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Taking Stock of 1949, 1950.

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TAKING STOCK OF 1949

Sunday, January 1, 1950

The year 1949 which has ended was not resonant of many important historic events. From that point of view, it was a good year, for in our age important historical events are, as a rule, of a calamitous nature. Blessed is the people that has no history, someone said a long time ago. A people whose life is calm and undisturbed, and whose citizens are permitted to pursue the even tenor of their lives undramatically and unsensationally is, in all probability, a people without history, but a people with a great deal of contentment and happiness.

I believe that our age would be grateful for a little respite from history. Our people would welcome a long period of unsensational living. It is to me a good sign when the front pages of our newspapers are not exciting, or when the editors have to work hard in order to sublimate for circulation needs a little ripple of an event into one which sweeps and echoes round the world. No news is good news.

In this sense, the year '49 was a relatively good year. At home, here in our beloved country, our people were at work. Unemployment was relatively small. Business was good. Business soon recovered from the temporary recession in the spring of the year, and our government stimulated that recovery by loosening its credit controls and by increased expenditures for armament and foreign aid. The national income for the year 1949 is estimated at 222 billions of dollars, just 2% less than the peak income for the year 1948.

There were some disturbing strikes during the year - the coal strike, the steel strike, the strike at Ford's. Two of them were soon settled; one is yet to be settled, but none of them seriously damaged American economy during the year '49. As a result of the steel strike, one-half million men in industry are now assured of a minimum pension at the age of 65, of \$100 a month. I am persuaded that the pension idea will come to embrace all industry sooner or later, and I rather think sooner than later. All industry and all American working men. I doubt that the argument that such pensions have a tendency to discourage thrift and personal savings

and to undermine self-reliance - I doubt whether this argument has much validity to it. Were every American working man assured of a saving wage - that is, of a wage sufficient for that of his livelihood, that of his family, and at the same time sufficient to permit him to save something out of his pay envelope every week - I say, were every American working man assured of that kind of a saving wage which would justify the thought that he himself should provide for his own old age, a case may be made against pensions, but that, of course, is not the case. So that the outcome of the steel strike in terms of the popularization of the idea of pensions for working men - old age pensions - is, in my humble judgment, a distinct gain for American life, and in the long run, for American economy.

In September of 1949 Great Britain devaluated the pound, you will recall, and that was soon followed by a similar action on the part of other countries. The effects of this devaluation, if any, are not yet discernible in the American economy because of the many artificial stimulations which our economy has received, as I said a moment ago, at the hands of our government. But the fact should not be overlooked that Great Britain's devaluation of the pound at the close of the third decade was one of the major contributions to the economic collapse of our country in the years between 1929 and 1933. And I'm afraid that we have not as yet felt the impact, the full impact, of the widening circle of economic influence and consequences of the devaluation of the British pound.

While our country has been exceedingly prosperous during the past year, our national, our public debt has nevertheless continued to mount. In 1948 our public debt amounted to some 252 billions of dollars. At the close of 1949 the estimate is that our public debt amounts to some \$256,000,000,000, a per capita of nearly \$1,740 for every man, woman and child in the United States. And while it is true that our government owes this money to its own people and not to foreign governments, nevertheless the very disturbing question remains, how long can the government keep up spending more than its income without ultimately finding itself confronted with the dangerous necessity of either repudiating its debt entirely or im-

posing such heavy taxation upon its people, which will be a crushing burden upon them and might cripple the economic life and enterprise of that people. The experiences of European countries in the last few decades with these colossal debts are not such as to encourage any optimism on the part of our own people here.

The most important development during the past year in the foreign policy of our country is represented in the signing of the North Atlantic Pact with 10 nations of Western Europe and of Canada, a pact aimed at concerted military action in case of attack directed, of course, against aggression on the part of the Soviet Union. The North Atlantic Pact means that our country must come automatically to the military assistance of any country signatory to this pact which is attacked. This pact signed last year is the inevitable follow-up to the so-called Truman Doctrine which was inaugurated, as you may recall, in the case of Greece in 1947 and which was aimed at the spread of Communism and which provided military and economic aid for nations striving to maintain their freedom and independence, as was stated at the time of the enunciation of this doctrine.

