



Max M. Kampelman Papers

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THE TIME IS NOW

**REMARKS BY
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The human being seems capable of reaching for the stars, but it would be a mistake if we did not recognize that we also have the capacity to dig a big hole for ourselves in the earth – We have the power to love and the power to hate – the power to build and the power to destroy. This struggle appears to be a part of our being. Differences among us and the societies we create seem to be an inevitable characteristic of our being.

Some of us look upon Sunday as a holy day. I was brought up to believe that Saturday was the holy day of Sabbath. We are increasingly beginning to note that those who look upon Friday as their holy day are much more numerous than all of the rest of us combined. It would be civilized if we could all look upon ourselves as brothers and sisters under one father, but we have not yet reached that level of religious commitment or civilization.

We have learned that religion appears to both unite us and divide us. The human being seems capable of creating endless issues to argue about and to fight and kill about. There is no end to the issues that can divide us, but many of our scientist and politicians and many of us have come to believe that we must find objectives and principles that have the potential to unite us as

human beings. That should be and can be the character and the commitment of our children's generation.

The human being appears to be unique in the development of the brain and in the capacity of that brain to help us create and build. But we have learned that it can also help us to destroy. Our session today is designed to understand how best to protect ourselves from the destructive consequences arising out of our growing mastery and understanding of the atom and its capacity to both destroy and create.

Our science has learned to master the atom. Modern medicine has been enriched by the knowledge, but we also discovered its potential as a weapon.

The growing theme of our civilization and of our task today is indeed that very challenge. Permit me to be personal, in 1985, President Ronald Reagan and Russian President Gorbachev decided to revive negotiations between our two countries. Our earlier experience had failed to find a method by which our two countries – the only countries then possessing nuclear weapons of mass destruction – could reduce their numbers and manage a peaceful relationship in the face of those dangerous weapons. President Reagan asked me to head the American delegation in those negotiations. I explained to the President that I was not qualified to deal with the subject which, of course, was a highly complicated one, but he knew I had spent three years in a previous negotiation with the Soviet Union on human rights and related subjects which had produced an agreement and specific humanitarian advances in Eastern Europe. He knew I was and remained a Humphrey Democrat. Indeed, he reminded me of his early friendship with Humphrey whose friendship he clearly cherished.

The 1985 agreement that the two Presidents –Reagan and Gorbachev- meet and get acquainted with one another took place in Geneva. At the conclusion of their meeting, President

Reagan called a White House meeting of his staff and cabinet to report on that first session between the two Presidents. In the course of that report he mentioned that he had suggested to Gorbachev the desirability of both of our countries going to zero on all of our nuclear weapons. I was at that White House session. I recall virtual unanimous consternation among his advisors at the report of his zero proposal. All who spoke believed that it was not in our interest to have us destroy our nuclear weapons. The President listened attentively. He did not respond to their concerns until he and Mr. Gorbachev later met again in Reykjavik, Iceland when he repeated his zero proposal. Those three days in Iceland narrowed the differences between our two Presidents, but did not produce an agreement, although they issued a statement saying that "a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought." Three years later the negotiations in which I was involved produced two treaties - one which totally abolished our intermediate range nuclear weapons and the other, which reduced our longer-range strategic nuclear weapons by fifty percent.

On that occasion many believed that it was only we and the Russians who possessed these awful weapons of mass destruction. This was not so and is not so now. Science does not end at national boundaries. We are finding that it is understandable for countries without the weapons to seek them for themselves and it is understandable for them to ignore our efforts to persuade them not to develop their nuclear weapons. India, Pakistan and Israel as well as we and Russia and our partners have nuclear weapons. It is understandable for countries without the weapons to seek them for themselves. Our effort to persuade them not to develop nuclear weapons is something like urging and bribing people not to smoke when you are dangling a cigarette from your lips.

I sense a growing mood among people of influence in our country and elsewhere that our survival requires leadership by the U.S. and the international community calling for the total elimination of all nuclear weapons of mass destruction. The highly respectable and professional

Hoover Institute at Stanford University is assuming leadership in that effort. Former Secretary of State George Shultz is chairing that effort which includes Henry Kissinger, former Secretary of Defense John Perry, former Senate leader Sam Nunn, and significant numbers of leading nuclear scientist who have now attended two vital sessions on this project at Stanford University. I am proud to be a part of the effort. Two weeks ago, I returned from a few days of sessions at Stanford where we debated and studied the best way of achieving the goal of zero, a goal we are pursuing. An article by me in The New York Times and an article by George Shultz and the Stanford group in the Wall Street Journal produced overwhelming public and leadership responses.

A few months ago I was invited to London where I spoke at The House of Commons on the need for England to join with us in that effort for zero. The British Foreign Minister openly identified herself and her government with our objectives. There is growing support in Europe and we have been invited to hold our new session in Norway.

I am frequently asked how it would be best to proceed. My own view is that the President of the United States should speak for the American people at a special session or the General Assembly of the United Nations and introduce a resolution which would declare the possession and development of nuclear weapons to be not only a crime against humanity, but an international crime doing violence to the principles of the U.N. That resolution, if agreed to by the General Assembly, would assign to the U.N. Security Council the task of achieving the goal of zero. In that connection, I vividly recall that it was President Reagan who emphasized "trust but verify." It will obviously be necessary to prevent cheating, but, as we aim at a higher form of living, it is also necessary to provide that those who make an effort to cheat should be punished by total political, economic, and cultural world isolation.

