

LET'S FACE THE FACTS

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7

Address to the Men and Women
of Canada

BY

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over a national network of
the Canadian Broadcasting
Corporation, Sunday night,
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tion of the Director of Public
Information for Canada

Text of the address of Lewis Mumford over the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation national network Sunday night follows:

Friends and Neighbors in Canada:

Were it not for the fact that our countries are already joined in acts of civil and military co-operation for our common defense, I should be loath to speak to you about the ultimate issues of the present war, even in response to your cordial invitation. As an American I have not yet earned the right to talk to you about the future. That future involves decisive action, great political responsibilities, whole-hearted personal sacrifices; and my countrymen have yet to assume those responsibilities and sacrifices in anything like the fullness that the hour demands.

At present, we Americans hover at the water's edge, like someone who watches a brave swimmer battling with a school of man-eating sharks. A great many of us have enough intelligence and enough sense of moral obligation to know what the human demands of this moment are: we know that we shall have to plunge in and help kill the vicious creatures. To leave you thrashing around in the water, no matter how cool you may be, will not permanently get rid of the sharks unless we lend our fresh strength to your efforts: unless we arm ourselves not just for defense but for attack and swim boldly into the danger zone.

Not everyone in the United States, it goes without saying, has either the clearness of vision or the moral resolution to understand this. There are still some who prefer to turn their eyes away from the scene because it is so painful to the spectator. There are others who hope that some turn of the tide will cause the sharks eventually to swim away or that some miraculous fatality will cause the most dangerous of the sharks to sink to the bottom through self-inflicted wounds. Still others say that after all our chief business in life is not to kill sharks but to enjoy the water as swimmers. They even talk about allotting special feeding grounds to the sharks, or they say we shall have to get used to swimming in shark-infested waters, even if we lose a limb or two: after all, sharks must live too, and one must keep on the right side of them.

U.S. SUPPORT GROWING

If you have followed the trend of public opinion in the United States as recorded by various objective polls and surveys, you will note that the number of people who believe that the United States must be prepared to step into the war and to fight the Axis powers has been slowly and surely growing. But what I should like your permission to do is to assume for the moment that we

Americans, before it is too late, will take this decisive step against the spread of Fascism: that we will throw all our moral weight and physical power openly on the side of the other English-speaking peoples. Just as overnight last June we abandoned the theory and practice of isolation, so perhaps overnight we will abandon our self-defeating policy of aloof self-defense and benevolent neutrality.

At some point during the next month, the next winter, or the next year, my countrymen will, I believe, have the courage and the intelligence to take the initiative out of the hands of Hitler and his accomplices. At that moment the American people will scorn to hold our political representatives to their foolish pledge that they will under no circumstances permit our country to be drawn into the war. We will demand rather for our honor and our safety and our common love of humanity that our government shall use the might of our navy and our airforces to subdue the totalitarian powers and to redeem Europe and China from the heavy yoke of their aggression.

This is not a promise, of course, for I have no authority to make promises. It is an assumption that I make on the basis of past history and experience; above all on the basis of my general knowledge of my countrymen and of the profound spiritual change that has taken place in them during the last six months. We Americans now see very clearly that we cannot permit this war to end in the defeat of democracy, for that would be a crushing blow to our system of government and our way of life, as it would commit us to the need for military organization and regimentation on a scale that would far outpass the craziest dreams and enterprises of Hitler. Neither can we stand by impassively and permit the war to come to a premature end through the compromise and appeasement of exhaustion. That course would leave the sharks still alive and still preparing new raids on their victims.

Nor yet can we permit the present war to drag on interminably until all the precious memorials of Europe are bombed into powder, until millions of innocent victims in Great Britain and on the Continent are annihilated or turned into physical wrecks by the inhuman punishment of lawless attack from the air which they must endure.

U.S. WILL FIGHT

I assume that the American people will rise up with all their manhood and their moral conviction and declare their unmitigated enmity against the Axis powers, against the ferocity, the brutality, the lying, the treachery, and the

systematic barbarism for which totalitarianism stands. In short, we will fight, and we will not content ourselves with a policy of hemisphere isolation and passive defence. We are beginning to understand that an ounce of attack is worth a pound of defence, and that, as the editor of the Louisville Courier-Journal pointed out a few weeks ago, as few as twenty-thousand American aviators and mechanics brought into action at the right moment may turn the scales in the present war.