I have on previous occasions discussed the implications both of the Truman Doctrine and of the North Atlantic Pact, and my one comment this morning is to call attention to the fact that it represents a most radical and most decisive departure in our traditional foreign policy, a radical break with the past, that we have set ourselves up as the guardian of the peace and the freedom of the world which means that we shall be involved in every political conflict and issue and in every war from here on; that we have ourselves assumed a responsibility which rightly belongs to the United Nations; that we have now undertaken the grave and taxing responsibility of arming half the world against the other half. And in 1949 we voted the first huge sum for the arming of the Atlantic Pact nations, a sum of over one thousand millions of dollars, which sum is likely, of course - this is the nature of all such things - to grow from year to year.

On the international stage the most impressive single fact of 1949 was the Communist victory in China, and the collapse of the corrupt regime of Chiang-Kai-Shek. This astounding and colossal victory of the Communist forces in China and the establishment of a Communist regime in practically the whole of China, embracing over three hundreds of millions of people, is bound to have a decisive effect upon the whole of the Far East. It will certainly stimulate Communist thinking and Communist propaganda in India and in the rest of Asia.

The one serious question in connection with the Communist victory in China is, of course, whether Communist China will go its own way, as Tito's Yugoslavia is going its own way, an independent Communist state, or whether it will take orders from an expansionist-minded and nationalistic Moscow. The United States is learning to get along with Communist states. Our recent aid to Tito is an indication that we have reconciled ourselves to the fact that for a long time to come there will be Communist states in the world with which we shall have to live in the same world, and we cannot destroy them. What we are concerned about is whether these Communist states intend to remain within their own borders or to carry on aggressive, undermining propaganda in other countries, non-Communist. From this point of view it would be highly desirable for the United States quickly to recognize China as India has done, as Great Britain is about to do, and to try to win it as a friend of the United States. Any attempt to destroy Communist China would, in my judgment, be a disastrous blunder, even as Hitler's disastrous blunder when he attempted to destroy Communist Russia.

Throughout 1949 the cold war raged over the face of the earth. In January of last year Stalin again indicated a willingness to talk about a peace pact with President Truman. He had made a similar offer before. Neither offer was taken up. Recently on the occasion of his 70th birthday another feeler was put out by authoritative Soviet sources. We preferred not to explore the possibilities of talking things over with Stalin. We preferred to go on with an intensification of the cold war.

Senator John Foster Dulles, who is in the Senate, in his maiden speech in support of the North Atlantic Pact made the following statement which is very disturbing and disconcerting: He said, "At Paris last month there was some discussion as to whether to accept at all the Soviet-proffered truce and to resume, even on a tentative basis, four-power consultations. The reason was that some feared any relaxation of East-West tension would bring a corresponding relaxation on the part of the American people, and therefore they needed to be kept artificially alarmed.

"That thesis," said Senator Dulles, "I may say, we rejected. We believed that the American people could be trusted with the truth and that they would see that even if the ~~peril~~ peril in Europe seems less imminent, still the European Recovery Program and the North Atlantic treaty could not now be abandoned without consequences of the gravest character."

Now this astounding revelation is that certain persons representing our government at Paris felt that the American people "needed to be kept artificially alarmed" - has since been confirmed also by the Secretary of State Acheson. This ought to give us pause. It seems as if this anti-Communist propaganda is kept alive in the United States not merely because of the threat of Communism, but because it serves other rations to keep the American people frightened in order that they could come to the Treasury of the United States and annually receive a handout for their own purposes. And you will find that whenever such a time arrives when either Great Britain or some other country in Europe is contemplating a raid on the American treasury, suddenly the whole press of America becomes filled with reports of the imminent threat to America at the hands of the Soviet Union.

In spite of the lifting of the Berlin blockade in May of last year the relationships between the East and West worsened. The Soviet Union went ahead with building up its military strength and consolidating its control in Eastern Europe, and the West, of course, consummated its consolidation in the North Atlantic Pact. The West established the Federal Republic of Germany, and the East established the German Democratic Republic. And in this regard, if I may be pardoned for expressing

a personal opinion, it is all to the good of the world that Germany be kept divided that way, for as long as Germany is divided there will be peace in Europe. As soon as Germany is united, we are on the eve of the Third World War.

