

A FREE MAN IN A FREE SOCIETY  
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Address by Senator Hubert H. Humphrey  
(D., Minn.)  
before the City Club of Rochester, Inc., Rochester, N.Y.

Saturday, March 5, 1955

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It is a privilege for me to be present with you today. Your reputation as a forum for the expression of opinion is known throughout the country. For years you have made a valuable contribution to public understanding by encouraging interest in and discussion of public questions. So it is understandable that I should welcome the opportunity to return among you and to express my own thoughts and opinions on some of the fundamental issues of our day.

Yours is a nonpartisan tradition. Your interest, very rightly, is in opinions worth hearing --regardless of the political persuasion of the one who delivers those opinions to you. This is in the great tradition of democratic decision making.

Of course, you know that I am a Democrat.

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I am committed and persuaded to the proposition that the best interests of our country will be served by the program and leadership provided by the Democratic Party.

But that is not the purpose of my appearance before you today. It is my only hope that my words and thoughts, such as they are, will stimulate the expression of further thought and discussion so that we in the United States may soon come to the crystallization of opinion which will help us meet the greatest danger to our freedom that our nation has ever faced in its history.

I speak, therefore, not only as a Democrat, but as an American -- and one fortunate enough to have been selected by the fellow citizens of my state to play a part in the vital decisions that may determine

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the fate of our freedom as individuals and as a society. It is a heavy responsibility, in which partisan considerations must remain secondary.

All of our hopes and aspirations are bound up in the one word "freedom". Our country was founded on that dream -- the dream of free men, living in a free society. That is still our vision and our goal today, not only for ourselves but for all mankind.

Unfortunately, it is a vision rudely blunted by harsh realities today. Of necessity, we are more immediately concerned with preserving the freedom we have, rather than expanding its scope to embrace others. Yet, the challenge and goal of freedom for all mankind must not be ignored if we hope to preserve freedom for ourselves.

I know of no member of the United States Senate -- be he Democrat or Republican, liberal or conservative -- who is not deeply conscious of the



threat that exists to our freedom today, as a result of the aggressive threat from the worldwide conspiracy of imperialistic Soviet totalitarianism. And, I know of none not sharing deep concern over vigorously and effectively meeting that threat, to assure preservation of our freedom.

I am proud to regard myself as a liberal in politics. Yet I recognize that there are many differing definitions of a "liberal", and different interpretations of what we who regard ourselves as liberals really stand for. Let me make it clear at the outset of these remarks that I am convinced real liberals should, and must be, in the vanguard of the fight for preserving freedom at all cost, for without it liberalism cannot survive.

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Liberalism, as a political philosophy, is

based on the assumption that freedom is essential for the full development of the human personality and that, therefore, men should be free. This has been the recurrent theme of liberalism from the period of its birth -- in the words of the Hebrew prophets, down through its development in our modern industrial era.

This striving for freedom, this appeal to reason, is the hallmark of the liberal tradition. Those of us who have associated ourselves with that tradition must recognize our responsibility to free ourselves as individuals from the shackles of fixed dogma and from the restrictions of conformity.

We have all heard and read much about the evils of conformity. We have pointed to the increasing growth of conformity in modern society. Liberals

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have frequently spoken out against the inhibitions which our laws, our mores and our neighbors place against "being different". We have emphasized that the free expression of individualism depends upon the rightful place of non-conformity of ideas and attitudes.

I have been quite frank in suggesting to my liberal friends, however, that the liberal movement itself is not free from this drive to conformity.

Unfortunately, there has been a growing "liberal line" with regard to many social, economic, and political problems which is just as rigid in its application, and just as brutal in its demand for conformity as other evidences of intellectual straight-jacket thinking.



I can not reconcile such attitudes

with my brand of liberalism, nor with the  
rightful attitude of free men in a free  
society.

