

Hallowed By Flowers of Memory

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Hallowed by Flowers of Memory

By A. F. FABER*

We join with people all over the nation to observe Memorial Day. We pay tribute to all in our nation who have sacrificed so much to preserve the liberties we cherish in America. Memorial Day means much to members of The American Legion and all veterans because they know many of the hardships endured by those valiant comrades who have given so much on the Altar of Freedom. The graves we decorate with real flowers and the flowers of memory can only in a small way consecrate the acts of courage performed by those whom we honor.

I do not speak to you in soft words of tribute for our beloved dead. Neither they, nor their living comrades in the American Legion, would have me do so. With their lives, these immortals, whom we honor, from Valley Forge to the bloody slopes of Okinawa and Heartbreak Ridge, sanctified their faith in the democratic principles, that even as men are born with the God-given birthright of freedom; so too shall they be permitted to live in the righteousness of peace.

We can no more add to their valor than we can impart added brilliance to the sun or added beauty to the eternal stars. Rather let us rededicate ourselves to the completion of the work which they have so nobly begun and for which they gave their lives. Let us, therefore, give voice to their stilled lips, and speak out unafraid in their behalf.

Would they be satisfied with the conditions we have today if they could be here? Peace is still not a reality to most of the people of this world. The grand alliance that crushed the armed might of Hitler, Mussolini and Tojo is dead. In its place there has risen a new form

*Memorial Day address delivered by A. F. Faber, Editor of the *Iowa Legionnaire*, over Radio Station WHO, Des Moines, Iowa on May 29, 1955.

of totalitarianism which differs from that of the SWASTIKA only in name.

Little nations which dreamed of redemption from slavery were liberated only to be enslaved anew under a flag of a different color. Suspicion, hatred, civil war, starvation and greed ride the range of human misery as ruthlessly as when the war lords of Berlin and Tokyo dreamed of their "master races."

Eastern Europe is closed to Western Europe by an "iron curtain" of censorship. Communist agents throughout the world, taking their orders from Moscow, are trying to seize control of governments and make them subject to the will of the Kremlin.

TYRANNY A MONSTER

Ten years after V-J Day, the American people are realizing that tyranny is a monster most difficult to destroy. Other despots have risen to make known their dreams of world dominion. They do not believe in an American century with peace and freedom and opportunity for all people. They dream of a Soviet century with the hammer and sickle waving in triumph over the ashes of democracy and a commissar ruling with an iron hand the life of every individual in the world.

Of all the threats to human liberty and freedom and to the advent of the American century, Communism is the greatest. The second World War left the face of the earth strewn with the wreckage of nations and empires. War-ravaged peoples live in despair amidst the ruins of their cities and industries. Hunger, unemployment and pestilence are stalking many lands. These victims of war have become the grist for the mills of Communism. Many of these weakened nations have toppled before the force displayed by Communist Russia with its inexhaustible manpower and natural resources.

The Politboro, the supreme Kremlin high command, has launched a world-wide Communist conspiracy to pave the way for Russian armies through sapping op-

erations by Red columns in every nation on earth. Those Red columns are busy right here in America seeking to undermine this greatest of freedom's strongholds. The picture of Russia's long stride from Czechoslovakia to China is too recent to have been dimmed in its ugly potentialities. In Korea it was brought to us in a most forceful and realistic way. Now again in Indo-China and Asia the same tactics are used.

The American Legion knows that the only hope of preserving human freedom, or making peace secure, of assuring the advent of the American Century, lies in American national strength! That means strength in the faith of American ideals, strength in American economy and finally, strength in American fighting power! The American Legion has always championed peace and freedom through strength. Despots and tyrants have only contempt for people who are so passionately devoted to peace that they foolishly never prepare to defend their peace.

SACRIFICES NOT FORGOTTEN

The words that may be spoken on this Memorial Day will soon be forgotten by the average hearer, but every man, woman and child worthy to be called American can NEVER forget the sacrifices made by the heroic men and women of our land—sacrifice has been the price of all progress—from the earliest pioneer who braved the uncharted sea to the first settlers who landed on the bleak New England coast, meeting the savage resistance of Indian as well as the soul breaking weather, to the finest young manhood that marched into the jaws of almost certain death at Guadalcanal, Iwo Jima, Okinawa, Normandy, Anzio, Africa and Korea. We cannot, nor shall not, forget these lives. No, a million times no, for they died that our glorious flag might wave as the symbol of truth and loyalty and freedom.