A serious jolt to our foreign policy in relation to the Soviet Union resulted from the announcement of President Truman in September that an atomic explosion had taken place in the USSR; in other words, that Russia now has the atomic bomb. As a result we have now to reconsider the entire situation, and a new statesmanship and a new foreign policy are now indicated. At the moment the minds of the Russian peoples and the peoples of the satellite states are being subjected to an intensive anti-Western and anti-American propaganda of the most outrageous sort. Those peoples are being isolated intellectually, culturally, even scientifically from the rest of the world. And we, in the democratic countries, are being subjected to a continuous anti-Russian propaganda which in 1949 in the United States was climaxed in the trial of the eleven Communist leaders in New York which resulted in their conviction in October of 1949.

I am rather of the conviction that I am not a student of law. I am of the belief that these convictions will not be sustained in the higher courts.

The Catholic Church has done its share to keep this cold war alive, and at fever pitch. Time and again the Pope of Rome has called for an all-out war against atheistic, materialistic Russia. The trials of Cardinal Mindszenty in Hungary and of other priests and religious leaders, and the difficulties between the Church and the government of Czechoslovakia resulting in the excommunication of government officials in Czechoslovakia have served as texts for intensive anti-Soviet propaganda in the United States. And at the moment/ⁱⁿ this conflict between the East and the West there is nothing but fog, no light. We are at a dead end.

There were some bright lights on the international horizon in the year 1949. The establishment of the independent United States of Indonesia after 347 years of Dutch rule is an achievement of utmost significance, not alone for the peoples of that part of the world, but for the whole of mankind. It marks the beginning of the end, of the final end, of all colonialism in the world.

The new state of Israel was admitted to the United Nations in 1949. Although in the last month, at the closing of the year an unwise decision was made by the members of the United Nations in ordering the establishment of the permanent international regime over the city of Jerusalem. I believe that the United Nations will wish to reconsider that decision before long, but it was an unwise decision to attempt to impose an international regime on the inhabitants of a community, none of whom wants that regime, neither Jew nor Arab.

It is a question whether the year 1949 actually closed the first half century or not. There has been a hot dispute in the press about it. Nevertheless everybody has acted as though today marks the end of one half of the century. One, of course, is very much tempted to comment upon the years just closed. I have covered some of the ground, some of you may recall, a few weeks ago in the two lectures which I gave on "A Hundred Years of European History" and "A Hundred Years of American History". But I should like to make one or two comments at this time.

This has been perhaps the most revolutionary half-century in the whole history of mankind. It ushered in the flying age and the atomic age. It gave us the wireless, the radio and the television. Einstein radically altered our conceptions of the physical universe, and Freud, our conceptions of the psychological universe.

Epochal advances were made in every field of science, in medicine and health standards and education. It's been an astounding half-century! It witnessed the collapse of empires, ancient empires, vast transformations to the map of the world. It saw the rise of the United States to a position of political and economic pre-eminence in the world which it did not have at the turn of the century. It witnessed

the rise of Russia to a position of the second most powerful government in the world, a position which it did not have at the turn of the century. It saw the rise of a new barbarism in Fascism and Naziism and their defeat in war. It saw the rise of a new colossal dictatorship in terms of Communist Russia undefeated in war, and today bestriding the world like a collosus.

This last 100 years ~~p~~ half of 100 years - witnessed the two bloodiest wars of all time and the disruption and disorganization of the world, many revolutions and many civil wars. It witnessed also two ineffectual efforts at world organization, pacification of mankind, the League of Nations and the United Nations. It saw the most frightful race for armament that the world has ever seen. It's too early to take stock of that half-century, but certain thoughts are inevitable as we look back over these years, and one of them is that we are amazed that mankind was able to survive the titantic ~~disrup~~ disruptions and disorganizations of the last five decades, that it was able to survive these murderous aberrations of Fascism and Naziism and Communism and their attack upon civilization. To me, it is an amazing fact having experienced, as many of you did, the two World Wars which were shattering in every department of human life everywhere. One is staggered when one looks back upon the unbridled and unleashed cruelty which swept over mankind in the last 50 years. This ferocity which we thought belonged to the Dark Ages and to the far-off past of mankind suddenly looming up, a ferocity used and developed and exploited by governments, this organized effort on the part of great peoples to break entirely with their past, to wipe out the traditions of the past, to wipe out all those moral and ethical concepts which we identify with the idea of the Judeo-Christian tradition in the modern world. And as a result of all that, man today finds himself frightened and insecure in spite of the monumental achievements in nearly every field of science.

