KENNEDY

"My answer to your first three questions is yes. The last two contain several terms which do not lend themselves to easy definition, and I prefer to answer as follows:

"I strongly believe that the achievement of effective disarmament should be one of the primary objectives of our policies, both foreign and domestic. To be effective, disarmament must be accomplished on a world-wide basis, under a system of enforceable controls. To this end we must formulate careful plans for disarmament, on the basis of thorough research.

"I have proposed the creation of an Arms Control Institute, to begin at once the research and development of monitoring and development of monitoring and inspection systems which alone can control modern arms. We must have the background information to propose an inspection system as reliable and comprehensive as modern science and technology can devise. The Institute will also plan ahead to facilitate conversion from an economy which spends enormous sums for military preparedness to a peacetime economy. It will engage in positive programs for peace—programs of international co-operation in research and planning to eliminate the scourges of poverty, disease, hunger, and illiteracy.

"The establishment of peace under a world-wide rule of law is another goal which I support. The task of creating the respect for law which is necessary for nations to live together in peace is one which we can aid by means of our actions. Our own history shows that it is possible for separate nations, or areas, to co-exist peacefully if there is respect for law, backed up when necessary by responsible force. There are grave difficulties in the path of anyone who seeks to establish such a world order. The countries of the Soviet bloc have not indicated a willingness to strengthen the United Nations. Any working peace system must take into account the ideals and aspirations of new and emerging nations. We must be certain that our efforts to create rules of law do not lapse into mere defense of the status quo.

"We must seize the initiative in planning peace. As each year passes the further advances in military technology make the need for disarmament more pressing. We cannot allow our failures of the past to recur. As a people, as a nation, as a government we must make clear our aim to work together for one united objective—the pursuit of world peace."

A Nation Must Choose

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Jeremiah 21:1-9

It is a rare person who can live in the Twentieth Century without any anxiety about the future. The vultures of death are circling low over our civilization. In many ways the tomorrow that awaits us seems more threatening than promising. War and peace hang precariously in the balance, and one wonders whether we have either the time or the imagination or the integrity to avert disaster.

I invite you to consider with me this morning an apt word from the Prophet Jeremiah who lived in the midst of another power struggle in an age long since past. His world also seemed to be going to pieces, and he was caught in a period of history that was not to his choosing. The Babylonian Empire was on the rise, and nations large and small were jockeying for security in the face of the threat. War seemed inevitable, and Jeremiah emerged as the Voice of God to advise the people of his land what they should do in this hour of national emergency.

Pondering the future, the Prophet said, "Behold, I set before you the way of life and the way of death." Actually, the choice as he understood it was not a very happy one. In essence he seemed to be saying, "Go fight and be killed, or surrender and live." Perhaps this was simply his way of insisting that no good could come out of war, that to resort to fighting would succeed only in making bad matters worse.

This, of course, is the conclusion of an increasing number of people in our own time. Anyone who seriously ponders the potential dimensions of another war is quick to conclude that war is not a live option literally. The only thing we could expect from it is mutual destruction. It is an alternative we cannot afford to contemplate. No longer is there any "hiding place down here." There is small hope of protection for any of the participants should another global conflict come. Traditional weapons of warfare are completely obsolete. Even jet planes are out of date. Today all that is required to reduce another nation to ruin is the push of a button, and within a matter of minutes a rain of rockets and missiles will descend and bring about obliteration overnight. Yet, in the face of such awesome facts as these, there are still those among us who talk like madmen, who try to minimize the horror of nuclear warfare by describing some of the weapons as "clean bombs" and by deceiving the public in the promise that defense is possible. The truth of those words of Jesus should be obvious now as never before that "those who take the sword will perish by the sword."

There is only one defense against a nuclear war—and that is peace. "Either we create a situation of safety, security, and sanity for the human race in this world, or we destroy the precarious conditions that make life on this planet possible. And by peace, I mean real peace, not just a brief siesta between crisis and calamity." How can we achieve it?

It seems to me that Jeremiah's statement, "I have set before you the way of life and the way of death," is a supremely pertinent one for us to consider. The lesson of history plainly shows that certain paths of action lead to war. I am convinced that our hope lies in charting a new course, in moving out in new directions, and not settling down in the same old ruts that have led us to disaster in the past.

I.

For our nation, the choice between life and death may be the choice between humility and pride. Inordinate national pride can be a very dangerous thing. No one likes conceited persons, and the same thing is true of conceited countries. The world is growing weary of our tacit assumption that we are better than anyone else. It is tired of hearing tourists, servicemen, and politicians tell them that everything we have is superior and that our way of life cannot be improved upon. Our condescending attitude has reaped some deplorable results around the world, and our would-be friends are alienated by our unrelenting pride. We cannot condemn Pharisaism in individuals and expect it to be condoned in nations.

