American
Leadership

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AMERICAN LEADERSHIP

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We have become accustomed to assert that the United States is the leader of the world. It is one of many habitual statements which, once they gain currency, cease to be vehicles of thought; on the contrary, they become barriers to the intelligent use of the mind. They are drawn into the common vocabulary of clichés and repeated without analysis of their meaning until they are accepted as axiomatic, and so beyond question.

It is easy to see how this concept of our leadership gained currency. The United States became the economic prop for the free world. Lend-Lease during the war made victory possible for the allies without the complete disruption of their financial structures. We contributed a large share of the money for the World Bank and the European Payments Union. The Marshall Plan, and now Mutual Security, bought time and brought resources to make an economically viable free world. Our productive capacity, in like manner, helped to arm our allies; and when we mobilized our manpower its vast potential strength was at last revealed.

Taken in sum, does this not add up to leadership? There is only one honest answer to that question: a clear and categorical "no." We have a position of enormous
weight. In that sense it can be said that the United States is, if not dominant, at least extremely powerful. But leadership means much more than the possession, or even the exercise, of power.

Two other factors are essential to genuine leadership: a clear sense of direction and sensitivity to the views of those whom we seek to lead. A leader without followers is a contradiction in terms. It is therefore incumbent upon us to possess much more than weight. We must acquire an understanding of the psychology of other peoples. In setting our course we must be alert to perceive how it will affect others not only physically, economically, or even politically; we must be able to foresee what their emotional response is likely to be.

In both these vital aspects of leadership we have made less progress than we should. Queen Juliana has been a refreshing visitor. Her speeches have lacked the stuffy quality of the formal diplomatic statements prepared for royalty to utter upon various occasions. They have been the sane and candid observations of a sensible and responsible person; they have been characterized by a spontaneity which we can all admire. Speaking in Detroit last week (April 15) she said: "We will have to show respect to each other and not commit the error of wishing to shape each other into shapes like our own. This mistake is still made all too often . . . This always tends to cause disharmony."

One reason we have been slow to learn this lesson is that we have become obsessed with the tension between ourselves and the Russians. I do not infer that these differences are unimportant. Our country and Russia, respectively, symbolize antithetical forms of government, structures of society, methods of finance, and systems of production; our religious presuppositions, our political habits — all the modes of our lives — heighten that sense of opposition.
In our current mood we oversimplify the situation. We tend to think of China, Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Bulgaria as synonymous with Russia; everything behind the Iron Curtain, so-called, seems to us to be unified. That is far from the fact; there are deep clefts. There are many varieties of cultural patterns, there are enormous differences in social dynamics, in traditions, feelings, temper, religious impulses and manifestations among the several Communist nations.

TITO'S break with the Kremlin revealed in a dramatic way how significant the fault lines are. Failure to appreciate their importance because of our tensions with Russia prevents us from conceiving and executing policies that put enough stress upon those fault lines to break other satellites away. That tends to consolidate the Russian hegemony over its satellites. To assume, for example, that everything Mao Tse-tung does is dictated from Moscow is to close our eyes to some of the most striking realities of Chinese history, tradition, religion, politics, and culture. Assumptions made upon slender and unstable evidence stimulate the realization of the situation we imagine.

Even more serious than this neglect to be aware of and exploit the strains within the Communist world is the failure to realize that there are many nations who follow neither the Russian pattern nor our own. We call them "neutralists," a word which carries an overtone of moral censure.

It is odd that we should now look askance at neutrality. This nation may be said to have invented neutrality; George Washington's proclamation of our attitude in 1793 was a turning point in the modern history of neutrality. Indeed it is not improper to say that the Monroe Doctrine was the culminating manifestation of the American at-
titute toward the classical tensions of the late 18th and early 19th centuries; we pro-
posed to live our own lives. Our point of view could be summarized in Mercutio's phrase, "a plague o' both your houses!"

President Wilson responded to the chal-
lenge of the first world war of this century with a declaration that we must be neutral in thought and word as well as deed. A gen-
eration later we long upheld President Roosevelt's effort at neutrality in the second such struggle. Is it not ironic that we should now assume that he that is not for us must be against us and take a censorious attitude toward those who do not regard Russia as one pole and we the other with the entire world spinning around the axis between the two?

THe great subcontinent of India is in a position somewhat analogous to the one we occupied in 1793. While its culture is old, it is a new country in the political sense. Though its teeming millions provide inexhaustible manpower, it is militarily weak. It needs time to grapple with its political, social, and economic problems, which are daunting in their immensity. It must work out a way of life, and not a mere modus vivendi, with Pakistan. Their mutual boundaries are nowhere near as simple as ours with Canada which caused so much friction for so long; between India and Pakistan boundaries are infinitely complex.

