



## **INTERNATIONAL APPROACHES TO NUCLEAR & RADIOLOGICAL SECURITY**

### **RECEPTION IN HONOUR OF LADY THATCHER**

Hosted by the Institute for Applied Science  
October 2002

#### **Text of Lady Thatcher's Speech**

##### **Introduction**

Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen. It is an honour to have been asked to attend your reception this evening - though I am somewhat overawed by the expert and distinguished audience I find myself addressing.

But I have at least one advantage. I am part of that rare - indeed almost endangered breed - a politician who began her career in science.

##### **A Serious Business**

As the large than life American film producer Samuel Goldwyn once put it in his own inimitable way, ' We've got to take the atom bomb seriously- it's dynamite!'

My friends, if we only could look upon the dangers which now face us with such easy humour. But we can't.

Over the past few days you have brought your expertise to bear in a subject which should command the attention of us all: namely both the security and the potential proliferation of nuclear material.

It is a dialogue between America and Russia, which has been overdue, but we are now forging a partnership, which will bring dividends both for us and for future generations. I pay tribute to you all, but particularly tonight, to our friends from Russia. You serve not only your own nations, but all nations, by your efforts.

Today, we are making up for lost time. But have no doubt that time must be made up.

## **The Nuclear Threat**

During most of my political life the two superpowers held massive nuclear arsenals, even a small proportion of which could have inflicted untold damage in the event of a nuclear strike. But this knowledge imposed a discipline that made for a kind of stability. The rules were clear, the psychology understood and each side's sticking points known.

But today the threat is different. The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction has fundamentally changed the world in which we and our children live.

We now face the far more menacing risk that such weapons might already be in or soon fall into - the hands of a ruthless and fanatical regime.

Our first line of defence - as this conference has been debating - must be to deter, or to stop such countries from obtaining weapons of mass destruction.

But if our security and watchfulness fails, we must pursue all necessary means either to force these maverick regimes to surrender their weapons, or to neutralize their ability to use them. The choice is that stark.

## **Wishful Thinking**

When I was young there was a popular song that went:

'Wishing will make it so,  
Just keep wishing, and cares will go...  
And if you wish long enough, wish  
strong enough,  
You will come to know  
Wishing will make it so.'

But it won't.

Though we might wish for the best we must prepare for the worst, and that is where your conference could not come at a more crucial time.

Two hundred years ago, Edmund Burke, one of our country's wisest political thinkers observed: 'All that is necessary for evil to triumph is that good men do nothing'. My friends, these words have been echoed down the ages, but they have never seemed truer than today.

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