

THE PROSPECT BEFORE US

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History repeats itself—and right now history is in one of those cycles which has always before led to great wars. It is our job—and our responsibility—to defeat this analogy of history.

IT IS NOT EASY to talk to a graduating class today. The world of action into which you are now going is not a joyous one. Your country is at war—not full out war, but still grievous war. And overhanging you, and all of us, is the seemingly irreconcilable struggle between Communism and freedom, with its menace of even greater conflict.

Many of you will be called upon to put aside your personal life and your professional career to serve your country. Even those of you who will not serve in the armed forces will be required, by your sense of obligation, to devote much to the problem of your country in its time of crisis.

Events have been behaving badly for the past 80 years; by which I mean that history is in one of those cycles which Arnold Toynbee has called a time of troubles, a time in which the rivalries of states reach a boiling condition which, so far in history, has led only to great wars.

It is our job to defeat this analogy of history. It is the opportunity of the United States as the leader of the free world to see to it that this time history does not follow this old and dismal pattern. We can succeed in doing this. It is your opportunity to play your part in the great adventure.

Pure and applied science has had a good deal to do

with getting us into our present troubles. It is science which has developed the weapons which are about to destroy our civilization unless we can learn to control them.

The cardinal political fact today is that war is no longer a bearable institution. We often forget that this was not always so. Indeed, it is only in the last few years of history that it has been so.

The story of how science made war unbearable is simple. It is that the weapons which man uses have increased geometrically in their power while the political institutions by which man governs himself have stood almost still.

The spreading apart of these two lines—the line of man's capacity to injure himself with the weapons he makes and the line of man's progress in the political institutions by which he governs himself—this divergence is the tragedy of today. The depth and seriousness of the crisis can be measured by the divergence of the two lines. And the seriousness is such as to raise the question whether civilization will survive unless we pull these diverging lines together.

Only a little more than a century and a half ago, before the French Revolution began, war—though horrible—did not raise the issue of survival. A war decided whether there would be a gain or a loss in territorial or

political prestige for the warring family dynasties which then ruled the western world, but it did not raise the question whether one or the other side was to survive.

War then was an extension of the foreign policy of the ruling houses of Europe. One of the rules of the game, of which there were many, was that you didn't entirely destroy the fellow whom you beat.

This was, by modern standards, a happy state of affairs. The political institution—rule by the family monarchy—was able to control the weapons of war as they then were.

Science and War

In the little more than a hundred and fifty years, war has been transformed into the horrible thing it is today.

We cannot chalk up to the credit, or debit, of science the first great advance that was made. We can charge, or credit science with the final steps which have made war what it now is, but not with the first step.

Before the French Revolution, armies were largely professional and small in numbers. The French Revolution injected the idea of the whole nation rising up in arms to defend itself against the aggressor.

This was a noble idea—the whole people rising to protect their patrimony. It was the sister principle to another great idea—the idea of universal suffrage. But it is a depressing fact that both these great principles were distorted when they fell into the hands of evil men. Universal suffrage in the hands of the dictators became a trick to destroy liberty. The nation in arms, in the hands of aggressors, became a terrible weapon with which to attack one's neighbor.

And, unfortunately, with the growth of this terrible weapon came the growth in applied science for destruction—gradual at first during the 19th century, increasing under the stimulus of the two world wars, and finally culminating into the utterly devastating power which science has now added to the nation in arms.

By the time World War I began, science's new machine guns and artillery had equipped the mass armies with terrible new weapons. By the time World War II was over, science had done the job most thoroughly. Man now had tanks, radar and other electronic devices, recoilless weapons, artillery of a type never before conceived, guided missiles, and those two terrible weapons which were to make the dose complete—the airplane and the weapons of nuclear power. The combination of the mass army and the products of science has now definitely made war incompatible with the survival of society.

All of this has put the United States in a serious dilemma. Wars always speed up the process of change. The two world wars not only made a great acceleration in the development of weapons, but also made great political, economic, and social changes.

One of these changes was to catapult the United States into the position of leadership in the free world and to put on our shoulders much of the responsibility

of the decision whether the free world is to be destroyed or is to go on to a greater and fuller future than any society has ever had.

Since you are about to take your place in the midst of the problems of America today, this dilemma and this responsibility of your country are most definitely your concern.

As technicians you will have to play a heavy role in preparing the defenses of the United States and the rest of the free world.

The armed services will turn to you for help in the building of these defenses. On you will fall much of the burden of seeing to it that the quality of our defenses is always superior to that of any possible enemy.

