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INCHING ALONG TOWARD PEACE

Excerpts from remarks prepared for delivery by Senator Hubert H. Humphrey (D., Minn.) before Dade County Bar Association, Miami, Florida, Monday, March 30, 1959.

We live in a time of continuous crisis. We have been numbed by screaming headlines about Suez, Quemoy, Baghdad, and Budapest. Now we are in the middle of the Berlin crisis. This is not just another international crisis. It is probably the most serious and fateful problem faced by the United States and the free world since the end of World War II.

We all know what is at stake in Berlin -- the two things we value most -- peace and freedom. A false move or a serious miscalculation could be the spark that would ignite a nuclear holocaust. If free West Berlin falls, it is not inconceivable that West Germany would eventually follow, and if West Germany falls, the nightmare of a new tyranny would sweep over all of Europe.

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Berlin is the focal point in the mighty struggle between Communist tyranny and the free world. The situation is fraught with danger. But I believe that firmness, wisdom, and solidarity with our closest allies will give us the strength we need to meet the challenge posed by Mr. Khrushchev's thinly disguised ultimatum which falls due on May 27.

In my remarks about the seriousness of the Berlin crisis, I would like to make a few general observations in the interests of understanding. I do not want to say or do anything that will make the job of the executive branch any more difficult than it now is. In fact, I seriously considered whether I should say anything at all in public on so delicate an issue. I hope my comments will help to clarify the situation in its deepest and broadest aspects.

A sound policy toward the Berlin crisis will require all the patience, understanding, and courage we can muster.

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If the American people understand the depth of the crisis, I believe they will be willing to pay the price to save West Berlin. We know that peace and freedom are indivisible and that both are at stake in Berlin. And if freedom is snuffed out in Berlin, the cause of freedom and justice throughout the world will suffer.

The gravity of the Berlin crisis necessitates that we enter into face-to-face talks with Russian leaders.

In his address to the American people, the President rightly insisted on both firmness and our willingness to negotiate -- as many of us have been urging. I am gratified that he is now willing to go to the summit.

We must always be ready to undertake any honorable move that will further prospects of peace.

The Test of our greatness and leadership is not to be found in the formalities of diplomacy, but rather in the sincerity

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of our purpose. With a large part of the world in the control of dictators, vital decisions will be made by heads of state. To suggest otherwise is to ignore the real facts of political life. Therefore, let us proceed to the summit conference fully prepared with purpose and program, and in unity with our allies. We must do our "homework" better than we have in the past, and know what we want, and what we are going to propose.

The willingness to negotiate is only the beginning, not the end, of a responsible policy toward the German situation. Our major problem now is to develop a viable negotiating posture in concert with Britain, France, and West Germany. To enter into talks with the Russians, either at the foreign ministers' level or heads of state level, ill-prepared or disunited, is to invite humiliation and even disaster.

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I want to emphasize to you today my belief that it would be excessively imprudent to hold the proposed summit conference without utilizing the unique facilities of the United Nations.

As we go into the coming summit conference, we need to invoke the moral authority of the purposes and principles embodied in the charter of the United Nations.

And, in my opinion, the best way to do it effectively is to hold the summit conference within the framework of the United Nations.

We can't be part-time members of the UN, turning to it in desperation at the last moment only after we have bungled efforts to solve the world's problems alone. We can't take an off-again, on-again attitude toward the United Nations, if we want to help keep it an effective force for peace.

When we had a crisis in the Middle East and Russia proposed a summit conference, we insisted that any such conference be held through the United Nations.

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Yet now, as we approach a summit conference which all agree is urgent, we seem to have regrettably turned our back on the UN -- and our back upon our other allies we represent in the occupation of Berlin.

The presence of the Secretary-General at a summit conference would mean the symbolic representation of all the members of the United Nations who may object to four powers presuming to settle an issue which can mean peace or war for the entire world. Peace is the responsibility of all nations.

It is not only the conference itself which should be brought within the framework of the United Nations. There is also the brighter prospect through such a conference of bringing within the framework of the United Nations the administration of any eventual agreement of a safer regime for Berlin. Such a regime might well include a permanent UN Presence for Berlin.

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The United Nations Charter recognizes the role of normal diplomacy, and charges the nations to seek solutions to their problems in the first instance through peaceful means of their own choice.

Nevertheless, the presumption must be that in dealing with general problems which threaten international peace and security, international conferences should be conducted within the framework of the United Nations.

The United Nations offers many advantages for international conferences, whether involving few or many states.

One of the advantages of a conference within the framework of the UN is that such a conference has the moral backing of the Charter, and would be directed toward objectives compatible with the purposes of the Charter.

Our purposes, in any summit conference, would stand that test. It would be Soviet purposes that would become subjected

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to world scrutiny.

What the Communists Want

It seems to me that the Soviet Union wants three things in Europe and has created the Berlin crisis as a lever to gain them:

1. The Soviet Union wants the three Western Powers to get out of West Berlin. It ultimately wants the entire city to be under complete Communist control.
2. She wants to use the Berlin crisis to force the Western Powers to negotiate an all-German settlement favorable to the Soviet Union. She prefers a united Germany tied closely to the Communist bloc. She will settle immediately for two Germanies. In other words, the status quo with East Germany the Communist state under firm Soviet control and influence. The least acceptable alternative that the Soviet appears willing to consider is a neutralized and denuclearized Germany which

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she hopes eventually to swallow up, by one means or another.