So, though I am anticipating the future in assuming that the United States must and will enter the war before it is too late, I am nevertheless not letting my imagination or my hopes run away with me. We may hold back, we may falter, we may allow optimism or unenlightened self-interest to hold us back until it is too late. But I think not. For I have a higher opinion of the essential decency and humanity of the average American than either the Fascists or the isolationists have. I am convinced that we will be fighting at your side presently without waiting for further assaults or aggressions by the Axis powers, and we will do this for a simple reason: because there is no other course open now to free men and women who value their democracy, who believe in justice and freedom and truth, and who realize that outright death is preferable either to slavery or to constant terrorism.

ISSUE IS PLAIN

The men with mechanical hearts may argue otherwise; the Stalinists and their fellow-travellers may argue otherwise; Fascist agents in our midst, whether paid or unpaid, whether native or foreign-born, may seek to confuse the issue, but the issue itself has long been plain, and every day is getting plainer. Democracy cannot hope to survive in a totalitarian world. We could not survive in that world if we would, and when we behold its corruption and debasement, its deliberate cruelties, its boasted hardness of heart, its sinister befoulment of the human personality, we know that if survival meant acquiescence in that regime we would not survive in that world even if we could.

War has become the price of peace; fighting has become the price of security; and the victory of the English-speaking democracies over the stale tyrannies and the mouldy despotisms that threaten them is the minimum requirement for a decent life in a world fit for human beings to live in.

Having made this large assumption, I have thereby given myself provisional license to deal with the main subject of this discussion: what ends should we be

fighting for, and what sort of world can we reasonably hope to create at the end of the present conflict? Note: I do not ask what we can get, I ask rather what we should demand. There is a school of political thought that prides itself on its realism and that never dares to put a political question in ideal terms because it is afraid of being considered impractical and idealistic. The leaders of this school always abandon their ideals before they have had the courage or the opportunity to test them out. They do their compromising and cutting and trimming in advance, and as a result when they encounter a practical problem they have already given in so completely to their opponent or to existing circumstances that they do not even achieve the little that they modestly demand.

I belong to the opposite school of political thought, the one which assumes that without rational ideals one can no more get what one wants than one can cross the ocean without charts and compasses. For I remember to this day the valuable advice that was once given me by an older colleague whom I was consulting about my course in life. I had laid before him various practical openings and opportunities that had presented themselves to me; but he shook his head. "The first thing to do," he said, "is to know clearly what you really want and to go directly for that. You will be surprised how much easier all these practical decisions become." That holds as true in political affairs as I have found from experience it does in the life of the individual. Indeed, whatever successes the totalitarian states can flatter themselves on achieving have been plainly due to the fact that their leaders knew clearly and unmistakably what they wanted, whereas those who opposed them had no clearcut notion as to where democracy was going or what it was trying to do. Lacking convictions these so-called leaders of democracy lacked direction, lacking convictions and direction they lacked courage; they tried to oppose violent ideals with comfortable habits.

DEMOCRACIES MUST PLAN

Now, we who belong to the free democracies must have a program of action and a plan of reconstruction for our own countries and for the world—a plan and a program just as daring, just as comprehensive, just as world-shaking, if need be, as anything that the totalitarian leaders can conceive. I do not mean that we must console ourselves for our present ineffectiveness and our past errors by treating ourselves to political phantasies and figments. We can leave that sort of thing to Hitler; who now promises millions of non-existent

houses to his followers to atone for their non-existent conquest of England.

Still less do I mean that we should repeat the mistake people made at the end of the last war when they assumed that peace, order, prosperity and good-living could be willed into existence overnight. If we win this war we will momentarily prevent slavery and totalitarian darkness from covering the whole planet; and that will be a great victory indeed, worth the mountains of effort that will be needed to achieve it. But nothing that we can do now will make the world safe and easy for our children to live in. Nothing that we can do now will lessen the need for further effort. If we wish to live easily the cheapest course of all is to accept totalitarian slavery; that involves no further sacrifice than the loss of our manhood and freedom. Once the initial act of spiritual castration is over, we can live in peace and harmony, the harmony of the chain gang and the peace of death.