There is no optimism in the world today. I think that's perhaps the most disheartening fact to be noted as the first half of the 20th century closes. There is no optimism in the world today. There was in the 19th century - there was at the

close of the 19th century - an amazing optimism. Everybody assumed that we were moving to the far-off, divine event to which the whole creation moved - automatic progress. Herbert Spencer stated that "progress is not an accident, but a necessity...Always towards perfection is the mighty movement, toward a complete development and a more unmixd good." That was the uplifting mood of the 19th century. They were sure of progress, sure that man was mounting continuously, higher and higher upon the rungs of civilization towards greater peace, towards greater security, greater goodness in the world. Today we are not only not sure of progress, we are not sure of survival. Today we are more impressed by the malevolence of science than we are by its beneficence. We don't know where we are going, nor why. And I believe that the reason for it, of course, is to be found, as the basis for all fundamental changes for life are to be found, in wrong ideas. When moral absolutes are abandoned, then other absolutes fill in the vacuum, state absolutes, political absolutes, machine absolutes. The 19th century accepted basic moral principles, and on the basis of these moral principles, it moved forward. The early 20th century undermined the authority of these moral principles. The undigested new ideas in the fields of psychology, of religious relativism have shaken the confidence of men in the basic moral foundations upon which human society alone can be built. As a result, new claims based upon moral anarchy and the repudiation of moral ideals have invaded the world, taken hold of society.

I should like to read a sentence or two from a very stimulating article which appeared recently in the New York Times and which summarizes some of these ideas.

The breakdown of the fabric of international law began with the First World War; the breakdown of standards of morality long taken for granted can be traced back to the end of the 19th century. A generation which had lost respect for - had lost even acquaintance with - the sanctions of morality found it possible to commit the hideous crimes that forever stain the history of the Second World War, making it the most brutal of all wars. And closely connected with the breakdown of authority was that irrationality which emerged in the early years of the century, and particularly in Central Europe. A philosophy of determinism, a philosophy of might, a philosophy of irrationalism, destroyed the notion of the dignity of the individual and unhinged reason itself.

Such phenomena as the persecution of the Jews, the wanton bombing of civilians, the torture camps, cannot be explained on purely nationalistic or militaristic grounds: we must go to philosophy or to the repudiation of philosophy for their explanation. If life had, indeed, no meaning other than the meaning of today's pleasure; if man was of no consequence; if there were no moral standards that anyone needed to observe; if the struggle was to the strong and the cunning and the rewards wholly material and secular, then the Hitlers and the Mussolinis, the Russian commissars and the Japanese militarists were acting logically enough.

They were acting - most of them are still acting - in the same barbarian logic which has given us the kind of a half-century which we experienced.

What is the hope for the future? Is there hope for the future? I believe there is. And the hope lies in the spirit of man which frequently goes astray, which frequently is misled, which frequently is overwhelmed, but which somehow, as always in the past, asserts itself again and begins to grope its way back towards sanity, towards justice, towards compassion, towards the good society. That spirit of man, which is the spark of God in man, has not been extinguished in spite of all that's happened, and here and there, in this group or in that group, in this part of the world or in that part of the world, that spirit is still burning and men and women are trying to kindle it into a greater and greater light for the illumination of the dark places of the world. The salvation of mankind lies in nursing this spirit, giving all to the light of the human spirit everywhere so that the darkness which has settled upon our world may ultimately be dispelled.

The last half 100 years have not at all been a total loss for mankind. A great deal of progress was made in the fields of education, in the ~~fields of~~ fields of raising the standard of life for great masses of the world, and what has been accumulated in terms of knowledge, of truth, of science, that remains as the treasured possession of the human race for all times. What is needed now is the strengthening of the moral hand of mankind to guide these tremendous powers which have been made available to it in the right direction so that it will lead not to destruction, but to the advancement of human society.

I am hoping for a spiritual revival, a spiritual evangelism, a spiritual crusade in the next half hundred years because that alone can save our world. As we have been moving, we are definitely moving to the abyss. There's no doubt about it. But we need not inevitably move to the abyss. Nobody has underwritten human progress; certainly nobody has underwritten human annihilation. Nothing is inevitable. Nothing is foredoomed. It is all within man, in his power. "Behold, I have set before you this day life and death. Choose life!" And the best minds of the world ought to turn from here on away from all ^{concentration} ~~conservation~~ in the Laboratory towards greater concentration in the school and in the church and synagogue and in the home, in the moral relationships of human beings. If that will be done, as I hope it will be done, then we can look forward to the next half one hundred years with a certain degree of optimism and faith.

