

THE FUTURE IS OURS

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In the last three weeks I have been talking to you about the future of the nations as a group, of the United States and of ourselves as individuals. And during that time, you have been talking to me in letters, telegrams, and telephone calls. It has been for me, a stirring and refreshing experience. One factor stands out; so many young men and women have taken the trouble to tell me what they think—and to ask questions.

My heart goes out to these young people, facing the future today.

No honest man could tell them that all is right with the world. They know as well as I that they are entering upon the active affairs of life in one of the most prolonged and ominous pauses in history. At home and abroad there is much that is dangerously wrong.

Neither could any honest man presume to tell them that the future is lost. It remains to be won. Right and left, we have many prophets of disaster and they may seem to make out a speciously inevitable case; pessimists always have a certain amount of logic on their side. But often their conclusions are reasoned from an imperfect un-

derstanding of nature, human and divine. God and man are forever surprising the pessimists.

The fact is that there are three outstanding possibilities, among others, now confronting the world. First is the hope that the leaders of the nations, guided by Divine Providence, may adjust international misunderstandings, make the United Nations an effective instrument and so usher in an era of prosperity and plenty. God grant they find the wisdom to do so! There is also a chance that we may find ourselves suddenly at war. And there is the third possibility that we may fall back into the old uneasy scheme of armament races and power politics. Let no man tell us he knows which of these three possibilities is most likely. To us the future remains the same dark mystery it has proved for all the generations before us, a constant riddle of hope and danger.

We shall be better off if we refuse to be elated by the wishful fantasies of dreamers or to be cast down by the nightmares of dejected *soi-disant* realists. Our serenity must lie in the fact that it matters little what the future holds for us of good

tions to seek shelter in the brutal rule of force.

Our pessimists are not entirely unreasonable when they suggest that we ourselves may follow the examples of Italy, Germany, and Russia. If we become sufficiently frightened, that tragic blunder is possible. We may tear up the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution and its amendments; we may tear down the statues of Washington and Lincoln and begin to salute a shiny new dictator, God forbid.

I believe that God *will* forbid it. I suspect that you yourselves will take a hand in preventing it. We have not lost our American heritage, although in recent years we have seemed to neglect it. I can look back to the end of our first World War which ushered in what has been called "the debunking period." For a while that project in disillusion was a needed and tonic experience. But having cast off the shackles of stuffiness we were not satisfied but proceeded to trample on good taste as well—and finally on good sense. "All things must be laid low" seemed to be the cry of the iconoclasts. Our heroes were besmirched as hypocrites, frauds and fools. Our morals were mocked at, our standards lowered, in a carnival of repudiation that was like a Walpurgis Nacht.

And all this cynicism was offered as if it were itself a brave new faith, a kind of new nobility, that appealed to our liberalism and our fortitude!

Yet if those who were dethroned had over-sentimentalized the facts of life for us, the new comers brutalized the same facts until they were false indeed.

It is the thrilling opportunity of the new generation to join in that rebuilding; to cherish the old faith in the midst of new perils, and scorning fear, face the world with attitudes born of principle rather than expediency.

There you have the heart of today's battle—principle versus expediency; a new phase of a very old struggle indeed.

He who holds to principle is prepared to lose advantage for the sake of something more precious than life, even. He who practices expediency will give up no advantage, sacrifice nothing; he wants what he wants when he wants it and he will take it by unrestrained action.

In private life, the one is called a social person, the other an anti-social person. The terms apply to nations and to governments as well.

Here we see the moral choice humanity must make between the immense contradiction of

two attitudes. The time is coming when we must decide what we believe. Is it better to give than to receive? Or should we get what we can, while we can? It is idle to evade the issue; that is democracy against totalitarianism, Christianity against Communism, good against evil.

Many Christian men and women have been tricked into believing that the social objectives of the Soviet ideology and of our Christian revelation are the same. Once again we hear the familiar and deceiving affirmation that here is a brave new faith, a courageous modern and more practical sort of nobility. "We want the best for all mankind," the Communists argue.

"In our system all men are made truly equal. We have no rich, no poor. All are on the same level."

They fail to mention a savage difference. Communism seeks to drag all men down to the same level of enslavement by hate. Christianity seeks to lift all men up to a higher level of freedom through love. Between those two concepts lies an abyss deep as perdition itself. The difference is one of attitude.

Meanwhile, we know what things are good and what things are evil, and we shall give our devotion to the good attitude. So shall we stand with Almighty God and if He is with us, who can be against us?