We do well to pay reverent homage to the Nation's heroic dead. It is a privilege coming to us as a distinct blessing in a Nation whose citizens may join in free assemblage to observe this twenty-first Memorial Day since the close of the World War. Almost alone among the major powers of the earth our country may pause — in peace — to decorate the graves of those who bared their breasts on the field of battle. To us in peace is given the honor of carrying on that which our soldier and sailor dead preserved.

On Memorial Day the columns of marching men in this land of ours include only a scattering remnant of those men in blue in whose honor Memorial Day was founded. The order to close ranks and fill the gaps among those who followed Grant and Farragut will reach the ears of only a few of the gallant survivors of the mighty forces who fought in the war for the preservation of the Union. By far the greater number among them have gone on to join "the bivouac of the dead."

Our highly-prized task today is to pay homage to our valiant soldiers wherever they lie buried. As we do so we shall remember the part they had in the preservation of the Union. As they so richly fulfilled the duties of citizenship in war so also did they contribute to the glory and the growth of the Nation in times of peace. As honored veterans of every United States war have always done they helped this Nation to develop its great natural resources.

In peace as in war they established by example the type of citizenship which inspired our generation and the generation ahead of us which came to manhood at the time of the Spanish-American war. For the kinship existing between the veterans of all our wars is forever established in our minds and hearts. We make no distinction between the soldier who rose to glory on the field of battle at Gettysburg and the Unknown Soldier who lies at Arlington.

As members of The American Legion we lead in the traditional ceremonies of Memorial Day. It is not alone our interest in our World War dead which inspires us to preserve the beauties of this annual ceremony. In memory we hear once again the martial tread of all the soldiers of every battlefield as we come to this occasion. We are mindful that it is our Nation's heroic dead we honor. And in the honoring we are face to face with the necessity to consider how well we have carried the torch they flung to us.

There comes to mind the poetic phrase of William Watson saying:

"Who loves so well man's noble memories
He needs must love man's nobler hopes yet more."
These "nobler hopes" of man have led us — as Legionnaires — to consider those who mourn their soldier dead. Our Gold Star Mothers have felt the beneficence of our aid. The widows of our departed dead have not been forgotten. The orphaned children of war have had our support. Our every effort has been to restore to the ways of peace and usefulness our disabled comrades.

There is a fine symbolic significance in the custom that leads us to scatter flowers on the graves and over the waters where our departed soldiers and sailors await the final call from beyond their earthly resting places. It is a symbol bidding us renew the pledge to those who gave their lives for their country. It is our indication to them that their sacrifices are not forgotten.

In bonds of "devotion to mutual helpfulness" we, as Legionnaires, guard well the symbolism of Memorial Day as we visualize those war heroes of the past who march in review. As Legionnaires we are thankful for the passing of those sectional feelings to be replaced by our desire for national unity. As Legionnaires we are reminded once again of the origin of Memorial Day which led the women of the South to decorate the graves of the Union soldier dead along with those of their own.

From abroad there come grim warnings to say we must not view too lightly the sacrifices these men have made in the name of our country. Over much of the World the forces of greed and despotism, and of bloody intolerance are loosed upon people whose desire for peace is as great as our own. Once more men must suffer and women must weep because the arbitrament of the sword is accepted as the only means of satisfying the dictator's lust for power.

The toll of death and destruction is mounting steadily in the horrors of war wherever the rule of the dictator has risen. In considering "man's nobler hopes" on this Memorial Day it is right for us to heed the dictator's threat which menaces freedom everywhere.

We who are Legionnaires learned in war to appreciate the America we love. In war as representatives of a liberty-loving people we saw how others lived. First-hand we learned to appreciate those things which have made our Nation great. We came out of those experiences with a new conception of the sacrifices in which men died to win the right to liberty. By the grace of God we escaped the fate of our comrades who died in war to defend that right.

Today, throughout our land, The American Legion is heeding the lessons our members learned in war. In every part of our Nation there are Posts of the Legion named in honor of those who gave their lives. The memory of brave officers, of heroic privates, and of valiant nurses is everywhere kept alive.

Our World War veterans, speaking through the Legion, acknowledge the threefold pledge they must keep. It is their means of urging our country to
benefit by the lessons of the World War. In working for its complete adoption our American Legion is erecting its Memorial to those who gave their lives in freedom's cause.