I realize that it is simple to state what “ought” to be, but how realistic is it? Permit me to say a few words about my belief in the “power of the ought.”

Prior to my introduction to Washington in 1949, when I joined the staff of newly elected Senator Hubert Humphrey of Minnesota, I taught political science at the University. During my teaching days, Gunnar Myrdahl, the Swedish Economist, published his massive study of the Negro in America. His dominant perception was the realization that wherever he went in our country, he noted a common theme – that of the principles of the Declaration of Independence. I then asked my students to recall that at the time the Declaration was proposed we had slavery, no legal equality for women, and property qualifications for voting. I could envision the practical politicians of that era saying in Philadelphia: “This is no time for these unrealistic dreams. We are fighting a war for our independence as a nation. Don’t mix us up. We are losing the war. Get out of our way. Slavery has been with us since the beginning of time – even the Bible tells us that.”

The practical politicians arguably had a strong skeptical case, but the “ought” of the Declaration has clearly historically overcome the “is” of that day. The political movement of the “is” to the “ought” has made our American democracy the country we cherish today. The “ought” has been and is central to our place in world history. The power of “ought” is real. I suggest to you that our role in the world must be to establish a civilized “ought” for the human race – the abolition of weapons of mass destruction. The alternative is chaos and unimaginable destruction.

The U.N. tells us that there are more than 27,000 nuclear weapons in the world! The number is growing. We cannot wish away the awful threat from nuclear weapons to the survival of the human race; but we must not resign ourselves to a nuclear disaster.

The President of the United States, after appropriate consultation, should personally appear and propose a resolution to the United Nations and the peoples of the world that its General Assembly call for the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction. This must be our and the world's indispensable rational objective – the “ought” for the world and the human race. The resolution should then simultaneously direct the U.N. Security Council to develop effective political and technical procedures to achieve this rational goal, including stringent intrusive verification and severe penalties to prevent cheating by irresponsible nations and groups. Total world isolation – political, economic, and cultural – must be developed to punish those criminal states which would attempt to violate the “ought” adopted by the United Nations. States found to be criminal states should also lose their right to vote or participate in any way in any of the bodies within the U.N.

As a part of this program, all countries with weapons grade plutonium and uranium should be required to sell their weapons grade material to a new United Nations Bank, which would turn that dangerous material into energy available to fill the needs of an energy starved states in the world.

Do I expect that Russia will join us in this effort to restore sanity to the world? I do not know. Do I expect that China will refrain from exercising its veto within the Security Council and thereby try to defeat our efforts toward world sanity? I do not know.

What I do know is that an effort toward sanity by us will communicate to the world that we Americans – descendants of Russians and Chinese and Africans and Latinos and Indians and Germans and French – all of us are part of an effort to achieve human dignity and peace, and that this is what America represents and seeks for all the peoples of the world. We have the sword, but we seek a world without swords. We have the capacity to win wars, but we do not want to fight wars.

It is essential that we lead the world into developing a decisive move away from the “is” - a world with a risk of increasing catastrophe – and work toward achieving peace and stability, the “ought”. It was President John Kennedy who said, “... the world was not meant to be a prison in which man awaits his execution.... The weapons of war must be abolished before they abolish us.” It was President Ronald Reagan who called for the abolition of “all nuclear weapons,” which he considered to be “totally irrational, totally inhumane, good for nothing but killing, possible destructive of life on earth and civilization.”

The world of science knows this. It is time for the political world to learn it. It is time for us to say so and to lead in that direction. Now is the time. Thank you.

Statements by Past Presidents

President Franklin D. Roosevelt:

"Truly if the genius of mankind that has invented the weapons of death cannot discover the means of preserving peace, civilization as we know it lives in an evil day."

President Harry S. Truman:

"There is nothing more urgent confronting the people of all nations than the banning of all nuclear weapons under a foolproof system of international control."

President Dwight D. Eisenhower:

"Let no one think that the expenditure of vast sums for weapons and systems of defense can guarantee absolute safety for the cities and citizens of any nation. The awful arithmetic of the atomic bomb does not permit any such easy solution."

President John F. Kennedy:

"Every man, woman and child lives under a nuclear sword of Damocles, hanging by the slenderest of threads, capable of being cut at any moment by accident or miscalculation or by madness. The weapons of war must be abolished before they abolish us ... the mere existence of modern weapons ... is a source of horror and discord and distrust."

President Lyndon B. Johnson:

"...uneasy is the peace that wears a nuclear crown. And we cannot be satisfied with a situation in which the world is capable of extinction in a moment of error, or madness, or anger. "

President Richard M. Nixon:

"Over 400 million people ... would be killed in an all-out [nuclear] exchange."

President Gerald R. Ford:

"The world faces an unprecedented danger in the spread of nuclear weapons technology."

President James E. Carter:

"In an all-out nuclear war, more destructive power than in all of World War II would be unleashed every second during the long afternoon it would take for all the missiles and bombs to fall. A World War II every second -- more people killed in the first few hours than all the wars of history put together. The survivors, if any, would live in despair amid the poisoned ruins of a civilization that had committed suicide."

President Ronald W. Reagan:

"We seek the elimination one day of nuclear weapons from the face of the Earth."

President George H.W. Bush:

"School children once hid under their desks in drills to prepare for nuclear war. I saw the chance to rid our children's dreams of the nuclear nightmare, and I did."

President Bill Clinton:

"...protecting the American people from the dangers of nuclear war ... is well worth fighting for. And I assure you, the fight is far from over."