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Address of

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Seven months ago a leader of the Nazi party dropped out of the sky on Scottish soil. He had made the flight from Germany of his own will. And when that news reached the outside world, the first impulse of freedom-loving people everywhere was to hope--tentatively, almost breathlessly--that at long last the Germany of the Nazis had become a house divided against itself, that the national unity which had been built of oppression within and conquest without was finally beginning to crack.

Berlin assured the world that Rudolf Hess was mad. Since that time it has come to be generally accepted that Hess's real mission was to turn Britain, to enlist Britons in a holy crusade, side by side with the Nazi host. And for once, it appears, we can take the Nazis' word for it. The man was mad.

But why should we ourselves have erred, even for a moment, when we first saw those startling headlines?

You who are gathered here tonight know the answer. You have come here, representing more than ten million Americans to whom the news from Europe had been bringing heartache even deeper and harder to bear than that which we felt when France fell, or while London was being bombed. There are among you those who have seen the lands of their forefathers overrun and desecrated, and those who have known that their own brothers were being tortured and enslaved. In the stark hopelessness of the news they were getting, month had passed upon month with no relief, nothing to suggest a turn or a break. And yet, you Americans who have in you the blood of the Czechs, the Serbs, the Poles, and the other Slavic peoples--you, too, on the morning of May 12 last, while the blitzkrieg was yet in its heyday, joined us in that hope that the nation behind it was tottering. Even you were still ready to believe that the conqueror could be broken in spirit!

But were you unsound in holding so long to that hope, unreasonable in supposing that the unified will of Nazi Germany ever could crack?

I believe that hope was sound.

I believe it remains so today--so very sound, at root, that it is worth working for, fighting for, and as many have done, dying for. For I share with you the simple conviction that dictatorship, race hatred, religious suppression, and the denial of free press and free speech--the four enslavements--cannot reestablish a lasting foothold anywhere on the scorched, bomb-scarred face of this earth. I share with you the conviction that there is no longer living-space for a regime born of mob violence, nurtured on vigilantism, and brought to full flower in such practices as the teaching of children to spy and inform on their own parents. I share with you the certainty that such a regime must fall.

So, too, do those in conquered lands for whose safety you have been praying, and who are themselves fighting to be free once again. Your anxiety, your anguish, is more than matched by what they have gone through, in Czechoslovakia, in Poland, in Yugoslavia and Russia. Like you, they cannot name the day when this suffering will end. Possibly from their dark perspective it seems even more remote. But they are none the less sure, none the less willing to go on with the fight in which they are staking their lives.

We have evidence of this. It filters through to us in scattered, incomplete reports. Against incredible odds, guerrilla armies form. Men plunge into hopeless battles, willing to lose if need be, and to die, if in their own loss they will have struck one small blow in the greater battle for freedom of their people. More than a hundred thousand such fighters, so we are told, are now carrying on from Bosnia to the Bulgarian border. Where else, and

how many more are engaged, who at this moment can say? We do not hear of them all. But they go on and on, and despite the best efforts of the German propaganda machine, the reports keep coming through. This, I hold, is the warfare of men who are certain.

What makes them so? Despite tremendous initial reverses, what has kept them, held them steadfast in this faith? Let us ask ourselves that, here in this gathering of people of many strains, often at odds among themselves in the past but now drawn together by an issue greater than any they have ever faced. Let us also, as Americans, ask ourselves that, confronted as we are by peril surmounting any that our country has ever known. And let us not be facile in our answers.

We in America rely upon arms, and we are arming ourselves well. But important as that is, I do not think it is all. I do not believe our present and prospective armed strength is what lies at the base of this conviction of ours that in war or in peace, we shall remain free men. With those who now labor under the lash in Poland, or await their turns before the firing squad in Serbia, I believe that that conviction rests squarely upon a vast, encompassing will, the unified will of all men whose common credo is freedom, whose common abhorrence is enslavement. I believe our unified will as citizens of a democracy will stand as a rock upon which an already obsolescent wave of the future, as it has been called, must one day shatter itself.

Nazi writers and speakers have gone to great lengths in the effort to assure the German public that no such unified will exists. And they have singled out the Slavic people for their chief exhibit. As you know, the Slavs have the distinction of being despised by the Nazis more than any other non-Jewish people—with the possible exception of the Italians.

Now, these Nazi writers have adopted a curious device against the Slavs--by the same scientific reasoning that has made Aryans of the Japanese. The name Slav, they say, derives from the noun slave. And the implications of that, of course, are clear enough. But according to the etymologists of other nations--and of Germany herself prior to the nazification of German science--the name Slav is a derivation from the word slava, which is used today, and which means glorious.

But if these Nazi findings are lacking in objective truth as set down in the past, they make up for it in holding a mirror to Nazi intentions for the future. They leave no room for doubt there. For the fact is, of course, that there is more in this world-wide threat than the clash of arms. There is more than the push for living-space or the grasp for empire. I see in it, behind the ruins of cities and the blackened fields, a war of spiritual attrition--simply stated, war between the spirit of men who have the will to be free, on the one side, and the spirit of men who have the will to enslave, on the other.