3. The Soviet Union sees in the Berlin crisis an opportunity to split the Western alliance. We must never forget that the primary objective of Soviet policy in Europe is to weaken NATO and to divide the United States from her allies. We cannot permit any of these Soviet objectives to be fulfilled. It is inconceivable that we would retreat from West Berlin. To do so would be to forfeit world leadership and in fact to become a second-rate power. I am convinced that the Soviet Union prefers to gain its political objective in Europe without nuclear war, and I know that the United States and our allies want to avoid a nuclear Armageddon.

We should make every effort to avoid getting into a position where we would be required to use force first. I am sure our Government will do everything possible to avoid a provocative or hostile act. We should, however, make it crystal clear that

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we will not be forced out of Berlin, nor be denied access to
or in any way accede to any effort to starve into submission
the West Berlin population. It must be clearly understood by
Moscow and East Germany that we are prepared to take any
action necessary in support of these policies and commitments.

U. S. Policy of Resolute Firmness

Last November I stood in West Berlin with its able and
courageous mayor, Willy Brandt. I vowed then, and I vow today,
to support a policy of firmness, to uphold the right of France,
Britain, and the United States to maintain garrisons in West Berlin
until a legitimate peace treaty is signed.

This is the position and policy of our Government. We can
all be grateful that we do not stand alone. Britain, France,
and the 12 other members of the NATO alliance stand with us.
We will not surrender. We will not be pushed out.

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What does standing firm mean? It does not mean holding fast inflexibly to old positions which have helped to produce the present unhappy stalemate. The real issue, said Walter Lippmann recently, is "whether to stand pat on positions that have become untenable or to move to new positions from which the Western allies can recover the political initiative." Standing firm means that we must match our firmness with imagination, courage, and a willingness to negotiate with the Soviet Union. It means firmness in our fundamental position and flexibility in our strategy and tactics. Standing firm and willingness to negotiate are not, as some people suggest, contradictory policies. They are two elements in any viable policy in the Berlin crisis. We must stand firm in order to negotiate effectively. And we must have solid bases for negotiation if we want to stand firm.

It is imperative that the best minds of our country -- those persons qualified as experts on the problems of central

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Europe and Germany as well as Soviet policies and tactics --
be called upon at once for intensive consultation directed
toward policy formulation.

In the weeks between now and May 27, we, in concert with
our allies, must explore every possible honorable means that
can ease this crisis and point in the direction of a just
and equitable settlement.

It is not enough just to negotiate and talk. We must
have clearly in mind the objectives we seek, and the means and
ways of achieving these objectives without bargaining away
the rights of others, or in any way weakening our own security.

I am gratified that our Government is at last taking anew
the leadership in preparing for these important conferences.

Yet I would be less than candid if I did not warn the
American not to expect quick and easy solutions out of the
impending negotiations.

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It must constantly be kept in mind that there are no short-time, short-run, immediate answers to these grave, perplexing, long-range problems. Negotiations will require persistent patience. They will require a willingness to endure almost unbelievable, tedious discussions of long duration.

But we must be prepared to negotiate and negotiate as long as there is the slightest prospect of relieving world tensions and minimize the danger of war.

The hope of peace and understanding with the Soviet Union is not to be found in political deals.

We cannot leap over our problems and differences.

They must be slowly chipped away, through our contacts in the United Nations, our participations with the Soviet in the UN agencies, through our exchange programs, and what we hope will be gradual changes within the Soviet Union.

At best, we will inch along toward peace and understanding.

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Let us hope and pray we have the emotional stability and maturity to persevere. And let us hope and pray that no attempts will be made to find quick solutions which will ultimately be regretted because of ill-considered actions or ill-advised consideration.

We know that our national security is not and should not be a partisan matter. But genuine bipartisanship in foreign policy does not mean that the loyal opposition silently acquiesces in all policies advanced by the Administration.

The Berlin crisis is both a danger and an opportunity. It is a danger to world peace if we display signs of weakness, indecision, or appeasement. It is an opportunity if we recognize the sharpness of the crisis and proceed to explore every means of peaceful settlement, not only of the Berlin and German situation, but indeed the relationships between the United States, its allies, and the Soviet Union in all of central Europe.

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Wise, prudent, and courageous statesmanship is needed now as never before. We must be prepared to follow the course that may be tedious, frustrating, and characterized by insults, threats, and abuses for months to come. The war of nerves has been intensified.

In this struggle, the victory will come to those who clearly understand the relationship between power and principle, maneuver and objective. We cannot afford to be found wanting in any of these.

Make no mistake about it, a policy of firmness with negotiation is the only policy that will avoid surrender on the one side, and minimize the risks of war on the other.

Cooperation with Allies and Restraint Urged

We must act in harmony with our allies, Britain, France, and West Germany. This means more than coordinating our pronouncements about standing firm. It means hammering out a

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unified policy and strategy to give us strength for bargaining, and to undergird our determination if negotiation should break down.

If we had worked a bit closer with our allies and had strengthened the consultative process within NATO during the past five years, perhaps we would be in a better position than we are today. But let bygones be bygones. If we ever needed the wisdom, strength, and counsel of trusted allies we need them now.

Yes, these are dangerous days and the situation is explosive. But these are also great and challenging days where spiritual and brain power may save us from the dangerous alternative of the use of firepower.

The alternative to war is peace, and it is in the pursuit of peace that we will find our greatness and fulfill our destiny.

March 27, 1959



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