The observance of Memorial Day does not hang upon the words of any speaker for deep down in our hearts we know the obligations that are ours in memory of

the sacrifices that have been made. They who have died have written their names not upon tablets of paper or stone, but in the everlasting memory of mankind.

We inadequately honor the memory of our heroic dead if we only strew flowers upon their graves. Not until we remove all signs of slavery from our country, not until human life is valued above income, not until justice flows from every courthouse, not until every man and woman is free to develop their highest talents, free from fears and free to worship according to their choice—then only shall the forces of tyranny be put in their place.

WHAT MAKES A NATION GREAT

No nation shall ever call itself great unless it has the interest of its people at heart. A nation may be great in many ways. It may excel in literature or science, and philosophy and mechanical genius, but at heart it may be the scourge of the earth, a disease that needs a powerful dose of a most potent medicine. The only true greatness of any nation lies in its high moral principles and its undying devotion to the raising of the level of the poorest citizen, until misery and suffering are blotted out of that society.

The day we observe is more than a Memorial Day. It is a day of rededication of ourselves to those high ideals, for which the men and women of this country died. We are *not entirely unaware* of the faults and frailties of our human make-up, but let us not forget the great heart of our people. We are thinking today of the gallant men of the Civil war period—those whose ranks have thinned out almost to the point of extinction, but their deeds will ever stand as the symbol of Americanism at its best. They kept the bonds of the Union together. They fought for ideals sweeter than life. When there arose those who would trample in the dust the sacred ideals of the Union, and selfishly destroy the nation, then it was, that they arose and gave of themselves to right the wrong.

Again in 1898, our Fathers answered their country's

call, and paid the price of their Patriotism with their blood. Similarly in 1917 and again in 1941, they withstood the tyranny of pagan demons who would have blotted out our civilization and culture, and destroyed all the sacred institutions of our people, and foisted a paganism upon us, that would have desecrated all that we can call Holy and sacred.

And again on the rugged terrain of Korea, our American boys joined with those of other peace-loving nations to suppress the ugly and venomous head of tyranny. We live in a changed world today, a new world, a dangerous world, a world where all that we are, is known—all that we say, is heard by every man and woman the world over.

If we are to avoid further tragedy, and guard the nation from again being steeped in blood, we must learn to understand our brothers over the world. We must learn to act in accordance with our religion. As we look at our country since the cessation of hostilities of World War II and Korea, we see that things are not what they could be—there has been a mad scramble for personal gain. We can build no lasting memorials to those who gave their all until we treat the living in such a way that our world will be worthy of the tremendous sacrifices made.

A DAY FOR DECISIONS

Memorial Day should be a day in which we decide that we shall live worthy of the men and women who gave themselves for America. It should be a day when we pledge to fight against intrenched wrong, whatever the cost.

It should be a day when we decide to live unselfishly, in the spirit of love for the other person, and spread the sweet perfume of our everyday acts along the highways of life. For it is only this love that will change the world, and without it, the world will return to barbarisms such as we have seen during the last few years, when men were beasts, where human

life was cheap, where the virtues and achievements of the centuries were blown to bits.

This Memorial Day can be meaningful to us, if we will dare to live worthy of the great sacrifices that have been made. If we will band together and fight for human liberty, for justice, and for peace. Not alone for OUR GREAT COUNTRY, but for all the countries of the world, and particularly for those who helped to rid the world of those who would enslave us.

There is a force of right that rules our world. We must renew our faith in God and beseech Him to give us wisdom and strength to continue our prized way of life. We must put on the armor of true Christians. We must carry out our obligation to its final conclusions, the ends for which our people have died.

This Memorial Day is not just another day. It is a most important day to all thinking Americans, and, to a greater degree, to all thinking veterans. It is not just a day to pay homage and respect to those who have died—it is a day of solemn rededication.

As we bow in reverence in memory of our heroes before their graves, let us pledge ourselves anew to the great task of making this world a fit place for the coming generations, and under the guidance of Almighty God, may we dare to give ourselves as unselfishly as we expected them to give themselves. Then we shall truly build an America where the fruits of their great sacrifice shall ever sustain and nourish the deepest needs of the world.

As Lincoln said, "Let us here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth."

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