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Address by

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Attorney General of the United States

At

Joint Ceremonies of
Daughters of the American Revolution
Sons of the American Revolution
Sons of the Revolution
Children of the American Revolution

Memorial Continental Hall

Washington, D. C.

Saturday, February 22, 1947

10:30 A.M.

It is a privilege to be here today and join with you in the 215th Anniversary of the birthday of George Washington. Much credit is due the Daughters and Sons of the American Revolution, and today I am highly pleased to see that the Children of the American Revolution not only join in this celebration but are in charge of it. To my mind, this augers well for the future of America. I think more than ever the children of America are God's emissaries, sent forth to us day by day to preach of the hope for America tomorrow; of the love and brotherhood of Americans and, yes, the peace of the entire world. Through them alone can the masses of the world be reached. All you have to do is get the boys and girls of the world started on the right track and the Devil will have to hang a crepe on his own door.

We, who, meet here today are particularly fortunate because we are assembled in the capital of the world, a capital that was planned and the destiny of which was foreseen by the man whose birthday we here commemorate. Washington has become the mightiest name of all throughout the world, for the Washington date line brings fear to those who would trample down the individual rights of the citizens of the world and it brings security and comfort to those who are in distress. To the millions of people who were rendered homeless by the hatred of Hitler the name of Washington brings a cheerfulness that is beyond comprehension.

Yes, the name Washington has come to symbolize the things that the man Washington stood for; the things that go to make up for greatness, honesty, integrity, perseverance and Godliness.

(OVER)

George Washington had his rendezvous with destiny and today you and I have ours. He was a frontiersman, a man of solemn information and sound judgment; a man so persevering that today we have a United States of America. It was he, who, by the sheer force of his own perseverance and determined will, held Valley Forge. Twice beaten on the field of battle--once at the Capital of his own tottering Federation, Philadelphia--with no housing, little food, and with a straggling Army actually barefooted, he, and those who believed in him, faced sure defeat, rout, and disgrace. During that terrible winter his army had eaten every kind of horse food except hay. He had forced it across the Delaware on possibly a day such as this. This campaign was indeed the test of Washington's character and of his heart. The perseverance that he showed there has never been equalled or excelled for he had not only to deal with his men, but he had to deal with public criticism and with legislative meddling. He had to deal with those who were traitors to his cause. He had to deal with bigots and intolerant, would-be leaders.

But Washington had his reward at Yorktown, for there he brought about a true American victory. But though the war was over, the battle had not been won, because dissention, disbelief and recrimination had crept into the minds and hearts of some of his fellow Americans. As he very aptly stated then, the policy of the various states would decide whether the Revolution that he and his comrades had won was a "blessing or a curse". During this period the Capital was moved from city to city; in fact, a total of eight times from Philadelphia to Baltimore, to Lancaster to York, to Princeton, to Annapolis, to Trenton, and to New York. In addition to the economic problems that faced the Confederation there was a fight over where the Capitol should be. Should

it be at Boston where the first shot was fired -- or at Philadelphia where liberty was proclaimed? Or in Yorktown where it was born?

An interesting story is behind the final selection. The capital was brought where we stand today by an understanding between Hamilton and Jefferson that the debts of the states would be taken over by the Federal Government and that in recompense therefor the capital would be located here.

There are many who think that the frontiers are no longer present; that the opportunities which came to Washington and Jefferson and Hamilton and those who joined together to found this great country of ours are no longer existent. But the frontiers will always be with us. They may not be the territorial frontiers that we had during the early days of our Republic, but the frontiers for doing good and for real accomplishment are with us more so now than ever before.

Whether we take advantage of the opportunities that are afforded us after World War II, just as our forebears took advantage of the opportunity facing them after the revolution depends entirely upon you and me. It is our job to see that advances are made and that the world moves toward peace, rather than World War III. In order to do that we must, of course, strengthen our own position. A statement made by George Washington at one of the first meetings of the Governors of the original states is most appropriate today. He said then:

"I will speak to your Excellencies the language of freedom and of sincerity without disguise. . . . There are four things, which I humbly conceive are essential to the well being, I may even venture to say, to the existence, of the United States, as an independent power:

(OVER)

"First: An indissoluble union of the States under one Federal head.

"Second: A regard to public justice.

"Third: The adoption of a proper peace establishment; and

"fourth: The prevalence of that pacific and friendly disposition among the people of the United States which will induce them to forget their local prejudices and policies; to make those mutual concessions which are requisite to the general prosperity; and in some instances to sacrifice their individual advantages to the interest of the community."

Today we have an indissoluble union. It is indissoluble in that we have determined that no state can dissolve it. But the problems posed by Washington in the Second, Third, and Fourth Admonitions we still have with us. There is a disrespect creeping into American minds and hearts of public justice. We must dissipate this. In order to do that we must wage an unrelentless battle against those who would tear down our institutions. Today we also have a class among us which would prevent the establishment of a proper peacetime Army and Navy. As Washington said back in his time, the adoption of a proper peace establishment is necessary to the continued advancement of America. We must not go backward in this regard. We must insist upon having a peace establishment that will cause the world to have respect for our thoughts and for our positions. As Gen. Geo. Marshall goes out in the next few days to attempt to bring about an agreement which we hope will guarantee the future peace of the world we must implement his position by making sure that we are strong.

And, on the Fourth Admonition, we need to do much work at home. For the dissensions that have crept in and among us have prevented that pacific

and friendly disposition that induces people to forget the local prejudices and policies. We must cast aside the intolerant attitude that seems to be cropping out all over this country of ours. We must learn, as Washington said, to make those mutual concessions which are requisite to the general prosperity. We must learn to sacrifice individual advantage to the interest of the community.