a penchant for buggery. My mother was a fifteen year-old French prostitute named Chloe with webbed feet.

My father would womanize, he would drink. He would make outrageous claims like he invented the question mark. Sometimes, he would accuse chestnuts of being lazy. The sort of general malaise that only the genius possess and the insane

lament.

My childhood was typical. Summers in Rangoon, luge lessons. In the spring, we'd make meat helmets.

When I was insolent, I was placed in a burlap bag and beaten with reeds – pretty standard, really. At the age of twelve, I received my first scribe.

At the age of fourteen, a Zoroastrian named Vilma ritualistically shaved my testicles. At the age of 18, I went off to evil medical school. At the age of 25, I took up tap dancing. I wanted to be a quadruple threat – an actor, dancer...

Therapist: You know, we have to stop...