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Whither America?, 1951.

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WHITHER AMERICA?

January 28, 1951

My dear friends, the American people have for some time now been engaged in a great debate on the foreign policy of our government, and on its outcome depend, in my judgment, the security, the safety of our country, and the peace of the world. A sharp division of opinion has been manifest among our people. Some have been and are very critical of the conduct of our foreign affairs by the President and by the Secretary of State. Others have defended it. Some have called for the resignation of Mr. Acheson. Others have demanded that the American people should be more fully informed about our foreign policy and more closely consulted, through their representatives in Congress, before major international decisions are made, especially such decisions as involve military action and the sending of American troops overseas.

There has been widespread dissatisfaction with the entire Korean affair and with our handling of the explosive issues of China and Formosa. Many of our people have been confused and have been rendered unhappy by the sudden shifts and shuffles and inconsistencies of our position in the United Nations and by the refusal of friendly nations, our presumptive allies, to follow the leadership of our country in the United Nations.

Let no one, however, dear friends, be confused or misled by the character of this division of opinion among our people. This division of opinion betokens no fundamental lack of unity among our citizens, no lack of patriotism or loyalty, and no political immaturity, as some people imagine. On the issue of making America strong and secure, on the issue of defending our free and democratic institutions, there is no division of opinion among our people whatsoever. In the kind of a world in which we live, so perilous and so insecure, where tyranny so often preys upon weakness, our intelligent citizens fully realize that it would be suicidal folly for our country not to be on guard, not to be alert, and not to be prepared. All that our people ask is that the sacrifices which they are asked to make in substance, in service and in blood should not be wasted and squandered either by governmental improvidence or by military incompetence.

Nor, dear friends, is there any serious division of opinion among our people concerning America's role in world affairs. There are very few people indeed who counsel total withdrawal and isolationism. Neither Mr. Hoover nor Senator Taft nor even former Ambassador Kennedy advocates total withdrawal and isolationism. Even Mr. Kennedy, who seems to be the spokesman for the most extreme position, would not deny all American military aid to Europe. "If the weakened European nations," he declared, "wish to hold their line (that is, the line on the Elbe and the line on the Rhine against Russia) and demonstrate a determination to do so, it may be that we can afford them some help." He argues, as others argue, that we should concentrate our strength and our resources to defend this hemisphere and the seas which surround it. The points that count in a realistic defense of America - and that should be the primary consideration, he maintains, and others likewise - the points that count in a realistic defense system of our country are Canada, Iceland, the Caribbean and Latin America.

Now, there can be a reasonable difference of opinion as to where our first line of defense lies, and it is not entirely a military question. It is not entirely a question of military judgment, which by the way, can be quite as fallible as political judgment. Both must be considered in the final decision. Global military strategy today - and wars today are global wars or the prelude to global wars - global military strategy today cannot be planned without reference to the political constellation of our world, and should not be planned without considering the political consequences which must emerge from it. Now, those of our citizens who advocate a concentration upon the defense of the Western Hemisphere and its surrounding seas rather than "scattering our armament over the globe" may be right or they may be wrong, but they are not isolationists and they are not appeasers. Nor are those of our citizens who urge that we withhold large-scale military support to the Atlantic Pact countries until we are assured of their readiness and determination to assume primary responsibility for their own military defense - I say, these citizens, too, are neither isolationists nor appeasers.

There has been a great misunderstanding about the concept of international co-operation. International cooperation does not call for global meddling on our part, for policing the whole world all by ourselves, for making commitments which we cannot fulfill, or for marching in shining armor to destroy Communism wherever it raises its head. That is not necessarily international cooperation. That may be called global meddling. Nor is the choosing of your own ground and your own time and conserving your strength for the awaited and final battle, rather than draining your strength in numerous preliminary and inconclusive engagements at the behest of some skillfully maneuvering adversary - I say, that, too, is not appeasement or isolationism. And generally speaking we ought not make this debate difficult by injecting into it ill defined epithets and unanalyzed slogans which becloud rather than clarify thinking.

Very few people in our country indeed are thinking today of America without allies, of America standing alone and aloof, isolated from world concern and world responsibilities. Nothing in the record of recent years - the record of our country - the more than 50 billions of dollars which our country gave through a variety of grants in recent years to assist in the economic rehabilitation of the war-ravaged world and the military aid which we extended to many countries - I say, nothing in our record suggests that our country is thinking of a retreat into isolationism. The fear which is spreading among our people today is rather that the very generous bounty of our country, the openheartedness and the openhandedness of our people, and the readiness of our country to rush in with money and with military aid whenever and wherever the cry of Communism is raised - that action on our part, generous and laudable, is leading us progressively isolated in responsibility, in the sponsorship and in the defense of those aims which we had been led to believe were the common aims of all of our democratic allies.

