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Suggested 1945 Memorial Day address for American Legion Speakers.

MEMORIAL DAY, 1945

With tears in eyes, sorrow in hearts, flowers in hand and a new determination in mind, all America pauses on this Memorial Day to honor the brave men of this war and other wars who died that our country might remain the home of the free.

We mourn today also the passing of our commander-in-chief, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, our first soldier in war and peace alike, who literally gave his life in the fight to re-establish justice and decency and human liberty throughout the earth.

Memorial Day this year has an added meaning.

It is more than a Memorial Day. This year it is a Dedication Day. It is a day on which we must pledge ourselves anew to finishing the task which our honored dead have so bravely begun. For as we decorate the graves of our hero dead at home and abroad we can hear the first strains of a new song of hope - a song of freedom from war. It is an inspiring new melody in a war-sick world, whose composition springs from the supreme sacrifices of thousands of gallant Americans. It is an uplifting lilt into which we must pitch our own voices in a mighty chorus to swell the chant of this new song of hope into a tremendous symphony of lasting peace. It is fitting that we dedicate ourselves to this world harmony on this Memorial Day.

We owe a sacred obligation to these brave dead. Ours is the solemn responsibility to convert the raw product of the victory bought with their blood and their lives, into the finished article of enduring peace. If we fail in this job, they will have died in vain.

The road to Berlin was torturous. It is strewn with the bodies of thousands of America's finest young men. They died in North Africa, in Sicily, at Salerno, and Cassino, on the beaches of Normandy, on battlefields all over France, Belgium and Germany.

The road to Tokio is equally heart-breaking. It is marked with the graves of Americans on Guadalcanal, the Solomons, the Carolines, the Marshalls, the Philippines, at Tarawa, on Iwo Jima and on Okinawa.

The valor of these Americans smashed the power of the Huns in Europe, rolled back the Japanese in the Pacific, and made possible the current conference in San Francisco of the United Nations' world security planners.

Every foot of this progress was paid for in American blood, toil, sweat, misery, treasure and cherished individual ambitions. Nor must we forget the great sacrifices of our allies - the British, the Russians, the French, the Poles, the Czechs, the Norwegians, the Greeks, the Chinese, the Filipinos and all other freedom-loving men and women.

This war has been the greatest catastrophe in world history. It has witnessed greater destruction of property, homes, and cities than all combined conflicts of the past. Yet deadly as has been this war, new inventions threaten to make another struggle an even greater holocaust. War must be outlawed or civilization will be destroyed.

How to convert our dearly-purchased military victory into a peace that will endure is the most important issue before the American people today. Secretary of State Stettinius summed it up when he said:

"Never since 1787, when our Constitution was drafted, have we as a people faced a greater opportunity, a greater challenge, a greater test. What you and I do in this year of 1945 will decide whether all the sacrifice and sorrow of this war will have been in vain, or whether we shall be able at last to live in a world free from war."

The San Francisco meeting on which the eyes of all freedom-loving men and women throughout the world are now focused, is not a peace conference. It is not concerning itself with drafting specific and detailed peace terms. Its only concern is to set up the machinery for world cooperation in the maintenance of peace and the prevention of war. The immediate objective of the conference is to draft the actual charter of a United Nations security organization to be submitted for approval to all the member countries.

The opening of the San Francisco conference was a historic event. It marked a step taken by 45 nations along the road charted so long ago - the road that leads to the brotherhood of man. The conference has become the subject of almost universal prayer and too general wishful thinking.

The American people, however, must not delude themselves by wishful thinking. For mankind is not yet ready to accept the only real formula for everlasting peace - one which is almost two thousand years old.

The world still lives and will live by the yardstick of practicality. It must so live as long as men and nations fear each other. History has proved over and over again that nations are only human in their characteristics of envy and greed and fear. Nations have coveted wealth exactly as have individuals. Nations have sought power. And all seek security.

This first world charter will not be perfect. It can not be perfect. Human nature does not change overnight. Brotherhood among nations will come only after brotherhood is achieved among individuals. When the individual ceases to chase false ideals, when envy and greed and hunger for power are no more among men, then they will be no longer among nations.

So what we can expect from the meeting at San Francisco is hardly perfection. It will contain all the little foibles of man. We must not be naive enough to believe that the motivating impulses of the various delegations will be inspired by anything else than realistic self-interest. But we will have scored a great advance if out of the San Francisco deliberations there comes a charter that will be a stepping stone toward future world neighborliness. If we can negotiate, in mutual understanding, an agreement that is honest and fair and workable, the nations of the world will be able to march together for the one great crusade of all mankind - the enthronement of right over might.

The task of the American people is to make their most effective contribution to this ideal. It must be a practical and realistic contribution, not any product of visions nor day dreams.

The American Legion has measured that contribution in realistic terms. It has measured that contribution in terms of enlightened American self-interest.

It is dedicated by repeated national convention actions to the principle of an association of free nations, armed with the force needed to keep the peace, and cloaked with the authority to use that force.

But The American Legion out of its realistic knowledge of war goes further than that. It declares with all the urgency at its command, that America must do more than express its willingness for enduring peace. As a nation we must demonstrate that we are both willing and able to preserve that peace.