Such rigidity, such dogma, such  
inflexibility has no place in the real liberal  
tradition. Beyond a basic commitment to the  
dignity and worth of the individual, the  
content of liberalism from age to age and from  
nation to nation will vary with varying conditions.  
Liberalism may one day challenge, and another day  
cherish government activity in the lives of men;  
at once time it may welcome the specific interests  
of the business community, and at another time it  
may regard those interests as hostile to the common  
good. In one era it may seek expression through one  
political party, and in another era it may choose

other means of political expression.

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The liberal approach must be experimental, and its solutions must be tentative. We must constantly be willing to re-examine and reconstruct institutions in the light of new needs.

Liberalism lacks the finality of a creed and it is thus handicapped, because it is without the allure of those dogmas which attract the minds of men by purporting to embody final truths. This is a serious handicap in a world seeking security and finality. Whether liberalism can survive in such a world can not now be predicted. We do know, however, that if such freedom of thought and expression does not survive, our civilization will perish with it. Our task, therefore, is to strengthen and support such freedom, with all our energies and intelligence. We must release ourselves



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from the shackles of yesterday's traditions and

today's dogmas, and, in the words of a great Justice,

"Let our minds be bold."

In order for liberalism to survive,  
democratic self-government must survive. The liberal  
must, therefore, dedicate his energy to the protection  
of democracy against its totalitarian enemies from  
without and from within. It is my deep conviction  
that liberalism, even as it recognizes the  
necessity to preserve the spirit and fact of  
dissent in the political community, must also  
recognize, above all, its ultimate loyalty to  
a democratic society and to the preservation of  
our nation.

For free men to live in a free society,  
we must first assure preservation of the free  
society.

Seldom before has our nation faced

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greater danger or been more seriously threatened than at this hour. It is a danger not only from within, but, more important, a danger from without. This external danger is represented by the military might and conspiratorial intrigue of an international communist movement directed and manipulated by the men of the Kremlin in the Soviet Union.

For years we have utilized and fought for the traditional means of negotiation in order to achieve understanding and to eliminate conflict. We have played a major role in creating the United Nations to help develop a universally acceptable concept of international morality and law. We have shared our wealth and technology to feed the starving, clothe the naked, and help the underprivileged.

These efforts helped create friends for

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us in the world, friends we urgently needed. But they have not alone succeeded in eliminating the danger of the international communist menace. It does not mean they have failed to improve the climate for peace in the world. It does mean, however, that we have awakened to the harsh reality of living in a world where we have learned power must be matched with power -- that the power to preserve peace and the will and determination to use it must match or exceed the power in the hands of tyrants who have made clear their willingness and intent to use it for aggression.

As a result, we have served notice of our intention to resist all aggression by force, if necessary.



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We accepted the challenge of Berlin,

and our airlift was victorious.

We accepted the challenge in Greece, Turkey,  
and Iran, and we prevented the march of Russian  
armies.

We accepted the challenge of Korea, and  
we prevented at great cost and sacrifice the invasion  
of South Korea.

We promoted a North Atlantic Treaty  
Organization to strengthen the will and ability of  
our friends to join with us in mutual defense.

We found that a firm decision, followed  
through meticulously, yields results in our relations  
and dealings with the Soviet Union.

We did all this and much more -- not as  
Democrats or as Republicans, but as Americans.

I say "we" did it, because in fact, it was you and I

and 160 million like us who paid the taxes, manned the armies, and suffered the casualties.

What we gained for ourselves was time -- time to further strengthen ourselves; time to strengthen our allies; time to build a will to resist -- and time during which we hoped that the inner contradictions of the Soviet totalitarian society would begin to tear that dictatorship and its empire assunder.

But the international situation is still threatening and critical.

The uncertainty following Stalin's death now shows itself to be crystallized into the greatest concentration of power in the Communist Party. Mr. Khrushchev, Secretary of the Communist Party, emerges as a new powerful figure -- with all of his potential

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rivals disappearing as serious contenders or acting in subservient roles in the Soviet hierarchy.