Not only is this the issue; I think it possible that over and above the factor of military might, the real conflict will be finally decided on the relative strength of those two wills. In terms of prospective national alignments, vast military strength looms on each side. I think it possible that military hostilities may even cease temporarily or become stalemated. But that would not end the real conflict. In that event it will still go on, silently and relentlessly, and he who fires the last shot will be enabled to do so only because the spirit that is in him survives.

This spirit, then--national unity, and the unified will of all democratic nations--is our most powerful weapon of defense. But I do not believe--

and this is the point that I have come here to make tonight--I do not believe that weapon is proof against ourselves. I do not believe that even the tremendous strength of democracy is proof against the indifference, or the emotional unbalance, or the deliberate abuse, of those into whose hands it has been entrusted. It is because I am deeply impressed with the terrible consequences, now, of such indifference, that tonight, on the eve of our Bill of Rights Week, I take this opportunity to make an appeal--to you and to listeners elsewhere who may realize, as you do, the gravity of the armed threat against us, but who will do well to realize also the gravity of any threat of spiritual disarmament in our midst.

That threat is not widespread. The privileges of free citizens are today better protected in this land of ours than they are or can be anywhere else in this war-torn world. Yet, that spiritual disarmament of which I speak assails us each time the constitutional rights of an individual or a minority are violated. Every violation of democracy committed within our country is of aid and comfort to the enemies of democracy outside.

That disarmament threatens every time an attempt is made to build up hatred against any person or persons on the grounds of race, religion, or national origin. It is of aid and comfort to the enemy outside when a one-time national hero descends to the unheroic level of a public appeal to race prejudice. It is of aid and comfort to the enemy when a boycott is directed against a small shopkeeper whose crime has been that his parents or his ancestors were German or Italian or Japanese. It is of aid and comfort to the enemy when manufacturers holding defense contracts for arms to defend democracy discriminate in their employment offices against Negroes.

That spiritual disarmament of which I speak threatens us in the very existence of vigilante, nightriding, or secret organizations which are ready for any reason to take the law into their own hands. It is of aid and comfort to the enemy outside when an improvised army of so-called deputy-sheriffs is recruited from among irresponsibles, given guns, and authorized locally to set up a reign of terror in one of our eastern manufacturing communities; or when bands of masked men ride in the south; or when local volunteers band together to burn the cars and brutally assault the members of a religious cult known as Jehovah's Witnesses; or when an attempt is made to pervert the functioning of a local defense council and turn it into an amateur spy-hunting unit.

It is of aid and comfort to the enemy outside when any American, succumbing to the mass hysteria which is one of the primary objectives of Nazi-Fascist foreign propaganda, unjustly accuses his neighbor, traffics in loose gossip, or joins in the persecution of that neighbor.

Among us here are many who can recall the cruel and stupid injustices that innocent Americans and many equally innocent aliens suffered in the years 1917 and 1918. Perhaps those victims spoke English with an accent. Or they may have been born of German parents--like my friend, United States Senator Robert F. Wagner. Or they merely had foreign-sounding names--like Fiorello H. LaGuardia, Mayor of the City of New York; the Honorable Murray D. Van Wagoner, Governor of the State of Michigan. It was for the crime of having names as sinister as these that our last wave of war hysteria struck at thousands of good Americans.

I was interested in a remark made by Mr. Deems Taylor at a recent radio broadcast by the New York Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra. He said that during the First World War the British continued to play and enjoy the works of

the great German composers, just as they are doing today. France did likewise. The Kaiser's government, on the other hand, was more inclined to lay down restrictions on the playing of English or French music. But of all the warring peoples, Mr. Taylor said, Americans were the least tolerant in this respect, the narrowest in their refusal to listen to German compositions, regardless of when or by whom they may have been written.

And having heard Mr. Taylor, I was not pleased to see a newspaper story, only a few days afterwards, quoting Mr. Richard Crooks, tenor of the Metropolitan Opera, as saying that today--here in the America of 1941--while on a concert tour he had found it necessary "to eliminate the works of German composers quite frequently in recent months."

So long as any number among us remains indifferent to the constitutional rights of our fellow-citizens, or becomes emotionally unbalanced to the point of overriding such rights, they are striking, not at our first, but at our last line of defense.

This most damaging of subversions is not always easy to detect in process. Sometimes, of course, it is outspoken, playing openly upon existing prejudices and hates. More frequently, however, masking as patriotism, it works on our love of country, and--most often and most effectively--on our fears for our country. It operates within the shadow of the flag, to the sound of brass bands and the fury of voices grown hoarse with avowals of fealty to that flag.

This subversive force plays most effectively upon our fears, for that is what happens in times of acute national stress, as today, when the threat of a shooting war is constantly before us, when American ships have already been torpedoed and American lives lost on the high seas. Then it is that the fear

for our national safety is most readily seized upon at home. Attempts are made to turn that fear inward upon ourselves, to direct it against individuals and minorities who happen to be of certain race, religion, or national origin. Alien-baiting gets under way in earnest--yes, even in the halls of the Congress of the United States.

