



REMARKS

BY

HONORABLE J. HOWARD McGRATH

ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES

Prepared for Delivery

at

Opening Session Of The

SIXTH NATIONAL CITIZENSHIP CONFERENCE

Hotel Statler

Washington, D. C.

Thursday, May 17, 1951

10:20 A. M.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Guests, Delegates and Members of the National Conference on Citizenship, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is with a good deal of pleasure that I again welcome you to this Sixth Annual National Conference on Citizenship. I know that when you return to your respective homes and organizations you will carry back the inspiration and the greater understanding that comes from an exchange of views on the various problems that confront us as citizens of our great democracy. I am certain that as a result of these meetings you will be more resolute in your determination not only to promote good citizenship in your own community but to stimulate and diffuse knowledge with respect to those things that count most towards making good citizens.

The theme of this year's Conference, "Freedom in One World: Today and Tomorrow", is most timely. Our Conferences in the past have emphasized the citizen's responsibility for freedom at home. This year's Conference aptly stresses also the citizen's responsibility for freedom abroad.

I have therefore chosen for my topic this morning "The United States and World Freedom", because it is evident to all thinking men that world freedom and freedom in the United States have now become interdependent. For today communism threatens every nation on earth, every religious faith, every home, every person. We know now that it is the plan of the Kremlin to subdue and enslave the entire civilized world.

A Committee of the American Bar Association has very recently made an exhaustive and objective study of the true nature of communism, and it has concluded that the Communist Party, even in the United States, "is not a political party as such, but is an integral part of a world-wide conspiracy to overthrow the democratic governments of the world by force and violence."

Accordingly, the task before the world today is to find the means of combatting the danger of communism, eradicating it, and thus bringing about peace under international law and order. We must attain a world in which peaceful nations may flourish, "unawed by force from without or the threat of subversion from within."

Though we have never desired it, events have placed our Country in a position of world leadership. As an eminent historian has recently indicated, the United States has been on the road to world leadership for at least half a century, but it was only during the last decade that the nature and the obligations of that leadership have become clear, not only to Americans but to people everywhere. We were never ambitious for world influence, we did not want it, and do not want it now, but we could not escape it.

As a world leader, we have a potent part to play in stemming the tide of communism and aggression and in halting the peril that faces all mankind on a global scale. In the words of our President:

"At this critical time in world history, men and women everywhere look to our Nation for leadership. They know that hope for a better life, human freedom, decency, justice, religion -- all these things -- depend upon the vigor with which we lead the free world in its fight for survival."

This world leadership necessarily imposes on us many heavy responsibilities. Our conduct as a democratic nation must be exemplary. What happens within our own borders influences all humanity.

The inventive genius of man has drawn us all into one close community. The earth has geographically contracted so that all nations have now become close neighbors. Liberty on any one spot on this globe cannot be preserved

unless unremitting efforts are made to preserve it everywhere else. Isolationism is no longer possible or even feasible for any society or group. Aggression or abridgement of freedom anywhere in organized society is abridgement of freedom of all society. Communist expansion in any part of the globe is a direct attack upon our own soil, our own government, upon our own very lives. Therefore we must contain and defeat this menace wherever it may appear. And we must do our part in assuring that future day when all nations will learn to live as good brothers.

A conference such as this is a concrete illustration of the possibility and practicability of international brotherhood. A year ago I told you that a conference such as this is "the voice of all our People and therefore * * * truly * * * the workshop of democracy." I assert today with equal emphasis that this conference is a perfect manifestation of a workshop of democracy on a world scale. Representing as you do every segment of our populace, you are showing America in action. You come here in a spirit of unity from far-flung sections of the Country, to demonstrate by your deliberations that people can get together in spite of differences of background and culture and evaluate the common factors affecting the welfare of our Nation. Mutual respect and understanding will be the basic reason for the success of your deliberations and achievements.

How different is this process from the sad spectacle we see in those areas of the world dominated by the communist masters. Here we have no conformity of ideas enforced by terror. Here there is no uniformity of opinion that must adhere to the patterns demanded by the infallible rulers of the state. Engraved in the minds and the hearts of our people is a tradition of liberty. The sacred expression of that tradition is the Bill

of Rights, which assures to each one of us the freedom to assemble, to express our grievances, and to voice our thoughts. Ours is a way of life rooted in open discussion, the exchange of opposing views, and a decision by the majority. And an inherent component of that way of life is tolerance for minority views.