But the life of freedom and democracy makes strenuous demands upon us, demands for self-discipline and self-sacrifice. And because people at the end of the first world war did not understand this, they fell back into a state of hopeless disappointment, bitterness and cynicism. They became the parents of the young men and young women who say now, "What's the use of fighting to save democracy again? We didn't succeed twenty years ago and we probably won't succeed now. What's the use?" The answer to that question is that the expectation of a permanent and final victory over the forces of evil has no meaning in the actual world. Democracy, like every other human institution is subject to change—to corruption no less than to improvement. Nothing on earth is wholly perfect or can for long remain perfect. And there is no success so complete, as Walt Whitman reminds us, that it does not demand further effort.

EFFORT MUST BE CONSTANT

You cannot save democracy once and for all, no matter how drastic your sacrifices, if immediately after this effort you turn over and go to sleep. It is not enough either to be prepared to save civilization every twenty years. You must be ready to save civilization every twenty minutes if need be. In short, without continued care, steady readjustment, active choices and decisions, creative plans and the courage and social vision to carry them out, we cannot survive and our civilization cannot survive, even if we should achieve a military victory.

I believe accordingly that we must be much more positive and much more drastic in our de-

mands for a new world order than were the people who emerged victorious from the last war. But at the same time we must be more patient. If our demands are intelligent ones they will involve radical and decisive changes in every part of our civilization; they will include the economic order no less than the political order; for political democracy and political freedom, without economic democracy and social justice, would be just a shadow of the full-bodied reorganization of our society that alone will provide an enduring order.

Just because our program must be such a fundamental one, however, it cannot be realized at once. No group of scholars, scientists, and technical experts will be able to prepare those plans and organize this world-wide change. With the best will and the most concentrated devotion in the world, the needed transformation cannot take place in half a dozen months or in half a dozen years. The better we plan for the future, the more that we demand, the farther off will be the full-scale realization of our plans. So there will be a great temptation, even on the part of those who do not belong in the camp of the appeasers, to accept half-measures so that they may quickly say that the war is done and over and a new order has begun. But economic and political half-measures will not provide the basis for a new order. They will only provide the basis for the same kind of disappointment, bitterness, cynicism and spiritual defeat that followed the last war.

WHAT ARE THE GOALS?

What, then, are the minimum goals that we must set ourselves? Let me begin with the negative conditions; and first, we cannot live in a world that is part totalitarian and part free. There is no possibility of security in such a world. There is no possibility of co-operation in such a world. Two systems of ideas are now at war; they are fighting for the right to organize the world, as the armies of the Christians and the Saracens when they met on the battlefield of Tours were struggling for the narrower right to organize Europe. This is a knock-down fight between these two ideas. If the totalitarian states win, the nations of the world will one by one be enslaved and looted for the benefit of their barbarian conquerors, as Czecho-Slovakia, Poland, Denmark, and every other conquered territory in Europe has already been enslaved and looted. If the English-speaking democracies win, our task will be, not the restoration of the world that existed before 1930, nor even the restoration of the world that existed before 1914. It will be

nothing less than the establishment of a democratic world society in which each nation and region will play a co-operative part.

Nothing less than a world union will justify the losses and the sacrifices of the present war, and no effective world union can be envisaged except one between peoples who speak the same political language and practice the same kind of loyalty to moral right and to objective truth. This means that if the English-speaking democracies emerge triumphant from the ordeal of battle, they will have to assume the imperative task of organizing life on a democratic and co-operative basis throughout the planet. No other peoples will have the necessary combination of moral authority and physical power. We cannot continue to view with tolerance or indifference the continuation of obsolete systems of government, the prevalence of barbaric ideas of public order and right, and we cannot admit the possibility of active collaboration with governments that do not rest on the free consent of the governed. And this means that the governed, in turn, shall be equipped by adequate education and by the institutions of free speech and free assemblage and free criticism to accept the full measure of their responsibility. Effective world organization, in other words, demands a community of equals.

Second, we cannot live in a world that permits nations to be suppressed or mutilated or wiped out of existence, or treated as hewers of wood and carriers of water for the benefit of some master nation. But neither can we live under an order in which nations proclaim for themselves the right of absolute independence of action and absolute freedom from the moral authority and political power of the rest of mankind. The notions of national sovereignty and national isolation go together. They are both insolent fictions that contradict the real condition under which human beings and communities actually live. No human being can live to himself. To attempt this, as Aristotle once said, man must be either a brute or a god.