The detection and prevention of sabotage and espionage are among the special responsibilities of the Department of Justice. More specifically, such detection and prevention are the assigned work of some hundreds of highly trained agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, covering all parts of the country.

The FBI works carefully and thoroughly. Most of you have been reading about the trial in New York of the 33 foreign agents accused of espionage; but few people realize the amount of time and thought that was necessary to produce air-tight evidence. This spy case took approximately two years to consummate. Agents assigned to the case worked day and night. In the course of the investigation, FBI agents posed as foreign spies; for 16 months FBI men, in the guise of foreign agents, carried on daily communication with a Gestapo radio station in Hamburg, Germany. It was no easy matter to outwit the German agents in this country and their employers in Germany.

Another case is that of the sabotage activities in the Glenn L. Martin aircraft factory. Since such sabotage was interfering with national defense, it was the responsibility of the Federal Bureau of Investigation to discover the guilty person or persons. In a very short period, one Michael William Etzel was arrested for sabotage. When taken to court, Etzel, confronted with scientific and detailed evidence, recognized the futility of contesting the case and pleaded guilty. He was sentenced to serve 15 years in the Federal Penitentiary.

Permit me to cite just one more example of the thoroughness of the FBI. There was a person who came to the United States in 1940 from Germany where he had been living since childhood. This man was an American citizen. Shortly after his arrival, he began making extended trips visiting defense projects and military establishments. He began sending what looked like innocuous letters addressed to persons in Germany. But between the lines of these letters, written in invisible ink, was an amazing amount of detailed information on our aircraft production and performance, and on equipment and location of our military forces. This spy thought he was traveling along and that he was getting his messages to Germany but in each case he was wrong. FBI agents kept him under constant surveillance. When it became apparent that he was ready to leave the country, he, along with four confederates, were taken into custody, charged with spying for another nation.

I dwell on the thoroughness and experience necessary in investigations of this kind because I hope my remarks will serve as a hint to many amateur detectives who think they can track down foreign spies and agents. The effectiveness of counter-espionage is determined by the intimate knowledge gained of the activities of spies, their associates, sources of information and methods of communication. I suggest that amateur detectives and other well-meaning people leave that work to the FBI, an organization of the Department of Justice which is superbly trained and equipped for the job. President Roosevelt stated this policy officially when he said--I quote--"This task must be conducted in a comprehensive and effective manner on a national basis and all information must be carefully sifted out and correlated in order to avoid confusion and irresponsibility."

To conform with that policy, the FBI has avoided any function or attitude which might place it in the position of prejudging cases. It is a fact-finding arm of government. It rejects the point of view that leads to Gestapo methods against those whom it has specific reason to suspect, or witch hunts against those whom it has no specific reason to suspect. It expounds no political thesis before the fact, nor does it sit as a court of judgment after.

For example, when charges of subversive activities were brought in recent months against persons employed in various branches of the government, the FBI began to investigate the cases at the request of authorized officials; and their findings will be sent to the heads of the respective agencies or divisions. Those findings will be limited to specific facts. No interpretations, no recommendations, will accompany them. And the merits of each case will be left for the head of the interested agency to decide.

For the task that lies ahead, the Department of Justice wants and needs the full cooperation of every loyal citizen. It wants all the information it can get. It wants every legitimate lead or clue to activities of a questionable nature. But it wants more than that. I take it as a very definite part of our assignment to combat, to the fullest of our ability, any subversion of the democratic ideal as it may be related to such investigatory work. In asking the cooperation of all loyal citizens, therefore, I very definitely mean their cooperation in that phase of our assignment.

For the furtherance of this aim, the Department of Justice now has a special unit which is likely to play an increasingly important role. I refer to the Civil Liberties Section, which was set up two years ago last February.

Within statutory limitations, this division has been able to act in the protection of the rights of individuals and minorities. It has enlisted the support and cooperation of lawyers and local government officials toward the same end. It has gone ahead quietly, without seeking headlines.

The functional guide of this Civil Liberties Section is the Bill of Rights. The abuses which it seeks to correct are denials of the privileges which the Constitution bestows equally upon all citizens of our country. For example, one of the objectives of the Civil Liberties Section has been the stamping out of peonage in parts of the south. Another has been to support qualified voters in their insistence on the right to exercise the franchise, in instances where that right has been denied them. A third has been to uphold the right of workers peacefully to organize unions without being molested.

This branch of the Department of Justice will carry ahead its work and extend it where necessary to include the protection of helpless victims of wartime persecution or wartime hysteria. It is no secret that the Department of Justice has made plans for the protection of enemy aliens in case of a more severe emergency. We have good reason to believe that most aliens in our country are peaceful and law-abiding. We will apprehend the alien trouble makers, but we will protect the others against persecution and discrimination.

Meanwhile I am aware that no governmental machinery can alone preserve or ensure the democratic ideal, just as no machinery alone can destroy it. In the final analysis, when this nation's ability to survive as a democracy is put to the test, it is we ourselves who will decide. It is up to us.