It is you who will have to see to it that our tanks, airplanes, and ships are better than anyone else's, that our radar is the best and that inventiveness and daring are brought to bear so that the new weapons of this rapidly moving era are in our hands and not in the hands of those who might be our enemies.

I suggest that you approach this task with a sense of humility. There is too much willingness today to underestimate the capabilities—and especially the engineering capabilities—of the Iron Curtain world. There is a smugness in the West which has led many to believe that it was we alone who had the engineering capacity to produce the best weapons of modern war.

I don't know how many times we have to learn the lesson that this is not always so—that we can maintain our superiority in this field only by always questioning our own progress. "He who thinks he knows, has ceased to learn."

A Necessary Sense of Humility

There is no doubt about the high ability of our men of science and those who have to make workable instruments out of the basic theories. We can be superior to all possible enemies in our technical output—provided that we are not over-confident and do not think that there is something God-given in us which allows us to get results without putting into our work everything we have. We must go about our work with a sense of humility and full recognition of the stiffness of the competition.

It is not just in the area of your chosen profession that your task lies. For the work of building the defenses of the free world is not just a matter of material things. There must be a determination on the part of this country to stick to the job for as long as it has to be done, and a like determination on the part of our allies in the free world, if we are to succeed.

Specifically, we have got to get ourselves ready for a long period of a steadily sustained posture of defense.

This burden is going to fall largely on our own country, for although we did not seek it and do not want it, we have had the leadership of freedom put upon us.

Let us look at some of the tasks which lie ahead. In the first place, we have to maintain our armament pro-

gram at a steady level. We cannot allow our armaments to vary with the vagaries of the international scene. We hope that some day the governments of the world will put teeth into a plan for enforcing the peace, and we are working now to achieve this end. But until it is accomplished we must not vary the intensity of our military effort in accordance with the shifts in the news in the morning newspaper.

There is danger that if the international scene improves, if Korea is settled, if there is an apparent ending to or interlude in Communist aggressions, we shall feel that we can afford to relax in our military strength. Especially will this be true as the full impact of this military spending becomes clear, as it is not now clear, to the American people.

It is relatively easy to make sacrifices when the situation is as it is today, with this dreadful fighting going on in Korea, with the Communists claiming control of Tibet's foreign relations and defense, and with the uncertainties in Iran and in other parts of the world. But it will not be easy if—possibly as part of a calculated scheme—the Communists decide to make things look better for a while. Then is the time when our steadiness will be called upon.

Toward a Unified Foreign Policy

Then, too, we must not be torn by divisions at home in matters of foreign policy. This is not to say that debate is not a good thing. On the contrary, no sustained posture in international relations is possible in this country unless the people have fully debated the issues and have made up their minds what should be done after hearing all sides of the problem.

But once the debate is over and the consensus arrived at, then is the time to bury all the sharp things that may have been said in the course of the debate and to come out for a unified policy for America.

This is what was done in the debate as to our participation in NATO and in the defense of Western Europe. The same thing is being evolved and will, I believe, result in the same kind of agreed policy as to our military and political purposes in the East.

Specifically, I believe that our Korean policy should and has become firmer as a result of the debate which is now going on.

I happen to believe that the intervention by the United States and the other members of the United Nations to stop the North Korean aggression was a necessary and wise thing to do. Some may disagree. But the point is that those who approve this policy and those who disapprove it will all have had their say, and out of it will come, and has I think about come now, a united policy backed by the entire country.

I believe that the intervention in Korea took the United Nations at a turning point in its career and gave it a vitality which promises great things for the future. I believe that if we had sat by in frustrated fashion while the North Korean troops destroyed South Korea, right

under the noses of the greatest concentration of American military power outside the United States, the United Nations would have catapulted rapidly downhill. I believe that our intervention not only prevented this catastrophe but held out hopes—to be sure, not conclusive hopes—that the United Nations would become an instrument for the collaboration of the free world in stopping aggression everywhere.

It may seem to you that the prospect of maintaining indefinitely a defense force, at huge expense to the taxpayer and great inconvenience to the citizen, in the hope that some day the Communists may realize that they will not be able to destroy us, is a dismal prospect.

Dismal or not, we will have to do this. For if there is anything on which we are all agreed, it is that we are going to do whatever is necessary to have the kind of military establishment we need to deter the Communists from attacking and to be able to take care of ourselves if they do attack.

There is, though, something that will help us in doing this job. The United States, in the position of world leadership into which it has been put, has another arrow to its bow—one which has elements of high hope.

