

ADDRESS OF HAROLD E. STASSEN TO A PUBLIC MEETING SPONSORED BY THE REPUBLICAN ORGANIZATION IN ST. PETERSBURG, FLORIDA , 8:00 PM, NOVEMBER 19, 1947.

Mr. Chairman, Fellow Citizens:

In the midst of the current proposal that we embark upon a widespread program to aid the rebuilding of Europe and to block the spread of Communism, a program in which I heartily agree, there is also a vital necessity that we act upon the imperative of keeping America strong in a military sense during these next years.

To do this we must take early steps to improve the supply of manpower to our armed forces, to strengthen our reserves, and to keep up our research and our air power.

We are currently more than 100,000 men short of minimum requirements in our armed forces, and post-war enlistments are expiring at a rapid rate. At this time our reserves are only partially recruited and are not in a satisfactory state.

To meet this situation the military leadership has advocated a universal military training program. I have supported that program from the very first time it was proposed by General Marshall. It is quite apparent now that there is great resistance to the program in the National Congress in both political parties. We must not drift along in this deadlocked attitude while our military force further deteriorates. The time has come for those in the Congressional leadership who have sincere differences of opinion as to the manner of maintaining American armed strength to come together and reach an agreement over an adjusted program.

I say specifically to those who express their opposition to universal military training, it is urgent that you come forward with your suggestions of the means by which we can build up the essential active duty manpower in our armed forces and strengthen our reserves. If we are not to have universal military training, what then shall be the training program under which we will keep up our armed strength? Shall we have all the young men register, and with an impartial lottery, and under quotas approved by Congress, select a certain percentage of them for a short term of essential military service and of training and for subsequent duty in the reserves? Or will some ingenious alternative method be developed?

We must at an early time enact the essential research legislation and follow through on a reasonable adjustment of our great aircraft industry to a stable basis for continuing peacetime operation.

I insist that America must be strong. This subject of military strength is one upon which we dare not be unstable in this uncertain age with fundamental sharp competition of the ways of life.

We may well reach a point in the next few years in which the leaders of the Politbureau realize that they have been making two major miscalculations in the world situation. They may reach the understanding that they have been wrong when they expected an economic crash in America. They may also conclude that they were wrong when they expected to successfully infiltrate this great, free country with a Communist movement.

They may see that they have been wrong when they have anticipated that chaos and suffering in Europe would lead the peoples to turn to Communism or Socialism.

When these realizations arise within the Kremlin, the crucial decision that then must be made is whether they seek to dominate by force or whether they re-evaluate their own position and basically change their policy at home and abroad to fit in to a harmonious world.

When the point for that decision arises, there is a greater prospect for peace if America is then clearly strong in its armed forces.

And when that point of decision arises, if the decision in the Kremlin were to be the judgement of madness, to seek domination and aggression by force, then even more will it be important that America be strong in a military sense so that with the greatest possible speed and with the least possible loss of life such a bid for domination by force would be defeated.

These are grim, basic facts, but I do not believe in participating in public life on any other basis than to face the facts. It is in that spirit that I ask tonight that the leadership of America unite for decisions assuring the future military strength of our country.

We have long since gone by the time when the question is what do you individually think is the right way to keep America strong. Now we are at the point where the important question is where can we reach agreement between the various viewpoints of the essential majorities of the National Congress to maintain our manpower and reserves and armed strength and research and airpower in the years ahead. We must not be an undecided America.

I close this frank discussion with the statement that weighing all the factors I have a sober optimism of a future of peace and of expanding freedom for ourselves and for mankind.



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