CANNOT LIVE TO OURSELVES

And similarly, no nation, no empire, no continent can live to itself; or refuse to take on the duties and responsibilities of international intercourse and international collaboration. Nations, like individuals under St. Paul's injunction, must be members one of another. Continental isolation is as unreal as empire isolation or national isolation. Nothing less than the earth itself is now a big enough place for any community to live in; nothing less than the

lands and the waters of the earth—all its continents, all its resources, all its peoples, all their treasures of culture and history—is sufficient for the education of man.

In this war, no single nation can survive by itself. That is plain enough from the desperate efforts that the Germans are making to bring into their company every country within reach of their bribes, or their bombardments. And in the world that will exist after the war, no nation or continent can live to itself or survive by itself. The continuance of our civilization depends upon our ability to conceive, work out, and to operate a world-wide union of peoples. Today mankind is one—one in misery or barbarism, or one in co-operation and human development.

The closed world of the totalitarian states is the symbol of darkness and regression, closed to trade, closed to ideas, closed to foreign radio communication, closed to foreign newspapers, closed to foreign travel; that is a world only one step away from the insane asylum. Or rather it is a world whose hallucinations and suspicions and corrupt phantasies are the veritable marks of the denizens of an insane asylum. We must expand our parochial horizons, even we in the United States and Canada who think so easily in continental terms, but still shrink from world-wide responsibilities. Solon, the great Greek law-giver, was once asked for the mark of a well-governed city, and he replied that it was one in which a citizen felt as much resentment against a wrong or an injury done to another as he would feel if the crime had been committed against himself. That is likewise a definition for a well-governed world.

UNION OF FREE PEOPLES

It follows from all this that something more than a *European* settlement will have to come out of this war; something more than that Federation of Europe of which people still too timidly dream. Europe is important, North and South America are important, but the security and well-being of the peoples of China and India and the rest of Asia, Malaya and Polynesia, to say nothing of the peoples of Africa, are equally important. Nothing less than a Federal union of the free and democratic peoples who are bent on establishing a world order will be sufficiently strong and decisive to serve as a starting point for the long process of reconstruction that lies ahead. That reconstruction will be a many-sided one. It will involve the equalization of advantages between continent and continent, between region and region, by a planetary rationing of resources. It will involve the equal-

ization of advantages between economic classes within the community now spread far too widely apart in their incomes and their social opportunities. It calls for the transformation of a system of production based chiefly on the pursuit of profit to one based on the pursuit of human well-being, to a system capable of working effectively even when profits have shrunk or have altogether disappeared.

RESPONSIBILITY OF VICTORY

The present war brings to a head—and let us hope to an end—four hundred years of unscrupulous power politics and reckless physical conquest. The so-called youth of fascism, which proposes to renew the grandiose dreams of power conquest and booty, which enflamed men's minds in the Sixteenth Century, is in reality not youth at all, but the second childhood of the power man with his dreams of predatory achievement and despotic rule. We are approaching the era of re-settlement, the era of balance, cultivation, and co-operation; an era that will be marked less by its mechanical inventions than by its social and political experiments.

We will need strength and hardihood to build this new order on a world-wide scale, no less strength, no less hardihood, than our ancestors showed when they spread over the planet as missionaries, as explorers, as immigrants and pioneers. But we now have a different ideal before us, not the exploitation of man and the conquest of nature, but an organic partnership based on men's permanent needs for security, freedom, justice, and truth. Victory over the Nazi Fascist barbarians will not mean that we have a smooth and easy journey ahead of us on the road to world order. Victory will merely mean that we have earned the power to make decisions and to go ahead.

As an American I want my country to contribute to that victory. I want to have the privilege of sharing the sacrifices that the peoples of the British Commonwealth of Nations are making. I want us to earn the right to work on the plans for the future, and to take part in the difficult work of reconstruction that lies ahead. Nothing that is worth doing today will come easy. Nothing that needs to be done can be done without running terrible risks and enduring painful sacrifices. But that is the way of birth, that is the way of life and creation. Only those who have taken part in this travail have earned the right to carry on—humbly, patiently, whole-heartedly, the work that those who are heroically fighting and dying to preserve civilization, must leave behind them.