It would be wishful thinking -- yes, and dangerous and foolish policy -- to assume that these recent shuffles in the Kremlin are any sign of weakness. It would be far safer to assume that the recent political developments in the Soviet Union are not weakness, but rather a demonstration of power of the Communist Party. Today we see the Communist Party and its hierarchy in complete and total control of the physical and human resources of the Soviet Union and her satellites. Any American official who even harbors the hope that some nationalist spirit will supercede the power dynamics of communist rule and control is guilty of having the wish become father of the thought.



~~The American people must not lull~~  
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themselves -- or allow themselves to be lulled --  
into a dangerous complacency with regard to our  
international problems. Marshall Zhukov is now the  
Minister of Defense, and he and General Eisenhower  
developed a fine friendship in Europe. But Marshall  
Zhukov is nothing but a pawn in the Soviet hierarchy,  
a pawn of the powerful Communist Party, a pawn to be  
used on the international front so that the Communists  
can have the lure of his name to help bring complacency  
to our shores.

Experts on Communist strategy advise us  
there is good reason to believe that the Soviet Union  
has decided that the year 1955 is the critical and  
crucial year of decision, both in Europe and Asia.

The Soviet Union has no reason to hold back  
Peiping from engaging in a provocative attack. On the

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contrary, the Soviet Union has a great deal to gain if the United States becomes involved, at a time of Soviet choosing, in a war on the China mainland. We can, therefore, expect more trouble, even serious trouble, in Asia.

But it would be a sad mistake to let that threat turn our eyes away from Europe.

With our eyes focused on the crisis surrounding Formosa and with the junior partner of the Soviet, namely Red China, acting more aggressively every hour, Communist Russia has carefully, methodically changed its policy and propaganda from one of coexistence under Malenkov to a policy of toughness, firmness, and increased armament under Marshall Bulganin.

Make no mistake about their intentions, and about their goal.

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The men of the Kremlin still regard Germany

and Japan as the primary objectives of their conspiratorial plans.

While our attention is directed towards Formosa and the off-shore islands, the Kremlin makes overtures to Japan with an offer of a peace treaty and a trade pact. To Germany came expressions of German reunification at the price of German neutrality, or a permanent divided Germany as the price of Western German alliance with other countries of the west.

Adenauer's government is in greater danger by the hour, due to this Soviet pressure.

This is the candid, realistic picture that I now see as a result of recent developments in the Soviet Union. It is not a pretty picture.

What are we to do in the face of this crisis?  
What can we best do to preserve the opportunity for free men to live in a free society?



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First of all, we must lift our sights. You

cannot meet a world-wide communist conspiracy by a provincial, parochial mentality. Democracy is world-wide in its implications, and it must be backed up with a world-wide strategy.

We should be prepared to meet these difficulties and these strategic and tactical moves, by anticipating them. We can best meet them if we first understand them. The decline of Mr. Malenkov and the ascendancy of Mr. Kruschchev is not a new development and should not have taken us by surprise. Students and scholars of the Communist world have written and warned us against these developments.

But such information, such understanding of Soviet maneuvers, should be available to the members of the Congress and to the American people -- and should most certainly be available to committees of Congress with

primary responsibility in the international field.

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For that reason, I have repeatedly urged that the Senate Foreign Relations Committee appoint a special subcommittee with specific responsibility to keep informed of Communist strategy, and help advise the Senate and the Congress as to developments as they occur -- and preferably before they occur. This does not require an espionage system; it is a matter of understanding, analysis, and expertness. These scholars are available. Congress should make use of them.

Today it does not. If we spent but a fraction of what we spend to expose neurotic domestic Communists on studying what the real rulers of the Communist party are up to we would be far better prepared to cope with our responsibilities in this world.