First, we pledge our strength to seek every honorable means to keep this Nation free from involvement in foreign wars - from wars that are of no concern to us.

Second, in the name of the thousands whose lives were sacrificed to the Nation's lack of preparedness we continue to urge an adequate National Defense.

Third, we renew our determination to combat the creation of any type of fifth column here at home.

Let me review briefly, the manner in which The American Legion has kept the faith with those whose memory we honor on this occasion.

In the post-war years the United States maintained the idealism with which we entered the World War. At the peace table we sought nothing and gained nothing to reward us for our participation in the World War. When the cry for an idealistic conception of peace called for disarmament our Nation scrapped ships while others destroyed blueprints. In the sorrowful parade of so-called peace pacts our Nation strove ever for World idealism.

How far these idealistic plans failed all of us now know. The peace that failed saw the rise of the dictator to power. Fascism, communism and naziism were enthroned. To power politics they brought new meaning. From the start, axis policies were allied against those of the Western democracies. The means for implementing war's horrors had been changed - so that killing in war might become more terrible.

In the struggle for power, crisis followed crisis. The blitzkrieg followed the abandonment of appeasement. Eight nations of Europe have gone into the international graveyard - have vanished from Europe's maps.

Against this grim background, The Legion met in Chicago. There we expressed again our faith in the wisdom of maintaining the neutrality of this Nation. While the candles were being dimmed all over Europe we saw greater hope for the future in avoidance of wars that were not our concern. The American Legion saw nothing in these occasions for war which called for our participation. Realistically we pledged ourselves to keep our commitments in the Western Hemisphere - a task to test the strength of any Nation pledged to keep faith with those who died in battle.

If we regret the Nation's delay in hearing the cry for an adequate National Defense, it does not mean we adopt an I told you so attitude. Our regret is rather based upon the so belated acceptance of the truth that no Nation can

(MORE)
neglect its own defense. We must be prepared to use the force that has meaning in the dictator's language. Unless we are to abandon the Monroe Doctrine and sacrifice the Western Hemisphere to European and Asiatic power politics we must be prepared.

We must have trained men. Our Navy must be capable of repelling any possible combination on two oceans. In guns, in supplies, and in munitions we must be prepared to meet any eventuality. The maintenance of peace here at home means the construction and maintenance of land, sea, and air forces in keeping with our strength as a Nation and the commitments which we can not abandon.

While we maintain the Monroe Doctrine we must scrap the thought that says there can come again a time when the minute men and farmers of Lexington can fight our country's battles.

Keep out and keep ready. It is the Legion's slogan expressing our pledge to keep faith with our soldier dead. In it we express our determination to stay away from foreign wars. Therein is contained an expression of the will to be prepared for the sake of peace in the Western Hemisphere.

The fifth column is the phrase used to describe those who dally with treason. It has found its worth to the dictators. It has had swift growth in the democracies of the world where the saboteur and the subverter are free to operate. The fifth column was used devastatingly to undermine the strength of Scandinavian countries.

The American Legion works now as it has always to combat those who would establish a fifth column here in the United States. The fifth column leader is among us but he finds it difficult to work effectively with the Dies committee exposing his techniques.

The real liberal is not so much concerned with the cry that "the communist line has disappeared down the drain pipe." The true American does not adopt the false cloak of academic freedom to support the fifth column educator who would trade the Bill of Rights for the communist manifesto.

No Trojan horse will be led into the classrooms of the United States so long as our teachers are strong. No new conceptions of social standards will support the use of textbooks seeking to tear down the glory of the leaders who made America great and strong.

Into the third decade of our life as an organization, The American Legion takes its unyielding pledge to those who have fallen in the defense of our country. Our will to stay out of war is strong. Our cry for an adequate National Defense is being heard. Our home defense against those who would lead a fifth column has exposed the sympathizer, the fellow-traveler, and the communist himself.
Memorial Day --

The cry for eternal vigilance cannot go unheard. There can be no yielding in the battle to maintain our hard won liberties. The American Legion can never rest content in its reliance upon victories it has won. But we can hope that our continued efforts have

"Deposited upon the silent shores
Of memory, images and precious thoughts,
That shall not die, and
Cannot be destroyed."

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