

The Counsel of FEAR



ADDRESS OF HAROLD E. STASSEN AT THE MEMORIAL DAY SERVICES
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"The Counsel of Fear"

By HAROLD E. STASSEN

On this day throughout America, men and women and children pause in thoughtful and thankful memory of those who have given their lives in the armed service of our country. It is altogether right and reverent that this be done. And I know that this vast audience joins me in commending on this day the G. A. R. Memorial Corporation and its various member organizations: the United Spanish War Veterans, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the American Legion, the Disabled American Veterans, and the Amvets.

Even as we meet this morning on this beautiful Arlington site, with its historic and heroic atmosphere, overlooking our National Capitol, our fellow citizens across the land are similarly engaged. I can envisage them now as I saw them a year ago at a small cemetery at Carbondale, Illinois, the home of the first Memorial Day. It was at Carbondale in 1866 that General John A. Logan gave the first Memorial Address, and it was two years later that he issued the famous General Order Number Eleven directing that Memorial Day be observed thenceforward.

We, the people of that nation which these who lie here have helped to preserve, should ever remember that the freedom and the fullness of life which we now enjoy are

directly due to the fighting and the dying and the winning of those who have served under the Stars and Stripes.

We should and do honor our heroic dead. And in doing so we may well reflect upon the most powerful and penetrating words ever spoken in memoriam. They were expressed near the close of our country's darkest years by our great and humanitarian president, Abraham Lincoln, at Gettysburg. You know the words: "That we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain . . ."

It seems to me that these words have special meaning to us on this Memorial Day of 1951. For, even as we meet, men are dying under our flag in a distant land. And in these recent weeks a tremendous flood of words has been released in speeches and in testimony regarding the military and foreign policies and actions under which those men are fighting and are dying.

The engagement to speak to you on this day at this place was made long ago, but I find that I cannot now speak without saying to you some very direct and immediate words about the situation that confronts you and me and all Americans today.

I have been deeply disturbed by these recent speeches and this testimony. Over and over again I have heard expressions which clearly accept fear as the guiding principle of American policy. Again and again those in the highest positions not only have said that they are afraid, but they have said things directly designed to frighten the American people. Theirs has been the counsel of fear—fear of atomic bombs on American cities, fear of the difficulties of far-off fights, fear of the consequences of decisions made in the Russian Kremlin. Over and over again it has been repeated that America is weak and that America should be afraid.

My fellow citizens, I find it hard to believe that it is really in America that I am hearing and reading these things.

I say to you on this Memorial Day that if those two statements—"We are weak" and "We are afraid"—become the two guiding principles of the policies of our America, then these honored dead will have died in vain!

I have always thought that one of the most powerful utterances that President Franklin D. Roosevelt ever made was the challenging statement in his first inaugural: "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself."

A generation ago President Woodrow Wilson said: "To such a task we dedicate our lives, our fortunes, everything we are and everything that we have, with the pride of those who know that the day has come when America is privileged to spend her blood and her might for the principles that gave her birth and happiness and the peace which she has treasured. God helping her, she can do no other."

Think with me, if you will, of the very birth of America. Think of General George Washington and his men at Valley Forge. What if General Washington had said, "We are too weak and we are afraid"? Where would America be? What would America be? History tells us that in all the crucial moments in the life of this nation there were those who counseled fear and calculated weakness. But never was their counsel taken! It was Patrick Henry who said in this very state of Virginia: "We are not weak if we but make a proper use of the means which the God of Nature has placed in our power. The battle, sir, is not to the strong alone; it is to the vigilant, the active, the brave."

My countrymen, if these honored dead are not to have died in vain, we must sound the confident truth that America is strong, and we must busy ourselves to make her stronger day by day. We must demonstrate that America is the land of the brave, and we must base our great decisions on courage and not on timidity.

It was the timidity of America in the cold war that led

directly to the hot Korean war. History tells us again and again, and yet again, that timid nations have to fight more wars than courageous nations. And not only that, but that the timid nations have to fight their wars at a time which someone else chooses for them, and more often than not they fight to a defeat rather than to a victory. I find nothing in the three centuries of the American record to commend the counsel of fear now set before the nation.

This counsel of fear is as alien to the heritage of America as yellow is alien to Red, White and Blue. It is an insidious infectious disease which turns steel to jelly and turns free men to slaves.

There is no doubt that if World War III should come tomorrow, America would win! It would not be easy, but victory would come. We must not forget that the only easy roads for any nation are those which lead down to the swamps of despair. Easy roads never lead to the high, clear heights of freedom and of better life.

I doubt that such a policy of fear and weakness will bring the Korean War to a close, and even if it does, I am certain such a policy will lead to even more grave consequences in the years immediately ahead.

I plead with my countrymen to insist that American policy now, as throughout our history, be based on courage and confidence in our strength. This does not mean a course that is reckless or without restraints. Far from it. But it does mean that the restraints that are practiced shall be based on moral principles and never on fear.

The standards for American foreign policy must be standards of morality and standards of justice, and not standards of fear or standards of craven expediency.

An America that is brave and confident will find that it has more allies that count, more allies that do their share, more allies that refuse to trade with the enemy, more allies

that build their own strength. An America moved by fear and confessing weakness will find its nominal allies dealing behind its back, making a mockery of its friendship, losing the respect for us which they had on the bright day of victory in World War II.

As President Theodore Roosevelt said at Kansas City on Memorial Day thirty-five years ago: "Weakness invites contempt. Weakness combined with bluster invites both contempt and aggression. Self-respecting strength that respects the rights of others is the only quality that secures respect from others. If, in our foreign policy we are weak, if we use lofty words at the same time that we commit unworthy actions, and above all, if we fail to protect our own rights, we shall not secure the good will of anyone, and we shall incur the contempt of other nations; and contempt of that kind is easily turned into active international violence."

And the record shows that Theodore Roosevelt contributed to peace, for this nation and for the world.

This nation under God would not today be the land of the free if it had not also been the home of the brave. Life is sweet only when it can be preserved with honor—on any other terms it is not worth preserving.

That is the lesson of Memorial Day. These honored dead require that Americans fear God—and no one else! On this foundation, and only on this foundation, can the destiny of America as a leader for freedom and justice and mercy for mankind be fulfilled. That must be our course. My fellow Americans, in memory of those who gave their lives for this nation, let us build our strength and be not afraid!



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