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Secondly, we must change our sights on military

preparedness so that we can negotiate from strength, not weakness. We must avoid the perils of complacency in letting budgetary considerations endanger our security by unwise reductions in military power. This is no time to reduce our armed forces.

We are already committed to the defense of 900 million people. What are we going to back up those commitments with? Budgetary considerations are important to a nation, just as they are important in a family. But budgetary considerations must never be allowed to interfere with the security of our nation. I am tired of hearing that there are limits to what our country's economy can stand, in the long pull of preparedness. Are we saying that we can not take it over a long period of time, but they can?



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I have more faith in free men and free

institutions than that. Freedom is not free, and if we cherish it we must be willing to pay the price.

The economic capacity of this nation to maintain defenses over an indeterminate time has not even been tested. We can take whatever the costs are of a world war, for an indefinite time.

Next, it is time we started substituting substance for slogans, and eliminate all signs of bluster from our foreign policy. There is no need for us to brandish the sword. Empty threats and ambiguity weaken our strength with our allies, and do not fool the enemy.

Fourth, we must recognize the importance of international trade as a vital part of our duel with Communism. While our country in the last two years has not engaged in any new trade agreements, the Soviet Union has undertaken

an intensive, realistic campaign to become an essential party to the world market. At this very moment, the Soviet Union is meeting with the leaders of Japan concluding arrangements for a trade pact. We are losing the initiative to the Soviet world in international trade. I am proud to join with President Eisenhower in his policy to strengthen our reciprocal trade program. We have lost two years of valuable time. We have lost two years making concessions -- we have spent too much time making non-aggression pacts with our own political leaders at home, and too little making trade pacts with other countries of the world. But with alertness and agility, we can regain the leadership we should and must have in world trade.

Fifth, we must strengthen the United Nations, rather than permit it to be undermined.

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Let us be realistic about the U.N. Strange

as it may seem in view of loud criticisms against the United Nations, American foreign policy has been eminently effective in this great international institution. We have yet to be rebuked or defeated on any procedural or substantive proposal. The Soviet leaders know that they cannot win in the United Nations without the use of the veto. The majority of the nation states in the United Nations in every instance have overwhelmingly rebuked the Communist proposals. I would say this is a pretty good batting average -- and you do not desert a ball club with that kind of a batting average.

But why must we remain on the defensive, in the U.N., instead of taking the offensive ourselves with proposals for making it even more effective?

I have proposed revision of the United Nations Charter to give India the disputed seat of China, as a



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permanent member of the Security Council -- and expansion of that Council to also include Japan and Western Germany.

It is a reflection of a very rapidly disappearing past for the United Nations to continue to seat China as a permanent member of the Security Council.

China at the end of World War II was a powerful ally. The Communist China of today is an enemy. The nationalist China of today on Formosa is not only weak, but it just is not representative of the new Asia.

Our proposal for seating India on the Security Council can be a positive rather than a negative answer to the constant Soviet harrangue for the seating of Red China.

Such a dramatic move would attract the attention and support of our friends all over the world.

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If the Soviet Union opposes this

suggestion, our position in Asia would be strengthened.

If our suggestion is accepted, we would have a strong, democratic Asian nation sitting in its rightful place of leadership in the councils of the world.

We must be equally realistic about Japan and Western Germany. At a time when the Kremlin is trying to woo them from our side, why do not we take the initiative in proposing a greater voice for these countries in world affairs?

We fully recognize the importance of Western Germany's participation in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization for the defense of Western Europe.

Likewise, the importance of Japan as a major military and industrial power in Asia cannot be ignored. A United Nations that does not include these two powerful

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countries within its security system is unrealistic.

Both of these nations are now closely allied with the non-Communist forces. They can better play their part in establishing peace by being full-fledged participants in the collective security machinery of the United Nations.

