

Macmillan calls 20th a century of destruction

By HUMPHREY HAWKSLEY

Former Conservative Prime Minister Mr Harold Macmillan last night said the 20th century has been a century of destruction and the ambitions striven for in Victorian times have been proved false.

Speaking at a Foreign Correspondents Club dinner he said:

"All the dreams in which I was brought up to have faith have proved a delusion.

"It has been a century of destruction which has brought no stability and to many of us overwhelming dangers."

He said unity between nations — specifically the nations of Europe — was one of the only ways to preserve peace and rise through the "technological revolution," which could see everyone prosper.

"One of the great delusions of mankind is that you can do yourself good by injuring another man," he said.

He pointed out, however, that in this century he believes people have made "spiritual" advances.

"There is more thoughtfulness, a greater sense of unity and less class distinction."

The 85-year-old statesman who steered Britain out of the Suez crisis during the years of his leadership from 1957 to 1963 is visiting Hongkong briefly before leaving for a week-long official trip to China on behalf of his family publishing company, Macmillan Ltd.

Mr Macmillan said that only if peace can be now preserved do we have a great future.

"It will not be preserved by people passing resolutions in committees, but by strength and firmness . . . by nations standing by their own rights."

He said the recent trends of world power had been — with the exception of the Soviet Union — for areas to

break into smaller, independent units.

"The unity of great empires have gone. Empires have broken up into smaller units and the great powers are watching each other."

He described the emergence of a balance of power based on nuclear strength as "strange" and said if such weapons were ever used the consequences would be "mutually destructive."

"So great is it (nuclear force), that it is in a sense paralysing.

"Little wars can go on, but still not the great ones, because it is too big a danger."

Recalling his youth, Mr Macmillan said he was brought up in a period of "great economic stability."

"From 1814 to 1900, for 60 years, prices hardly moved, but within that period salaries doubled . . . by a true increase in productivity.

"This seemed the normal world. The European powers were more or less in a state of equilibrium."

"The Crimean War was the only war — and that was not a major war."

Then, he said, as he was about to take a trip to Switzerland, he found himself — instead — on a barrack square, preparing for World War I, which saw him wounded three times.

"The horrors that were inflicted by human beings upon

each other were tremendous," he said.

And it was this which sparked off the mutual destruction which prevailed this century.

Looking on the brighter side, Mr Macmillan praised the formation of NATO, the United Nations, the European Economic Community and similar unions.

He paid special attention to ASEAN and Southeast Asian economic treaties.

"These unions are made under pressures of peers from the outside but still they are good," he said.

Then, pausing for a moment, he asked: "How will it all end?"

"I believe that in the long run we shall prevail. The general sense of mankind is more sensitive than before. The general will of man will have a greater effect.

"It is a very strange world and very much altered from my childhood."

Throughout his speech, Mr Macmillan showed he still had the same powers of wit and oratory that earned him the title of "Unflappable Mac" during his years in 10 Downing Street.

And he skillfully dodged several questions from guests about current world events, especially those concerning affairs between China, the Soviet Union and the West.

A New World

I awoke this morning with devout thanksgiving for my friends, the old and new. Shall I not call God the Beautiful, who daily showeth himself so to me in his gifts. I chide society, I embrace solitude, and yet I am not so ungrateful as not to see the wise, the lovely and the noble-minded, as from time to time they pass my gate. Who hears me, who understands me, becomes mine—a possession for all time. Nor is Nature so poor but she gives me this joy several times, and thus we weave social threads of our own, a new web of relations; and, as many thoughts in succession substantiate themselves, we shall by and by stand in a new world of our own creation, and no longer strangers and pilgrims in a traditionary globe. My friends have to come to me unsought. The great God gave them to me.

-RALPH WALDO EMERSON-