If India feels it has an ethos of its own, a tradition of its own, and distinctive problems of its own and must, therefore, be left to follow its own star and not be drawn into either orbit—Russian or American—should we be impatient with that determination? We should be more understanding since its desire is so like the decision we reached when Napoleon stood in place of Stalin, Britain in place of the United States, and we sought to remain at one side, associated with neither.
Or take the Arab world; its history in recent centuries has been one of division, colonialism, spheres of influence, and satelliteism. If the new wine of nationalism, which burst so many bottles in the last century, now has the same effect in North Africa and the Middle East in the mid 20th, shall we denounce the Arabs for the inconveniences that result? Are we to tap the flowing wells of the Persian Gulf in order that we may have more cars per capita than any other people in the world and deny to the land which produces the oil the rich cultural, social, economic, and political benefits which should be available to them as a consequence of their underground riches? We wanted no one to deny our access to this continent or prevent us from exploiting its boundless resources for our enrichment.

Evidence is mountain high that the exercise of leadership will demand an intense effort at historical, cultural, social, economic, and political understanding of other nations. Americans traditionally have been unwilling to learn even the most commonly used languages of our allies; it has always seemed to us easier for others to learn English! Centers for the study of oriental and Middle Eastern languages are particularly few in number and small in enrollment. Relative to our international responsibilities the United States is gravely deficient in persons who have knowledge of the languages, literatures, cultures, and economics of other nations.

Until scholarly efforts have been greatly expanded and have time to bear fruit, we shall remain in the unhappy state in which we now find ourselves around the world. We are spending money like water and getting small thanks for our pains. In our hearts we are innocent of imperialism; yet we are accused of it with vigor by our opponents; even our friends suspect we are infected with that historic malady.
If one seeks to understand the reason for suspicion, it is necessary only to recall the patronizing tone in which we promise with Point Four to confer the vast boon of our "know how" upon peoples whose standards of value do not treasure those qualities so much as we. Other sources of irritation are more direct and immediate; call to mind the recent explicit interference of our ambassador in the domestic politics of Greece. If, in the days of our weakness, any foreign representative had spoken to us in such terms, resentment would have blazed into flame. Washington's dismissal of Genêt is a classic example.

Or, take another instance of our rough exercise of power: the terms of the 1951 Battle Act put limitations upon the economic and commercial policies of our allies — with the loss of American funds as a powerful sanction. These illustrations should furnish plain hints as to the reasons for world fears of an unconscious (or even naïve) imperialism on our part. Leadership in the current world situation requires us to avoid such a reputation.

They are afraid, too, that our Congress will reverse the international policies upon which, temporarily at least, they have become dependent. They are afraid we will withdraw support before they have built up their defense forces or restored their economies. We should realize, before it is too late, that weight in the balance of power, no matter how great, is not the equivalent of leadership.

Why should I speak of these things at the Chancellor's Dinner in honor of men who have completed long terms of service in this University? The answer is as simple as an answer can be: there is no other place, save the universities and colleges, where understanding and enlightenment can begin. There is no other place where government
or business can find persons educated as Americans need to be if the use of our weight is to be translated into leadership guided by wisdom and skill.

THE task of our universities is magnificent in its scale and its scope and in its power for good. Not all the authority of government nor all the resources of industry can achieve that goal by themselves. It must be done by men with the patience and the zeal of scholars, with a passion for learning and for teaching, and with that openness of mind which scholarship can inculcate.

If these things are true, why have the universities done so little? Because they have been under social pressure to perform tasks of more immediate public concern. Moreover, there is not a university in the country, either publicly supported or privately endowed, no matter how generous the appropriation or how vast the endowment, which has the resources to carry through an adequate program in international studies, broadly conceived, in addition to the other responsibilities with which society has already burdened it.

If we are to lead the world, the intellectual capital of the United States must be vastly strengthened. That means the universities must have the resources upon the one hand and public understanding on the other to achieve their destiny, since they are the only source of intellectual capital, the only place where it can be developed.

If they are to perform their essential functions, the public must realize that in the production of experts quality is even more necessary than quantity. It is said repeatedly that we must have more engineers and more scientists; that is mere iteration of the obvious. Too little is said of the need for men who understand both our allies and our enemies, and those who wish to be friends and no more. And it is seldom said, though
it desperately needs saying, that we require better scientists and better men in the social studies.

What is true of international studies is true of technology and the sciences. The universities alone can develop the basic advances in pure science upon which all technology must rest. Fundamental science is exactly like the foundation of a building. It may be buried beneath the earth; only the beautiful superstructure is visible; but the strength and security of the entire building rest upon the adequacy of the foundation.

Basic research requires great skill and demands enormous self-discipline, yet neither skill, nor self-discipline, nor the combination of both is enough. In addition, it is risk-taking at its most extreme point, running far beyond the risks of "free enterprise." A professor may work intelligently and arduously in a laboratory for many years and find himself up a blind alley, through no fault of his own. On the other hand, he may work a relatively brief time and hit upon a valuable discovery. Or, by long labor, he may achieve something really significant and have it lie virtually unappreciated for a generation or more. Rarely does he receive any income from his discoveries in pure science, yet industry is free in its own good time to exploit his advances for profit.

