

REMARKS

VICE PRESIDENT HUBERT HUMPHREY

MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR PRIME MINISTER SHASTRI

WASHINGTON CATHEDRAL

JANUARY 28, 1966

Just sixteen days ago I had the sad responsibility of leading the delegation of the United States of America to the banks of the holy ^{Jahnn nah} ~~Jamuna~~ River in New Delhi.

There I joined the millions of mourners assembled for the last rites for Prime Minister Lal ^{Bah-hah-dar} ~~Bahadur~~ Shastri. BAH-
ah-dar

Today we have gathered in this sacred place so that those who could not make the long journey to India might pay some fitting tribute to his memory.

May we, in giving tribute, wish for his successor, ^{Prime Minister} ~~Indira~~ ^{Indira} Gandhi -- the strength, the firm will and the quiet devotion with which Lal Bahadur Shastri met his tasks.

h A perceptive observer of India has described Prime Minister Shastri as "an earthen lamp in an hour of destiny."

h He drew this simile from the great Hindu poet Rab-BIN-drah-net - Tagore Rabindranath Tagore. In one of his poems, someone asks what will happen when the sun sets. As the darkness gathers, all remain silent until an earthen lamp quietly says: "Light me; I will do the best I can."

When the blazing sun of Prime Minister Nehru had set forever, Lal Bahadur Shastri did the very best he could to light the way for his people in a time of great trouble. No man could have done more.

h He was a gentle and unassuming man, a son of the people who shared the poverty of India's millions. And he never for a moment lost touch with them.

Writing to his Cabinet colleagues shortly after assuming office, he declared that the immediate priorities of the nation should be those of the common man: food, shelter, medical care, work.

↳ He was so poor as a youth that, for lack of money to pay the ferry, he often swam the Ganges to school, with his books strapped to his head. ↳ And he respected learning so greatly that he became known by the name of his degree, "Shastri."

↳ With Gandhi, Nehru and the Congress Party, he spoke, worked, and suffered for India's independence.

Spending
He spent nine years in prison as his personal sacrifice to that cause.

↳ To those who watched him rise in responsibility in his home state, and in national office, he showed what a distinguished colleague called "a genius in striking balances, handling difficult situations and achieving compromises."

↳ For Shastri was a man democratic in spirit and conviction . . . anxious to obtain ^{the} benefit of all opinion before acting . . . tolerant . . . liberal . . . with a passion for thoroughness.

↳ He also had a quiet dignity . . . a basic confidence in himself and in others . . . and a reasoned optimism that kept him going in the worst of times.

↳ He had need of all these qualities of mind and of spirit. For it ^{is} almost impossible for ^{those of} us who are blessed with relative comfort and security to comprehend the burdens borne by this man and his people.

↳ They were burdens which, in other countries and under a different kind of leadership, might have led to the extinction of democracy itself. ↳ Yet, throughout the years, India has maintained the basic freedoms of speech, of the press, and of assembly. The people have been free to elect their representatives and free to reject them as well -- and they have vigorously exercised both freedoms.

↳ Under the leadership of Nehru and of Shastri, they have hewed steadfastly to the democratic way ^{and to peace} -- in the short run, perhaps, the most demanding way, but in the long run the most rewarding.

↳ Above all, Prime Minister Shastri had the courage -- an even higher courage than that which war requires of us: the courage to make peace.

↳ Indeed, in a very real sense, he died for peace.

To me, the last photographs from Tashkent are intensely moving. Here was a good man who had accomplished a great thing, and was not ashamed to show his elation. It seemed inconceivable that this man, so exuberantly alive, was only a few hours from his death.

Had he lived, Shastri would have been in this city a few days hence *critique + conferring with our President +*

What, besides shock and sorrow, can we feel at the loss of a gentle, good and humble spirit from among us?

For my own part, I feel again how precarious our life is.

Yet I feel also how profoundly wrong those people are who hold that the world is moved by blind and impersonal forces and that no single individual, no matter how great and how ~~great~~ ^{good} hearted, can make a real difference.

For this humble man did indeed make a difference -- both to the lives of his people and, ultimately, to the peace of the world.

Finally, I feel within me the certainty that all men in the world are brothers, irrespective of the imaginary boundaries we may draw between ourselves.

Who, if not mankind's brother, was Lal Bahadur Shastri? *Boh-hah-does*

What, if not the cause of mankind, did he die for?

There are those who take a dark view of history and who incessantly foretell man's impending downfall.

It is possible that they are right. For man today does possess the means to destroy himself.

But I for one believe they are wrong. For there are -- to prove them wrong -- men like Shastri, with their faith that there is nothing inevitable save ~~this~~ *this*! ~~that~~ *that* man's free spirit can and will prevail when men are willing to dedicate their lives to others.

↳ In a literal sense, the earthen lamp of Shastri has been extinguished. But I am confident that, in fact, it will burn ever more brightly in all our hearts because of the kind of man he was, the way he lived, and the way he died.

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