I have always had the most profound sympathy for the people in the countries behind the Iron Curtain. It is their sad misfortune that they must live under the yoke of the communist oppressors. Their minds must feed on the meager pabulum doled out by the hands of authority. Their expressions can never venture beyond the limits officially charted, for the unsanctioned idea might today or tomorrow be deemed a treasonable deviation. They know from tragic experience the fate of dissenters. Their discussions must be furtive and conducted in apprehension that an informer or spy may be listening. They live in constant dread of the insistent knock on the door in the dark of night and the swift condemnation of those who have incurred official displeasure. To them freedom is a precious but distant dream.

To free Americans the ways of tyranny will always be abhorrent. To us the oppressions of the communist despotism are a sure sign of its innate weakness and insecurity. History teaches that it is the weak ruler who throttles opposing views and tramples individual rights. And history teaches also that although authority supported by terror may prevail temporarily, it invariably nourishes the seeds for its own destruction. The day of doom has come for all tyrannies of the past, and the day of doom will surely dawn for the communist dictatorship of the present era.

Our society has been built on the solid bedrock of respect for the rights of the individual. It is a thrilling commentary on the vigor of our

institutions that even in these days of national peril we are devoting our best thoughts and efforts to safeguarding our heritage of liberty. Even the traitors and spies in our midst have had the benefits of the due process of law guaranteed by the Federal Constitution. These enemies of our society have been convicted of violating our laws only after a fair and open trial before a jury, at which they were represented by counsel, were confronted by the evidence against them, and were given opportunity to present evidence in their own behalf. And they were able to challenge their convictions on appeal, including an eventual consideration by the Supreme Court of the United States.

The insistence upon a maximum of fair play, even during a period of national danger, is a striking illustration of our determination to preserve the traditions of liberty entrusted to our care. So too is our passionate devotion to the principles of open discussion and free agreement, which this Conference so outstandingly typifies. By our actions in advancing the right of our citizens to a voluntary choice, arrived at through a tolerant exchange of ideas, we offer a shining example for the oppressed peoples of other lands.

Only on such a basis can a world society of peace and freedom be constructed. To achieve that goal, however, we must meet the aggression that is now waged upon us. To do that we are girding ourselves materially. We are mobilizing and marshaling our every vital physical force to guard ourselves against the enemies of our way of life both from without and from within.

Sad to say, we do have enemies from within. I can assure you, however, that the Department of Justice, through all its agencies, is on the alert

for the nefarious enemies from within. There is no room in our midst for the spy and saboteur, for the traitor and the disloyal. As chief law enforcement officer of our Government, I pledge you to spare no effort or means to eradicate the vipers gnawing secretly at our vitals.

In this effort we shall need the cooperation of all our people. We shall need and must have a united front. There is much controversy today as to national policy, but this controversy, so long as it is in the interest of the common welfare, is a healthy attribute of democracy at work.

We must also animate amongst all of us a spirit of patience. It took us many years to develop our concepts of liberty and justice. This is a rapidly changing world. The great and complex problems of the new world order will be solved only after long and constant effort on the part of countries in accord with our principles of liberty. We must learn to adjust ourselves to the slow processes of history.

Equally important, we must as good citizens have complete faith and confidence in the truth that a democracy can solve its problems within its constitutional framework. In calculating our resources and comparing those of the communist bloc, we must remember that the greatest resource we possess is the intelligence and resourcefulness inherent in a free people. That is a far greater and far more potent asset than anything material.

Next Sunday we shall all observe "I Am An American Day." Each of us will surely give thanks to the Almighty for the possession of the most wonderful gift of American citizenship. It should also, however, be a day when we should pause and ponder on the great responsibilities that we assume as American citizens -- the responsibility of preserving the torch of freedom for the one world we have today.

We Americans truly have an hour with destiny. The Good Lord has given us of this generation the historic role and opportunity, in cooperation with other nations, to help create a peace which will preserve the world in accord with the eternal truths which He teaches through the various creeds. We have been chosen with other people to defend the spiritual values -- the moral code -- against the forces of iniquity which would destroy them. We know that reasoned morality has never failed man and that only force and oppression has wrecked the world from time to time. We will stand vindicated at the bar of history only if we guide our activities in accord with the eternal spiritual principles taught to us by all religions. Yes, we must gird ourselves spiritually as well as physically to overcome the totalitarian onslaught.

The story of the United States of America is a most thrilling revelation of man's determination to be free. Our Country was first settled by those who sought freedom of religion. It was nurtured by our ancestors who craved freedom of expression and thought. It was developed by our people who enjoyed freedom of opportunity. We are now seeking freedom from fear -- fear of the destruction of our rich heritage. With the help of such meetings as these, and with the guidance of Divine Providence, we shall not only retain but will strengthen this heritage of freedom, not only for ourselves but also for all people and all posterity everywhere. We shall then have Freedom in One World, not only for today but for every tomorrow.