

ADDRESS

by

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at

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Mr. President, Trustees, Faculty and
Graduates of St. Lawrence University:

I am grateful for the honor which St. Lawrence University so generously has bestowed upon me and I am happy to be accepted as one of its Class of 1947.

This class steps from academic life into a workaday world that shudders again to hear "ancestral voices prophesying war." On the day of German surrender, forces began to realign themselves for a titanic struggle to control Central and Western Europe. It is difficult to reconcile our war, and rumors of war, with the level of educational attainment of the world brought to mind by such occasions as today. It raises the question whether the ascending level of general education in the world increases the probabilities of peace.

The enemies with whom hostilities so recently ceased were among the most literate, scientific and artistic peoples of the world. No European people could better meet a general educational test than the Germans, and no Orientals were more proficient in the Western arts and sciences than the Japanese. Barbarians no longer menace civilization, for modern war is a complicated enterprise that only a generally educated nation can manage. Hence the paradox that a people is to be feared in direct proportion to its education.

What will it profit a world to perfect itself in every science and art if it does not learn how to keep the peace? What can education contribute to that end?

I should not suppose it is open to question that when two nations have the same general outlook on life and are cultivating the same kind of civilization, improved education helps to improve relations. Understanding in specific problems is made easier between people who begin with the same underlying general assumptions. Our closest rivalry and most frequent and vital collisions of interest in the past hundred years have been with the British Empire. But they have been composed by negotiation or, in extreme cases, by arbitration. Advancing general education in both countries has contributed to a calm, dispassionate and understanding public attitude which enabled the statesmen of both nations to deal with

international controversies without panic or false alarms.

But the real test of our public education comes when we find our interests conflicting with such a people as the Nazis or the Soviets who also hold antagonistic political, legal, economic and social philosophies. When educational systems of two countries are integral parts of different types of civilization, the more either advances, the farther apart they are likely to lead their followers. It is hard to find a starting point for reconciliation between peoples who are educated in assumptions drawn from different traditions and philosophies of life.

There are enough points of similarity between the present relations of Russia to the world and those of Nazi Germany at about the time of the Austrian to make one feel uneasy lest, in time, they be similarly climaxed by world catastrophe. I suppose that Dr. Mayo, whose classmate I have the honor to be on this occasion, would consider it helpful in dealing with an obscure malignancy to have an autopsy on a person who died of a similar cause. In our dealing today with aggressive totalitarianism, we do have the benefit of a post-mortem examination at the Nurnberg trial of the causes and progress of totalitarian aggression. Captured records and witnesses laid bare the inwards of the police state and its methods of aggression. Now, I am often asked, "Has Germany learned its lesson?" I cannot be sure that she has. But the question that ought to concern us more is whether America has learned its lessons.

As a matter of fact, the United States is no more prepared intellectually to understand the problem of Russian expansion in Europe than it was to understand the Nazi expansion, and it is not much better prepared to resist its program. The reason is not far to seek. When we finally found ourselves in a struggle against the Nazi system, we accepted as allies any who also were fighting against the Nazis. It did not matter to us, in the haste and pressure of the moment, that the cause of their hostilities and their aims in victory were not the same as ours. Instead of

recognizing, as the Russians did, the opportunistic nature of our alliance with them and its illogical nature as a long-range matter, we sought to cover up our differences with bromides which never ought to have appealed to an educated public.

The sedative we took to overcome any tendency to analyze our strange partnership was the bipartisan slogan that we were all "one world." As a proposition of geography or astronomy, it was undeniable, but, as such, it was irrelevant to our political problems. Insofar as it implied unity in cultural heritage, intellectual outlook, political methods or aims or international objections¹⁴, it was sheer blarney. But it would have been impolitic for any public man to have questioned a prescription so soothing.

We now see that under the spell of this fiction the United States left understandings vague which ought to have been definite, and left differences unresolved which ought to have been settled, while we had a good bargaining position. We provided vast supplies of arms to equip the inexhaustible reserves of manpower, which was the chief asset of Russia, and she helped to force the surrender of the common enemy. Then we withdrew and demobilized most of our forces, at panic speed, leaving the mobilized Russian Armies, greatly outnumbering ours, in possession of the field and with the infinitely difficult problems of the peace unsolved. We find the ally we fostered setting up new totalitarian regimes with all of the earmarks of the old.

Now we rub our sleepy eyes and try to make out what became of this "one world." The answer is, "It was never there." The sober fact is that now, as always, East is East and West is West, and when those two worlds have appeared to meet, there was no real meeting of minds.