As one writer put it recently, "Other countries have come to think that they do us a favor if they let us defend them." The nations which are to save presumably from the imminent menace of aggressive Communism are seemingly not as perturbed about it all

as we have been taught to be. They are carrying on a very energetic and seemingly profitable trade, even in war materials, with the Russian menace. They have been content to stand more or less on the side-lines while our men have been fighting and dying for world freedom in Korea, and while these nations are far closer to the Russian danger than we are - territorially almost the neighbors of the Soviet Union - it is we who have had to send our General Eisenhower to rally them to awareness and to stimulate their military preparedness. Whatever they have done so far in this direction has been done most reluctantly and under our persistent prodding, and this is rather amazing, for it is these nations, closer to the menace, who should be sending emissaries to us to insure themselves of our support rather than the other way round.

The American people is not for withdrawal or isolationism. It is against having assigned to our country the role of some over zealous sap-head to the world, a sort of an international sponge. The American people is for sharing and cooperation in world affairs. It is against unilateral action on our part and against sending American boys to die in any ideological crusade.

Now, the American people may yet be stampeded into such a fatal crusade for the propaganda mills are already busily at work and there are groups and interests in this country who do not want an understanding with the Soviet Union, who are advocating what they choose to call a "preventive" war against Russia. For the present, thank God, these war mongerers have not yet succeeded in confounding and in panicking our people as they hope to do ultimately.

The American people is heart-sick about the entire Korean affair. It was startled by our sudden intervention there without the consent of Congress, without consulting our Allies, without waiting for clear directives from the United Nations, and without ascertaining beforehand who else was going into that war with us and with what effectives. It has been shocked at the staggering military defeat which we suffered and at the terrible and mounting toll of our casualties. The American people wants our country to get out of Korea as quickly as possible, even if we can in a military sense continue to fight there indefinitely. Such fighting can result nothing but an unmitigated

bloody futility. The Korean affair has been a mistake from beginning to end, compounded out of domestic political considerations, out of over-confidence, out of military blunders, and out of willfulness in disregarding the warnings of friendly nations that marching towards the Manchurian border would bring China into the war.

The American people wants no war with China! The American people is bitterly critical of China's intervention in Korea. It is bitterly critical of China's rejection of the United Nations' very conciliatory proposals which were recently made for a cease fire in Korea and for a conference to settle all Far Eastern problems. It was not wise for Mao Tse-tung, for Red China, to reject these proposals and to insist that negotiations for a settlement should take place before a cease fire is arranged on the ground that, as they put it, "The purpose of arranging a cease-fire first is merely to give the United States troops a breathing space."

Victorious generals and victorious leaders frequently make the same mistake. That was the costly mistake which General MacArthur made after his great victory at Inchon. He would not halt his troops at the 38th parallel, but urged and received authorization to move on to the Manchurian border - and to move on to disaster!

Our delegation at the United Nations is now demanding to have China condemned as an aggressor and then to consider the nature of sanctions which should be applied against China. Undoubtedly, China has been an aggressor and the demand of our delegation to have it found publicly such is entirely logical. But what then? Many of our democratic allies are prepared to go along with us in this official condemnation of China, but they, too, ask, what next? Does this condemnation commit them and us to sanctions against China? But sanctions, economic or military - the boycott, the blockade, the diplomatic quarantine - will gravely increase instead of decrease the probability of an all-out war with China, and neither they, our allies, nor we want a war with China. That being the case, to brand China as an aggressor with a mental reservation not to follow it up with sanctions is after all purely a gesture for the record which may be face-saving for us, but which might seriously lessen the chances of ending the fighting in Korea and adjusting the other war-provoking issues in the

Far East, the issue of Formosa and the admission of China to the United Nations. Face-saving is important, but peace is paramount. And I believe that we are strong enough as a nation to reach beyond and above face-saving to that which is preeminently our historic interest - peace! To be doctrinaire and inflexible on this issue is not only to endanger the hope in the Far East of peace, but to alienate those nations whose cooperation we are seeking and to disrupt the alliance of the free nations of the world which we are trying so hard to cement.

The most recent proposal which has been made at the United Nations and which is said to be acceptable to Red China calls for a seven-power conference whose first order of business would be the arrangement of a cease-fire. And once the cease-fire has been arranged, the conference would proceed to discuss the other Far Eastern problems. If this proposal has any prospect of acceptance, would it not be the part of the larger statesmanship on our part to accept it? There is nothing to be gained by a "get tough" policy towards China. There is nothing to be gained by continuing to refuse to recognize the new regime in China which most of the Atlantic Pact nations have already done. There is nothing to be gained by continuing to oppose China's admission to the United Nations which most of the nations friendly to us favor. Had China been admitted to the United Nations a year ago, I believe, though I am not at all certain, but it is my belief that the whole picture in the Far East might today be quite different. There is nothing to be gained and much to be endangered by continuing our self-contradictory policy of wanting to avoid war with China on the one hand, and at the same time, flirting with Chiang Kai-shek, the beaten and the discredited Chiang Kai-shek, on the issue of Formosa - Formosa, which we agreed was to become an integral part of China, and by shipping to him war material and by announcing to the world, as did the deputy chief United States delegate to the United Nations, Mr. Ernest A. Gross, the other day that Formosa would be handled by us in a way "completely consistent with our national interest and security, and that Chiang Kai-shek would be represented in any negotiation on this subject."

