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AN ADDRESS

BY

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AT

SEVENTY-NINTH ANNUAL MEMORIAL DAY EXERCISES

ARLINGTON MEMORIAL AMPHITHEATRE

WASHINGTON, D. C.

FRIDAY, MAY 30, 1947

12:30 PM EDT

Mr. Chairman, comrades, ladies and gentlemen:

Today, Americans reverently pause once more to observe "Memorial Day".

Throughout this great land and under foreign skies where crosses, row on row, rise above consecrated ground, tribute is being paid to our valient dead who sacrificed that the ideals of our country might live.

In all ages people have paid tribute to their hero dead with flowers and song. Our Memorial Day was instituted by General John A. Logan, when, as Commander-in-Chief of the Grand Army of the Republic in 1868, he had May 30 set aside to honor the memory of departed comrades of the Civil War by decorating their graves.

As time marched on, the honored custom of paying tribute to the hallowed dead of the Civil War has widened to embrace the heroes of all our wars who have answered the roll call of the Eternal Commander-in-Chief.

As we stand amidst the departed whose memory and sacrifices we honor, let us pay heartfelt tribute to those wounded Americans in homes and in hospitals. For them our fervent prayers go. We owe to them a debt of gratitude that humble hands and hearts can never repay.

For us, the living, the Day has come to be regarded as an occasion that should mark our rededication to the principles of the American way of life.

These principles which claimed the loyalty of Americans yesterday, claim the same loyalty from us today, and will claim it from the generation of tomorrow.

We are both trustees of the future, and inheritors of the past. We dream of the future, we live and work in the present, but we learn eternal truths from the past. And so we salute the heroes of yesterday who added

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After centuries of effort to establish the worth and dignity of the individual, the rights of mankind were mercilessly attacked by the forces of tyranny and destruction.

For a century and a half, America's geographic isolation rendered us safe from attack. Lying between the great Atlantic and the mighty Pacific, America thought herself secure. In her imagined security, she was caught asleep and almost brought to ruin by the destructive forces that wreaked devastation upon the people of Europe.

There is still a clash of ideologies in the world today. However it may be camouflaged, we cannot hide the fact. When democracy, as we know and live it, is chained, when thought is rigidly channeled, when news is suppressed, when misrepresentation supersedes truth, when individual liberty is dethroned, then aggression, despotism and slavery follow in their train.

We cannot be indifferent to the tragic problems facing the world today. That means indifference to the future of America and our own posterity.

The American dream came from the hearts and burdened souls of millions from all nations. It came from the hopes and aspirations of human beings throughout the centuries.

America is not perfect, but the democratic ideal has sustained our Nation since its beginning. In our daily practices we have on many occasions fallen short of the ideal, but in the long run we have been moving in the direction of our goal. We must continue to move in that direction.

During the years following World War I, America, with awesome

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responsibility to a torn and expectant world and to her own troubled people, almost lost her way. She followed isolationist by-paths that crippled our position in the world, made us lose the idealistic objectives of World War I, and compelled us to send the sons of the veterans of that War into another conflict in defense of the ideals of mankind.

Yes, America faltered at a crucial time in the history of the world. The ideal of a world organized for peace was abandoned, before it was fully formed, and we broke faith with those who slept in Flanders Field.

We again have the opportunity to hold high the torch and light the way to a better world.

A wearied humanity is looking to America to lead them to a world of peace, and understanding, and happiness among men.

The common people of America and of the world look to this Nation as their hope.

If we fail now as we failed after World War I, civilization may not get another chance.

We have a covenant with the future, sealed with blood and sacrifice, that this time we shall not fail.

Those to whom we pay tribute today showed us the way into the future.

If we lose that way, our tributes to them are but hollow mockery.

And it could be said of us as of some others centuries ago:

"You decorate the graves of the prophets of old, yet your present attitudes prove that you are the spiritual descendants of those who stoned the prophets. You decorate their sepulchres while you desecrate their principles."