The time has come when we must show, in the sacred names of all our hero dead, that we are just as determined to fight for peace as we are to fight for victory in this war!

Our participation in the San Francisco conference is a glowing demonstration of the will of the American people for enduring peace. But The American Legion says we must contribute more than our good will. We must contribute the punch of our

national strength behind our good will, or else we will be giving only lip service to the peace ideals we profess to cherish.

The finest contribution we can make toward bringing about international teamwork for preserving peace, is a strong America. Such an America will be proof to all the world of the success of a democracy in protecting the rights and liberties of its citizens and upholding its responsibilities as a leader of nations.

A strong America will remove the chief cause which led to two world conflicts - a weak and ineffective American republic when grave dangers arose to the peace of the world.

It is the belief of The American Legion that adoption of peacetime universal military training will strengthen the work of the San Francisco conference.

It will serve notice upon the rest of the world that America is serious about the proposed world security organization; that it is ready to put everything behind it to make that organization work; and that it has taken steps to keep its full support behind it. It will show that America is prepared to wage peace with the same courage and willingness for sacrifice as it waged war.

We must not forget that the San Francisco conference is but a noble experiment. We pray to God that it may be a successful experiment. We must do everything we can to make it that. But we must keep in mind the finding of the national study conference of the commission on a just and durable peace of the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America which with rare vision and realism declared:

"Until a world organization not only exists, but has established its authority through wise and responsible action over a period of time, no member states, great or small, can confide their destinies unreservedly to its performance."

We are forced, therefore, by enlightened self-interest, to follow a dual course toward the objective of freedom from war. One course is through full and wholehearted collaboration with other freedom and peace loving nations. The other course is to take out insurance against failure of international teamwork to outlaw war.

In universal military training, The American Legion says, we have a means of advancing along both courses of our national self-interest.

Our late President Roosevelt who gave so much of his waning strength to the promotion of the cause of enduring peace, said just before his death:

"I am clear in my own mind that as an essential factor in the maintenance of peace in the future, we must have universal military training after this war."

A poll of American citizens, civilians and those in service alike, shows that better than 70 percent favor immediate adoption of universal military training in this country.

National Commander Edward N. Scheiberling who represented The American Legion at the opening of the San Francisco conference, said:

"In the months that have passed I have traveled the length of our land. I haven talked to countless men and women, in every walk, in every position of life. I have talked with civilians, with veterans of the last war and of this.

"I find them united in this determination: that now we must find the way to prevent another world holocaust; that this time America must be prepared to accept her responsibilities; that America must be ready to preserve and maintain the peace. This time, they tell me, America must be strong, able to meet any challenge that the future may bring.

"Wherever I have gone, they have asked me about universal military training. America believes in it today - accepts it as a sure, firm bulwark against whatever the future may bring.

"America is the hope of the world today. It is on our vast strength, our fresh leadership, our unselfish devotion to the cause of freedom, that the structure of world peace must be built. We must say to the world, that America is prepared to assume the responsibilities of peace; that America is ready to do her share.

"We know that peace cannot be won by appeasement, it cannot be won by idle wishing. This time we shall achieve a militant peace, a peace based on justice and strength. Inherent in the plans for world peace machinery is the armed power needed to

put an instant stop to any threat of aggression. We believe a strong America is the first step toward success in any plan for enduring peace. And we know America cannot be strong, cannot be ready to fulfill her role of world leadership for peace, unless our sons are ready and trained to fight.

"For that reason The American Legion is advocating universal military training - not as a weapon of war, but as a weapon of peace, as a vital adjunct to the San Francisco conference."

Destiny has given us a chance to redeem the failure of a previous generation. It is a chance that is being bought and paid for dearly in world-wide destruction and precious lives. The price is brutal no matter how we figure it. It will be exorbitant beyond human calculation if we are forced to fight a third World War a few decades hence.

We have a far better start this time toward making peace permanent. Planning for world organization was begun long before the war was fully finished. This over-all planning is a continuous and flexible process, divorced from the tangled problems of territorial, political and economic settlements.

This time we have unity among the American people for working with our fellow nations for keeping the peace. Statesmanship has taken precedence over partisanship. This is to the everlasting credit of the leaders of our great political parties. Factional differences have been ruled out at every stage of our national preparation for the work at San Francisco. Our delegation there is not a democratic delegation, is not a republican delegation, but an all-American delegation. Its members deserve our faith, and our solid backing.

We of The American Legion, we whose ranks include men from both World Wars, have confidence in the work that will be done at San Francisco. We have confidence in the leadership of President Harry S. Truman, in his ability to carry out the peace plans launched by his great predecessor, Roosevelt. As the largest organization of veterans of World Wars I and II alike, we pledge him all of our support, all of our strength, in carrying the San Francisco conference to a successful conclusion.

In that spirit we bend our knees at these shrines of American heroism today. From these honored dead we shall draw the inspiration to make good all the promises we have sent to all our armed forces - that this time we shall not fail in vision and statesmanship to make the most of their victory in terms of lasting peace.

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