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4-26-1962

Report to the People Vol. 6 No. 7

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REPORT TO THE PEOPLE FROM YOUR CONGRESSWOMAN

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Volume VI, Number 7

Thursday, April 26, 1962

Today -- Easter Week, 1962, the time of the greatest feast in the Christian calendar, of Passover in the Jewish calendar, and a period of symbolic rebirth and renewal in virtually all the major religions of the world -- is an appropriate occasion to speak briefly of peace and freedom.

I intend no lengthy essay, or sermon or scholarly analysis. I simply want to refer to two events which, in future histories of the twentieth century, may well occupy dominant places.

At first glance, the renewed determination of the President to proceed with atmospheric testing of nuclear weapons may seem to conflict head-on with the draft treaty for total disarmament which the President proposed last week. The two are not contradictory, however. On the contrary, whether or not one agrees with them, they reflect the continuing effort of the United States to protect its own security and that of the free world by remaining militarily invulnerable and at the same time to explore every possible avenue toward a safe and effective method of preventing nuclear war.

PARALLEL BUT OPPOSITE

There can be no minimizing the difficulties inherent in these two parallel but opposite approaches to peace. Both are highly controversial. Some of our people -- impatient at the frustrating and dangerous business of trying to negotiate with the communist world -- would have us abandon the attempt entirely and rely exclusively on a massive buildup of American military might. Others -- concerned with the threat to civilization of an all-out nuclear arms race, and overlooking the history of communist deception -- would have us halt, unilaterally, any further testing and development of nuclear weapons and concentrate solely on disarmament.

Neither approach by itself, in my judgment, would be a service to the cause of peace or freedom. Total peace and universal freedom may, indeed, be unobtainable in this world. But mankind, however feeble and imperfect and fallible we may be, can never give up the effort to reach these goals. To do so would be to deny our very nature as human beings. On the other hand, because of our fallibility and imperfection -- because good and evil have always been forced to co-exist on this earth, and man's free will has made change and danger and opportunity inseparable partners -- no single, simple, righteous formula can ever guarantee success in the search.

I am afraid, after all, that this may sound a little like a sermon. I hope not, however, for my purpose is not to preach but to clarify, to explain how this central dilemma of our time looks to me. As I have indicated, both the resumption of nuclear testing and the draft disarmament treaty are controversial. But this is good: both require the most careful study and examination.

There are tough questions to answer. To what extent, for instance, do we need to test? What margin of safety do we have from the danger of increased fallout? How many and what kind of test explosions will be necessary to assure the U.S. of an adequate degree of nuclear superiority over the Soviet Union? If the Soviets also resume testing, at what point and by whom can the nuclear see-saw be stopped? Does the draft disarmament treaty go far enough to meet past Soviet objections to inspection and control of armaments? If so, does it offer sufficient assurance to us that Soviet compliance

--more--

with any disarmament agreement can be effectively policed and enforced? Will creation of an all-powerful United Nations police force create more problems than it will solve? Who will police the one big policeman? Would a balance between several national forces, limited in size and power, be a preferable means of achieving arms control?

I do not pretend to have answers to these questions. Perhaps no one does, at least at the present stage. Satisfactory answers will, in any event, have to be hammered out before any action or agreement can be determined. And it may well be that the present disarmament plan is completely unworkable. Even without final answers, however, I believe these are the general lines we should be following -- bolstering our armed strength at the same time we are striving to find a workable way of reducing or eliminating the threat of nuclear war. It is a course of action premised on three conclusions: first, that neither the U.S. nor the U.S.S.R. wants a nuclear war it cannot win; second, that the best way of avoiding war is to devise an arms control system both sides will respect; and, third, that in order to persuade the U.S.S.R. to accept an arms control agreement, the U.S. must retain the power to defend itself and destroy the enemy in the event of war.

Allowing for differences of detail and changes in circumstance, it is also a course of action which both the Eisenhower and Kennedy Administrations have followed. Today, I believe, it has in general the support of the responsible leadership of both political parties. But it is a difficult, complex, infinitely tedious course of action. It is opposed as "soft" by those who believe Russia and world communism can be wiped out if we would only "get tough." It is opposed as too "hard" by those who view peace as the product of meekness and mildness.

STRANGE LANGUAGE OF PEACE

It is a paradox, I suppose, and a sign of the strangeness of the world we inhabit, that when we talk of peace at Easter-time we must speak the language of arms and consider the possibility of war. But it is the only way a divided world, a world split in half by fundamental differences in moral assumptions, can safely think of peace. It is the responsible way and, therefore, the right way.

Somehow, these preliminary comments have become nearly the whole report, leaving me only space enough to mention the subjects I originally planned to write about: my request to the Secretary of Defense that priority be given in releasing reservists to those for whom recall to active duty has meant the greatest sacrifice; my request, which is already bearing fruit, that our Subcommittee on Intergovernmental Relations include in its study of Agriculture Department activities a look at the spectacular operations of Billie Sol Estes, the Texas multi-millionaire speculator, which have led to his indictment and the resignation, firing and suspension of several top Department officials; and our renewed effort to obtain limited self-government for the residents of the District of Columbia, as worthwhile a fight as any I know. More about these matters later.

One final word, however, about our Congressional Questionnaire. Returns continue to pour in, I am happy to report, and before too much longer we'll have the answers tabulated. Meanwhile, they have provided hours of valuable reading every day, especially those to which many of you have added extensive comments. Although I am reading every one of them, and trying to answer as many as I can, limited time and a small staff make it impossible to reply to all of you.

I have been impressed at the conscientious way you have evidently approached the questionnaire -- not dogmatically or impulsively, but hesitantly and with qualifications. I know how you feel when you protest that yes and no answers are often inadequate. And so I think you understand my own position when, as your representative, I am faced with those same yes and no situations on the floor of the House every time debate is ended and the voting started on a complicated piece of legislation.

I do appreciate your cooperation, therefore, and I want you to know how helpful your participation in the survey has been. There is still time, by the way, if you haven't already returned your questionnaire.