I think Russia may have rendered an invaluable service to us by taking the first giant step into outer space. It was revealing to see how difficult it was for our nation to make the adjustment to its wounded pride. Rationalizations became the order of the day, and despite reassurances from those in places of responsibility that we were not really behind, it is quite clear that we were overtaken. Our response to the shock of coming in second sounded very much like the little boy who upon losing the foot race explained that he had not really tried, and besides, he had hurt his toe.

Inordinate pride is dangerous because it leads to dishonesty. The recent U-2 incident demonstrated this. First we denied it, and then we admitted it. Confronted with irrefutable facts, we had no choice but to confess. How painful it is for us to compromise our national pride and face the truth about ourselves! Senators insisted that pictures of our slums, our racial prejudice, and our dust bowls be taken down in our American exhibit at the Brussells Fair. Why? Because we were unwilling to let the rest of the world know that there is anything wrong with us.

When a nation can do no wrong, it is following the path that leads to war. It is one thing to love one's country; it is another thing to make an idol of it. When the American Legion condemns UNESCO because it teaches our children that the world is above the United States, we have occasion to be alarmed. Surely it is high time we did teach our children that our primary loyalty must be to mankind wherever we find him!

That wise saying from the Old Testament, "Pride goeth before a fall," applies to nations too. We cannot afford to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think.

II

In the second place, the choice between life and death for our nation may be the choice between military strength and moral conviction. Considerable evidence can be marshalled in support of the indictment that we have betrayed our faith in our American heritage and put it in power politics instead. Surely the path to peace lies in recognizing that right must always take precedence over might, yet repeatedly, we have followed the dangerous way of easy expediency. We have tried to establish our security through building up power alliances and have failed to demonstrate our fidelity to democratic ideals.

The most flagrant illustration of this has been our habit of lending our official and financial support to governments that are diametrically opposed to the principles upon which our own is based. We have armed leaders of other lands who deny to their people the basic freedoms which we have insisted should belong to all. While professing to believe in Democracy, we keep dictators in power, and while remembering with pride our own successful struggle for liberty and independence, we have sided with colonial nations against those who seek the same. Such inconsistencies have been impossible to justify. We should not be surprised when our Vice President is spat upon, nor should we be shocked when our President is not welcomed, in so long as we practice a double standard and in so long as we are all too ready to exchange our birthright of liberty for mess of military pottage.

Out in Denver, Colorado, there was recently erected in the heart of the city for public display a 90-foot, 110-ton ICBM. At the unveiling ceremonies, the ballistic missile chief of the Air Force described the weapon as the "symbol of freedom's answer to the challenge of Communism." If we can offer no better answer to Communism than bigger bombs, I am not sure that we deserve to survive! Have we forgotten that we have an idealogy to share? The fact that nearly 85 cents out of every tax dollar is spent to perpetuate our military machine may indicate where our real faith lies and should give us pause to seriously wonder.

Any sane hope for peace lies in large measure in getting through to the minds and hearts of men, and this is not done with a bomb. Halfred Luccock reminds us that when David went out to win the contest against Goliath, he carefully aimed his pebble at the head of his opponent. This is what we must do. Unless we can show the rest of the world that we have something better than bombs to share, the future is dark indeed. We must realize that in the last analysis our hope rests in convictions and not in coercion, in moral principles and not military might, in democratic ideals and not deals under the table. This may be our choice between life and death.

III

In the third place, the choice between life and death for our nation may be the choice between apathy and concern. Our generation has not tasted the bitter fruit of war on our own soil, and so it is difficult to imagine the potential destruction that stands at our door. It is so easy for us to reason. "It just can't happen here." No doubt the citizens of Jerusalem in Jeremiah's day responded in the same way to the threat posed against them. Or, we are tempted to respond with a shrug of the shoulder. "I can't do anything about it," we reason, "And so there's no use to worry." Such apathetic attitudes within our nation may be just as dangerous as any aggressive action from without.

As people of God, we must insist that war is not inevitable, and if we are faithful in seeking first the Kingdom of God we must do everything within our power to explore and support every alternative that promises peace. We must be numbered among the concerned, and we must find avenues through which to channel our concern.

How can we do this? Obviously, we must keep informed. We must avail ourselves of opportunities such as this World Affairs Institute affords. If our franchise is to mean anything, we must vote intelligently, for the persons whom we elect make decisions that affect the world. We must be aware of what the issues are, and we must exert our influence toward such urgent matters as curtailing the armaments race, finding means to share our surplus food, extending the program of cultural exchange, and converting our economy from one geared to war to one committed to