The Nurnberg record discloses how long and disastrously the Western World failed, in dealing with the Nazi regime, to recognize the essentially militant character of totalitarianism and its fundamental hostility to our way of life.

Whatever excuse there may have been for delay in waking up to the menace of a police state to Western democracy, none exists today. The Nurnberg trial laid bare the entire system of totalitarianism as practiced in Germany, and as it must be practiced anywhere in order to exist.

The foundation of the German dictatorship, like the foundation of every dictatorship, was the fuehrer principe, or the leadership principle, which vests absolute power in the leadership and imposes unquestioning obedience on all followers. As Goering, on cross-examination, put it, "The conduct of the government was entirely up to the Fuehrer." He testified, "So far as opposition is concerned in any form, the opposition of each individual person was not tolerated, unless it was a matter of no importance." Such a government could not exist, he admitted, except by virtue of a secret political police to ferret out opposition or dissent. And they cannot function effectively unless they are given powers of "protective custody," which Goering frankly said meant that "people were arrested and taken into protective custody who had committed no crime but of whom one could expect that if they remained in freedom they would do all sorts of things to damage the German state." But the terrorism of the police would be defeated if prisoners were allowed to be tried before independent courts, so the judiciary was deprived of all power over protective custody cases. Then arrests became so numerous that the prisons would not hold the victims and concentration camps were established in which to imprison dissenters and to exterminate enemies of the regime. That was, and is, the essential pattern of suppression followed in every authoritarian state before and since the war.

But that was not all. In addition to rigid censorship, a huge propaganua machine is operated by such a government to keep the press, radio, screen and lecture platform constantly rallying the people and, most of all, to make sure that they learn only the government's version of news from the outside world. Informa-

tion is a government monopoly. Now, I have met people who were quite pleasant to dine with who believe in this system, or at least believe it is the only kind of system possible under conditions that prevail in some countries. But no honest person can deny that such a system is irreconcilable with every principle on which our Government is founded and that the two are in permanent conflict.

But the Nurnberg record also shows that the democracies often adopt policies which play into the hands of these regimes. Totalitarianism is vastly strengthened if it can maneuver the free peoples into a position where it gains diplomatic victories over them. There was a strong underground within Germany; high-ranking military and civilian Germans secretly opposed Hitler's policy on various grounds and feared that it was leading to war. This opposition, in 1938, formed a powerful combination that was prepared to seize and destroy Hitler and the entire Nazi coterie. Whether it would have succeeded we have no way of knowing. At all events, all opposition to the dictatorship of Hitler came to a halt with the news of his bloodless victory at Munich over Chamberlain and Deladier. Most of his opponents were converted and all were awed by his success. As one witness has put it, "From this time on, you can always hear the saying, 'Well, the Fuehrer will do it somehow; he did it at Munich.'" The lesson for today is clear that nothing will build up the prestige of the Soviet dictatorship in all Europe so much as to dramatize our opposition to it if we must, at the critical moment, yield.

Another lesson that stands out in the Nurnberg record is the advantage which such a regime can take of threatening announcements by other countries. We know, from the post-mortem at Nurnberg and from other evidence, how quickly German propaganda seized upon and capitalized on the announcement at Casablanca of the formula of "unconditional surrender." Of course, it was popular here, for no American wanted to see the war end without a decisive victory, one that the Germans would know to be a defeat. But these terms were proclaimed at a time when Germany was

under no necessity to offer a surrender of any kind. Moreover, it happened to come at the very moment when the German underground had again matured a most likely plot to remove Hitler and his immediate gang from the scene and to establish a government that would be at least as democratic as anything that we have a prospect of establishing now and to end the war. Goebbels and the German propaganda machine seized upon the vagueness of this slogan and presented it as a demand for "total enslavement" and convinced the German people that it meant just that. The evidence is unanimous that, whatever effects it had elsewhere, it enormously stiffened German resistance, ended all prospect of internal revolt and united the German people under Hitler. ^{Today} The people of Russia today are war-weary, destitute, and they long for peace even as we do. Nothing would help to whip them up to endure another war like some attitude on our part that can be used to show them that they are being threatened by us.