The war stimulated advances in technology, but its haste and preoccupation with immediacy obstructed fundamental research. The secrecy involved in "security"—a modern fetish—was even more hostile to advances in the pure sciences. Real progress requires the cross-fertilization of minds—which secrecy disrupts.

The situation is the more critical because the United States has usually imported basic scientific discoveries from abroad. If one thinks of the atomic theory, or atomic fis-
sion, or relativity, or any other of the absolutely first-class modern developments in pure science, he will look in vain for the name of an American, trained in an American university, among the earliest researchers. Americans have done marvelous work as exploiters of fundamental discoveries. Though we have become the creditor of the world financially, the support of the world economically, and the primary producer of the world's goods, we are still debtor to the European universities for those pure scientists whose work has put them in positions of the highest order of magnitude.

European universities are so disrupted and disorganized as a result of political tyranny and war, so impoverished both financially and in personnel, that we cannot expect them any longer to supply intellectual capital for our exploitation. American universities alone can make us a creditor nation scientifically; we must make the same transition in the educational world that we made long since in the world of finance and production. That will require not only public patience, faith, and appreciation of excellence which have thus far been lacking, but also enlarged financial resources.

At present the public is not giving to universities resources for the development of an adequate program of training in pure science and the formation of requisite intellectual capital. In terms of modern dollars and numbers of students, private philanthropy donates to higher education only about one-quarter of what it provided in the 1920's.

Business corporations generally will have to develop a point of view that some of its industrial leaders have already manifested. This university is fortunate in having among its alumni one of the pioneers in what I believe will be a revolution in the history of higher education. He has shown the vision, perceptive analysis, and courage to express among the first, and with the
greatest clarity, the need for a change in our giving habits.

More and more businessmen must realize that the interests of their stockholders run beyond today's dividends; the production of future dividends is equally important. The tragedy of our forests resulted from a short-range view of the profit motive. We know that agriculture cannot prosper over the long pull if the soil does not benefit from conservation practices. Similarly business leadership cannot thrive without ensuring a succession of competent graduates in science, technology, economics, foreign affairs, languages, and cultures. Any industry which hesitates to give money to a university because it claims "the profits belong to the stockholders" is impoverishing the source of the ideas which alone can guarantee dividends for the years to come.

It is incredible that we should see vast commitments for the future in plant and facilities and the retention of earnings for physical expansion on the ground that only thus can the stability of the dividend structure be maintained, when other elements equally important for the investor are neglected. It is extraordinary to see some of our greatest corporations pay one man as much as $500,000 in a single year for his executive leadership and then say they cannot put money into universities to supply future leadership of a high order of excellence as a guarantee of continuing profits. High salaries (of which I am not now complaining) are justified upon the ground that, large as they are, they are only a tiny fraction of the total expense. Yet when smaller sums are asked for education some corporations say they cannot "give away" money which belongs to the stockholders.

I say, without fear of successful contradiction, that the universities of the United States have been giving business the greatest "free ride" in history. Without the universities they would not have the scientific
personnel, the technological staff, nor the executive leadership requisite to their continued strength and prosperity. As American business has acquired world-wide ramifications, its need for men and women who know the language, culture, economics, and politics of other nations has grown apace.

**EVEN** domestically, when business takes the long view, advances in the theory and practice of politics and economics become just as vital as the immediate and direct development of scientific research and technological processes. With conspicuous exceptions corporations have failed to make a statesmanlike approach to this problem. So far as secure dividends are concerned, it is no more defensible to refuse to support and strengthen university sources of essential personnel than it would be to stay in old buildings with obsolete machinery and let the future take care of itself.

Many aspects of life puzzle me; none do I find so difficult of explanation as the financial problems of our colleges and universities. Often one wonders whether the worst enemies of a free economy are not some of its vocally professed friends. From them come advertising which appeals to everything except intelligence, political contributions in the hope of material return, efforts at bribery which run so low as gifts to induce the admission of students academically ineligible. These things I find shocking; one can hope they are sporadic manifestations by the lower moral fringe. But the failure to ensure the future of free, independent exponents of the living and growing truth in science, in the arts, in the humanities and social studies is infinitely more daunting. That is the action not of the lower fringe; it is the failure of the best elements in our economic life. Independent education is essential to the independence of business—and independence can be
achieved only by gifts. If business does not want to be taken over by the government, it must see to it that the universities are not forced into federal dependence.

There is one group whose gifts are beyond measure and beyond praise. Those whom we honor tonight have made a gift beyond riches. They have dedicated their lives to the training of fresh generations of Americans capable of shouldering the heavier loads which time and circumstance have shifted to them. The largest contribution to the intellectual capital of the University has been their very lives. What they have done thousands, many thousands, of others have done in other institutions from the Lake of the Woods to the Gulf, and from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

In recognizing their services we can express gratitude for sacrifices which are often unreasonable, for the renunciation of greater financial opportunities, for hopes which were sometimes defeated by lack of resources in money to match their resources in mind and character. Let us hope that in the instant future the industrial giants whose strength is drawn so largely from the intellectual contributions of the universities will see that their own true interest lies in securing the growth and vitality of intellectual centers such as this.