Such an attitude will never bring peace to the Far East, will divide our allies and will alienate our friends in Asia. It is in sharp contrast to the policy which was announced by President Truman last September when he declared, "We believe that the future of Formosa should be settled by international action and not by the decision of the United States or any other state alone." Our government denounced Chiang Kai-shek in its published "White Paper" and mercilessly condemned his rule of China as corrupt, incompetent and dictatorial; and yet we continue to support him against a Communist regime which today is in complete control of the whole of China, except for the island of Formosa.

My dear friends, we have made blunders in the Far East, and we have paid a terrible price for them, but they are not fatal blunders. We can rectify them. But we must have the higher courage to make clean-cut decisions, and stick to them. We must put an end to indecision and vacillation and duality in our foreign policy.

The debate which is now going on among our people on the foreign policy of our government is not an indication of disunity among our people or of political immaturity. Our people will be found strongly united behind a consistent, well-defined and reasonable policy once it is clearly enunciated, and follow^{ed}/through by our responsible leaders, a policy which can recommend itself to the intelligence as well as to the idealism of the American people. The American people will bravely accept all the controls which will be put on it, all the increased taxations, all the sacrifices which will be demanded of it when such a program is clearly enunciated.. And this great debate is not evidence of political immaturity; rather it is evidence of political maturity, that our people have not blindly accepted the ill-considered and from time-to-time improvised and hastily revised, blundering and disastrous foreign policy of our government.

The root of all the evil, in my judgment - the root of all the evil in our foreign policy in recent years is the so-called Truman Doctrine. It imposed upon the American people a mission which is beyond its power to fulfill and with the establishment of the United Nations, beyond its moral or legal competence. The so-called

Truman Doctrine was an unpremeditated but withal a dangerous assault upon the status and authority of the United Nations. The whole philosophy underlying the United Nations is that no single nation possesses the right to set itself up as the sole judge of what is good for the world and the sole defender of freedom or democracy. It aims to substitute collective judgment and action for unilateral judgment and action, however high-minded and nobly motivated. No nation belonging to the United Nations has the right to assume the sole responsibility for the peace or the freedom of the world. That is the exclusive function of the United Nations.

Thus, it is not for our country to define where the fronts are that democracy lies and to pledge American resources to defend them. Not only is our country actually unable to defend them; we simply have not the resources for such a gigantic task. Nor would our people sanction such global military undertakings, nor are they persuaded that countries like Greece and Turkey and Korea and Indo-China are really the outposts of democracy. But it is contrary to the very spirit of the United Nations that America should charge itself with such a responsibility. The thought underlying the charter of the United Nations is to unite the strength of all nations to maintain international peace and security, to take effective ~~preventive~~ collective measures for the prevention and the removal of the threats to the peace. And definitely, the United Nations Charter does not envisage a world divided into two blocks, as the Truman Doctrine seems to envisage it; nor does it contemplate the trusting of the defense of the world's freedom and democracy to one single state; nor does it assign to any single state the duty to determine when and where the peace of the world is being endangered.

This should be clear to all of us, dear friends, in any discussion of the grave and serious problems which confront the world today. We cannot destroy Communism by war. War spreads Communism. We cannot contain it by building a Chinese wall around it, to be manned by unwilling democracies or by mercenaries of reactionary governments financed by American dollars. We can help to rebuild the health and economy of the world to the degree that we are able, and in so doing strengthen all peoples

in the ways of freedom, for no people willingly resorts to dictatorship. This should be clear to all of us who seriously are facing the problem of peace in the world. We must continue to live in the same world with the Soviet Union. It is possible, I believe, with skill and patience and good will to work out a modus vivendi. It will take many years before all causes of friction are removed. It will not be an altogether quiet, untroubled and undisturbed relationship, even if war does not come upon us. But war is the enemy. Capitalism, Socialism, Communism, and their many variations are here to stay for a very long time, and they must learn to live together if human disaster is to be averted. There must be room in the one world for all these political, economic forms and for others which may follow them, for they must all find their place within the framework of a peaceful world order. False steps which are taken in these early days of world reconstruction, such as we live in, will have a fatal effect upon all subsequent developments.

It is not yet too late to avert disaster.

I conclude, dear friends - the road to peace is far more difficult to follow than the road to war. What we urge upon our country is not the well-trod road to war, which is so often paved and smoothly surfaced by pride and emotionalism and by grandiose conceptions of election and destiny. Rather, we urge upon our country and upon our people the hard road of restraint and self-possession, of caution and forbearance, of faith and humility. This is the road of peace. This is the road which consecrated leadership always takes. And if we take it, this would be the spirit of America at its best and at its noblest.