The offer for a U.N. Security Council seat for India can and should be part of a more dynamic bid for Asian support to the free world through a comprehensive program of economic and technical assistance, both on our own and through the U.N. It is time we made more dramatic use of our food and fiber reserves as weapons for peace in a world of hunger, by calling for an international food and fiber conference through the U.N., and being prepared to dedicate America's agricultural production to world needs. It is time we also took the offensive ideologically through increasing



our library and information programs, and expand our student exchange program, with emphasis on Asian and African countries.

There is little time to waste, in making known our interest in Asia and our intention to help Asia. The greatest conference in 200 years is just about to take place in Indonesia, the Afro-Asian Conference, to which caucasian nations are excluded. What are we doing to see that our friends among Asian nations go into that conference with firm backing and support?

The Kremlin is not overlooking this opportunity, you can be sure. The provocative acts by Red China are being timed to enable Red China to go into that conference with bluster and strength. And Soviet offers of help to India are being blown up there as showing her aid and

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friendship for Asian countries. Why must we

remain asleep?

We need boldness and decisiveness, not  
dalliance and ambiguity.

Effective foreign policy is not built  
on hesitation. While we hesitate, the Soviet  
Union is able to announce that she is going to  
build a large steel plant in India . The Communists  
are concentrating their technicians into Asian  
countries, while we are uncertain as to our plans  
with regard to technical assistance to the under-  
privileged nations.

Our hope in avoiding war must lie in our  
strength, and we need allies to exert our maximum  
strength.

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Through strength we can eliminate the

injustice and poverty in the world that breed

Communism. Through strength we can afford to

negotiate, and know that we are negotiating

without sacrificing our principles of honor.

The lessons we have learned from modern history

tell us that negotiation from strength is the

only possibility of averting war and ultimate

defeat.

It has been my attempt to present to

you a realistic picture of the world as I see

it today, in contrast to our vision of the world

we desire of free men living in a free society.

It is not an attractive picture, or a hopeful

one. But it is by no means a hopeless one.

With determination and strength, we

can defeat the Communist conspiracy. Communism is



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a philosophy and we can defeat it as a philosophy because our principles of freedom and democracy are more attractive to men than the principles of slavery and subjugation.

Communism is also a system of power, backed by divisions, by ruthless state planning, by unscrupulous use of resources and economics. We can defeat Communism as a power by being more powerful ourselves, by showing that there is greater strength in the mobilization of free men and free institutions than there is in the mobilization of a totalitarian society.

I have concentrated on the threat of Communism from without, because I feel that threat is the far greatest of the dangers confronting us. I do not minimize, however, the internal dangers.

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Our internal security requires eternal

vigilance against the forces of subversion. Yet we still face the unresolved problem of adequately reconciling the needs of the national security with the traditional American concepts of political liberty, justice, and fair play.

It is far from a simple problem. It is not merely the problem of protecting innocent people from being hurt. We also have the problem of protecting our America from being hurt. But in so doing we must erect safeguards to protect the basic rights of free men from being sacrificed in the hysteria surrounding threats to our free society. That I have endeavored to help do by proposing a high level, bipartisan Security Commission to review workings of our entire security program, both as to its effectiveness

-32-  
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for national security and its fairness to individuals

in view of our basic American principles of justice.

Hearings will be opened on that proposal next week,

with the aim of assuring that traditional American

rights will not be curtailed needlessly in the name

of a false concept of security -- yet that adequate

protection will be afforded our national security

to assure continuation of a free society in which

free men can live and work.

Perhaps all of us need to reappraise our

attitudes and code of conduct in view of the internal

and external problems confronting us.

As a suggestion, I leave you with my own

guiding principles for these troubled times.



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Now, if ever, we need calm confidence in  
the political and moral strength of our cause.

Now, if ever, we need consistent courage  
in the face of ever-present danger.

Now, if ever, we need persevering patience,  
both in defense of our areas of freedom and the  
pursuit of honorable efforts toward negotiation  
when ever such is possible.

In my opinion, only by such a course  
can we preserve the free men in a free society.



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