It is nothing less than the determination of this country to close the gap of which I have spoken—to bring into bearable balance the weapons man has and the political arrangements by which he controls them.

Few great nations in history have sought to avoid war more earnestly than this country of ours.

This country has always tried to keep out of wars. And when we were drawn into them, we did our best in the peace settlements to set up new relationships between nations with the hope of getting rid of the institution of war itself.



Secretary Finletter holds a brief press conference on campus just before delivering his Commencement address

This we did after World War I. It was an American president who largely inspired the League of Nations. Although we did not join in the effort to make the league a success, the fact remains that we had much to do in setting it up.

The same was true of World War II. It was with American leadership that the United Nations was established; and it is with American leadership that the first great effort to give vitality to the United Nations is being carried on in Korea.

Our ideals go beyond this.

The conferees at the San Francisco conference which set up the United Nations did not know that the atomic bomb had been perfected.

Soon this knowledge came to a startled world and the United States took the leadership once more in doing something about meeting this new and terrible danger. The President of the United States called a meeting of himself and the foreign ministers of the United Kingdom and Canada in Washington in the fall of 1945. Out of this meeting came the atomic declaration of November 1945, in which a great purpose was stated. It was to set up a fool-proof system of security which would enable the nations to eliminate from their armaments the new weapons of mass destruction—not only the atomic bomb but all the other developments of applied science which had made war the intolerable institution that it is.

Again, it was under the leadership of the American Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, that the Moscow declaration of December 1945 was made. The Moscow declaration was word for word the atomic declaration of the preceding November, except that this time Russia joined in and agreed to go forward with the program.

Again it was under American leadership that the general assembly in January of 1946 adopted these great principles and announced it as the purpose of all the United Nations to eliminate from their arsenals the mass weapons of destruction under a fool-proof system of security.

Again it was American leadership which produced another of the great state papers on this subject—the report of the Secretary of State's committee of April, 1946, in which detailed proposals for the elimination of atomic weapons from national armaments were made—including an elaborate system of inspection and control. This was the first step in detailed planning for the great purpose of eliminating war by banning, under a fool-proof system, the weapons which make war.

We all know what happened. The Communists blocked every effort to carry out the great principles of the atomic declaration, the Moscow declaration and the general assembly resolution.

There was no alternative for the United States. We had to rearm.

The United States and the rest of the free world thus has on its books a pair of apparently inconsistent policies. Our fundamental purpose is a world of peace under enforced disarmament. But side by side with

this fundamental purpose goes our policy of being strong and of playing our part in building up the strength of the free world so that we shall be safe while we are working for peace and so that by our military power we shall make it clear to our possible enemies that it would be a mistake to attack us.

There is in fact no inconsistency between these two policies. Our policy of rearmament is a half way house—an intermediate point in the seeking of our final objective—a world of peace under enforced disarmament.

Peace Can Be Won

It can be and is argued that it is mere words and not a facing up of facts to talk of peace with the world the way it is today. It is argued that the Communists have shown finally that they will have none of any peaceful solution; that war is therefore inevitable; and therefore that our talk of peace is mere words.

This is definitely not so. It is true that the situation looks sombre. But it is still an American aspiration to use its leadership and strength not for self-aggrandizement, not for the perpetuation of war, but to show that the use of military power is not the way to settle things.

And if you question the realism of all this, I submit that anything is realistic if you believe in it enough. We in this country do believe that war is not inevitable. We believe that peace can be had. The people believe it and the government believes it. As recently as last October the President, speaking before the United Nations, restated this objective of enforced and fool-proof disarmament. He did not speak in generalities. He made specific and detailed proposals as to the kind of plan which the United States would be willing to accept. These proposals are on the record as the great aspiration of this country.

In short, you, as you enter on the scene of action, will have before you the prospect not only of a determined America, ready to do what may be necessary to defend itself, but also of an America working for the great ideal of a decent world at peace.

I am not saying that the prospect which lies before you is easy and agreeable. The future is difficult and dark. The threat of war is overhanging us all. The future of our search for peace is uncertain.

But there is no question about one point—the great opportunity which lies before you as the future leaders of America.

Justice Holmes said that to live was to function. You will have your opportunity to function. There is no doubt about your chance to serve, and about the challenge of the task which lies ahead of you.

You are coming into your own at a time when the stakes are the highest in our history, when success will give us the greatest prize our country has ever worked for, but when failure may mean the end of our society and all that our forefathers have achieved. There is before you the highest opportunity for service any generation of Americans has ever had.