The American ideal contains no narrow isolationist's spirit, no national selfishness that would deny universal brotherhood of man.

This time we must not fail.

We will not fail. America is determined that there must be an enduring peace for peoples everywhere.

Here at home, we have a job to do.

In the words of John Ruskin, "That country is the richest which nourishes the greatest number of noble and happy human beings."

As we review the progress and achievements, the glories and sacrifices of those who fought and died to preserve and safeguard our principles of government, vital and undiminished, we realize that it is for us, the living, to be here dedicated to the unfinished work which they have thus far so nobly advanced.

We must be constantly alert to stamp out anti-democratic tendencies.

We must watch for dangerous symptoms such as the abandonment of the concept and practice of equal justice for all, "the placing of some groups in a perfected class of citizenship at the expense of other groups."

When we express racial prejudice, we are lacking in love for mankind. We are concerning ourselves with the things that divide, not with those things that unite.

Think kindly of your neighbor, speak kindly of him and act kindly toward him, is good advice to follow in our daily human relationships.

In the face of aggression we got together and submerged most of our minor differences. In the big issues, everybody came through.

You, comrades, did not hesitate to risk your own life for the sake of a buddy. You didn't know what was his religious faith or whether he was an industrialist or laborer - or whether he was wealthy or poor.

And it wouldn't have made any difference, anyway.

Such a spirit was in keeping with our great Bill of Rights which came down to us from our forefathers. We must be ever vigilant to hand on to

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succeeding generations that Bill of Rights, not weakened, but deepened and strengthened, through daily recognition and practice of its principles for the protection of every American citizen.

The greatness of America is grounded in enduring principles, not in the transient desires of individuals.

The ways of democracy are not contingent upon any single person. Where one leaves off, another picks up and carries on.

Man exists for a moment, but the principles of our national life go on forever.

Our American heritage is something more than a rich continent lying between two oceans. It is something bigger than a nation with vast resources. It is the American's idea of freedom - freedom of human aspiration. This freedom is the foundation of democracy, of justice, of opportunity, - of everything we hold dear.

Upon us rests the obligation to prove worthy of the heritage that has been handed down to us.

We must make democracy a living reality.

We must protect our country and defend its institutions with the same courage and devotion which our honored dead exemplified in the past.

Their task is ours.

The job must be finished.

We must strive to secure economic freedom for every man and his family, employment for every worker, education for every boy and girl in the land.

New modern homes must be built to wipe out the slums.

We must do many other things that will build and maintain the health, happiness and security of the citizens of this country in the days of peace.

We want a country in which our children and their children will grow up in security, a land of freedom.

We Americans have a real work to do, a peace to achieve, a world to rebuild.

The Voices of Gloom in America sometimes tell us that America is no longer a land of opportunity - that opportunity is dead, that democracy has outlived its usefulness.

Such voices have been heard before - but happily went unheeded.

Here in Washington in 1833, a clerk working in the Patent Office resigned because he thought that he was wasting his time on useless patents, that there was no longer anything important to be invented.

Yet between that date and the present time, more progress has been made in America than was made in all the world throughout the preceding centuries.

America today is still the land where its citizens can get joy out of achievement and thrill out of creative effort, both of which enrich our country.

Americans today have undreamed-of opportunities in this land of freedom which releases the energies of every single human being.

The Nation will grow as its people grow. It will be as great as we, ourselves, are great.

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This was true in the beginning of our history. It will be true in our future.

Our Nation's strength will be no greater than that given it by the devotion and loyalty of its citizens.

It will grow and realize its wonderful opportunities as long as it has loyalty and patriotic support from the rugged individuals who form its citizenry.

We must have a faith to live and die for, and a faith to live by.

Basic in that faith to live by, is faith in man, and faith in our country, and faith in God.

As a fitting close on this Memorial Day, I want to repeat the last words of our fallen Commander-in-Chief, Franklin D. Roosevelt, written the day before he died, which says:

"The only limit to our realization of tomorrow will be our doubts of today. Let us move forward with strong and active faith."