The Nurnberg record also shows that it would be a mistake to underestimate the hospitality of the peoples of many countries toward the totalitarian system. It is not so shocking to peoples who always have known despotism, as it is to us. And some have had such corrupt, weak or unstable governments that they do not think they have much to lose by accepting dictatorship. We must not forget that one of the most effective supports of a totalitarian regime is its propaganda. It plays up every injustice in the democracies, every strife, and every weakness. It appeals to the tastes and instincts and understandings of the poor people, to whom it is addressed. By comparison with it, there is no source from which these people may learn of American ways or of our system or purposes. It simply will not do for us to act on the assumption that because our liberties, our democracy and our economic system seem good to us, they will sell themselves to the other people. We are making a miserable failure of cultivating understanding of our policies or good will toward ourselves, even among peoples of Europe who are predisposed to like the

Americans.

The Nurnberg post-mortem shows that the behavior of nations in international affairs, like that of individuals in personal affairs, is decisively influenced by the ideas inculcated by their education. The influence which brought ^{about} the criminal policy of the Nazis, easily traces back to widely-held ideas deeply imbedded in German culture.

The German people, individually, are generally industrious, self-disciplined, sober, law-abiding and home-loving. Germany is made up of many states or provinces whose inhabitants differ in origins and habits. What is it, then, that unites them into a nation that has been the most internationally lawless, aggressive, and ruthless of the Western World? I think the answer must be sought in their cultural background which, even more than their unified government, gave them social cohesion.

German education, like the German mind, is practical, scientific, precise, efficient and experimentally inclined. At the same time, it is imaginative and gives away to a cult of mysticism not much above superstition. The Germans saw themselves, despite different origins, welded into a volk, or folk, in which each German shared. They are romantic about its origins and passionate about its destiny, and all who are outside of this circle are considered inferiors and properly subject to exploitation.

The state, with the Germans, is the mystical implement of the volk in maintaining its solidarity and achieving its destiny in the world. To this end, the individual must completely subordinate himself to the state and make his uttermost contribution of strength, hardness, virility and obedience to it. Militarism and socialism alike fit into the volk lore. Centralization of power, mobilization and discipline combined, are the practical means to attain visionary ends. Authoritarianism, anti-semitism and expansionism are all embraced in this

tradition.

Do you remember how many years we made fun of Hitler? To us, with our matter-of-fact attitudes, he never ceased to be a bit ridiculous. Even at Nurnberg, after we knew his bloody record, I always had an impulse to laugh when the film evidence showed him with the pageantry of Nazidom, ranting to his followers. But no matter how much they opposed him, Germans did not laugh at him. In his setting of German ideology he might be dangerous, but he was not funny. We Americans did not so much fail to understand Hitler as we failed to understand the Germania mysticism and ambition to which he appealed.

Today, I do not think we Americans comprehend any better the Slavic cultural background, or pan-Slavic ambitions, with which the Russian totalitarianism is so successful. We judge the motives and strength of Stalin, Molotov and Vashinsky, not by the standards of the people to whom they are addressing themselves but by the standards of our own country. What may appeal to us as a weak or intolerable position in the light of our history and tradition, may make a strong appeal to those who have the viewpoint of Poland, Hungary, or the Balkan States.

In our Western concept of democracy, quite contrary to the Eastern usage of the same term, it is quite right that our foreign policy be subject to popular control. But if foreign policies are to be shaped to win approval of domestic opinion, it becomes vital that our public opinion be an informed one. If we are to become the leader in world affairs which many envision, we must expand our educational horizons accordingly. Prejudice and parochialism can put us behind an iron curtain as dangerous to our security as censorship barriers to understanding can be to other nations.

The Nurnberg trial demonstrates that great chasms between Soviet and American philosophy can be bridged in concrete situations. In day to day

cooperation we reconciled the conflicts between the Soviet law and procedure and our own so as to cooperate in a single prosecution of Nazi war criminals. It would be idle to pretend that we did not have times of difference, tension and vexation. But the steadfast purpose to prove the possibility of successful international cooperation in use of the litigation process always found ways to overcome obstacles. We have shown the nations of the world that despite differences of language, history, legal tradition and political philosophy, we can unite in workable legal procedures. The world knows that wherever the hearing and adjudicative process is appropriate to settle controversy, it can be made to work if the nations concerned have the will to do so.

In the broader fields of endeavor, I think education can go far -- much farther than it yet has -- to teach our people to shun half-truths and slogans as substitutes for understanding. It can stimulate a wholesome curiosity which will seek to learn more of the culture, traditions and aspirations of those whose systems we oppose. It can teach us better use of our critical faculties on our own, as well as on our adversary's, position. Education can be made our best assurance that we will not stray from paths of reason and of peace.

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