

“... not merely peace
for *Americans* ...”

Banning Nuclear Weapons and
Retrieving the Legacy of
President Kennedy's Last Year



"...in the final analysis, our most basic common link is that we all inhabit this small planet. We all breathe the same air. We all cherish our children's futures. And we are all mortal."

*President John F. Kennedy
June 10, 1963*

ANSWERING "IN PRAISE OF LEARNING"

We are learning the simplest things,
We are learning our ABC's.
It is not enough, but we are learning them.
We are not discouraged, we have begun.
We will learn what we need to know, because
We are taking the lead.

Some in exile are studying.
Prisoners are studying.
Some in the kitchen are studying.
An old one is studying.
The homeless are seeking out a school.
We are taking the lead.

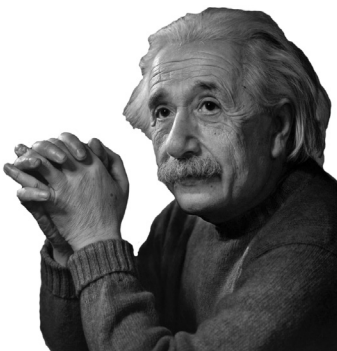
We are not afraid of asking.
We will not be won over;
What we don't know ourselves,
We don't know.
We are adding up the reckoning.
It is we who must pay it.
We are putting our finger on each item.
And asking, "How did this get here?"
We are taking the lead.

WHO WILL TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR OUR FUTURE? IF NOT US, WHO? IF NOT NOW, WHEN?

Thank you for taking this pamphlet. Please read it, think about it, and share it with family, friends and neighbors. The goal of this pamphlet is to help you think clearly about the threat posed by nuclear weapons and to understand what we need to do to overcome this threat.

At the dawn of the nuclear age Albert Einstein warned: *"The unleashed power of the atom has changed everything save our modes of thinking, and we thus drift toward unparalleled catastrophe."* What did Einstein mean? How must our thinking change, if we are to avoid catastrophe?

By unleashing the power of the atom, humanity has embraced a force for evil and destruction new in human history. In order to avoid disaster, we must develop a new creative moral force capable of confronting and overcoming this danger. This moral force involves new capacities for thinking, for imagining, for feeling, and for not turning away. It requires many people coming together with this new capacity — coming together in human solidarity, for collective human responsibility and for coordinated action. We hope that you will see that in the final year of his presidency John F. Kennedy began to demonstrate this enlightened moral force, and that it is critical that this enlightenment be grasped by millions.



Today the United States possesses more than 6,000 nuclear weapons. Many of these weapons have a destructive power 30 to 50 times greater than that of the bombs that were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. These weapons are deployed on the ground, in the air, and on submarines. They have been put on alert such that one computer error could trigger a series of actions and reactions which could lead to our extinction. No matter how improbable this may seem, given enough time, the improbable becomes more and more likely to occur.

For more information on the danger and destructive power of nuclear weapons, go to the TED talk of Dr. Ira Helfand, a member of International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War and Physicians for Social Responsibility.

tinyurl.com/preventnuclearwar

“We don’t think about things that way.”

The problem with the idea of “nuclear deterrence” was revealed a number of years ago in a brief public exchange between Professor John Deutch and a peace activist. Deutch at the time was the Provost at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He later served as US Deputy Secretary of Defense and Director of the CIA.

Peace Activist (PA): *“Dr. Deutch, I have three questions for you. First, would you agree that limited nuclear war is impossible. That once the weapons start going off, the situation will be uncontrollable.”*

Deutch: “Yes.”

PA: *“So would you agree that, in a sense, the last thing that will happen in a nuclear war is the weapons start going off?”*

Deutch: “OK, yes.”

PA: *“Well, if that is the last thing that happens in a nuclear war, what are the first things that happen in a nuclear war? And what is the difference between what you call ‘detering nuclear war’ and fighting a nuclear war in its early stages? Because if you can’t differentiate fighting a nuclear war from deterring a nuclear war, the concept of ‘deterrence’ is meaningless.”*

Deutch: *(pauses for a moment)* “We don’t think about things that way.”

They weren’t thinking about things that way, and they still aren’t.

A recent article by Professor Michael Klare highlights the folly of current United States policy in regard to nuclear weapons. Klare discusses how the US government is proposing to spend “... \$1.7 trillion dollars to rebuild every component of the US nuclear arsenal. Military officials claim we need to replace our current atomic weapons with even more terrifying ones to remain effective as a deterrent force.”

“Making Nuclear Weapons Menacing Again: The Pentagon’s plan to overhaul the US nuclear arsenal is as costly as it is dangerous.”, The Nation, March 21, 2019

THE FALLACY OF “NUCLEAR DETERRENCE”

One of the ways our thinking must change involves understanding the mistaken idea that we can “deter nuclear war” by arming ourselves with nuclear weapons. Before nuclear weapons were invented, we could think that wars began when the weapons started going off. But the opposite is the case with nuclear weapons.

With nuclear weapons nuclear war ENDS with the weapons going off. If this is how it ends, how does nuclear war BEGIN? Nuclear war BEGINS by building nuclear weapons, by amassing arsenals of them, by deploying them for use against so-called “enemies”... From this perspective, we can see that WE ARE IN A NUCLEAR WAR RIGHT NOW. Thus, the question is not how to prevent nuclear war: The question is: Can we find a way to end the nuclear war we are already in by getting rid of these weapons before the weapons get rid of us?

People like to talk about democracy, freedom and human rights, But isn't the right to life the most basic right and freedom of them all? What kind of freedom, democracy or human rights are possible, when the decision of a small number of people could mean death for all of us? It is important not to turn away from this. If we don't face this reality and join with others in taking responsibility, who will do it? If not now, when?

Where does all this lead? Since the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki there have been repeated waves of public protest against nuclear weapons that have at times slowed the nuclear arms race and reduced the number of nuclear weapons. But these waves have not banned these instruments of mass destruction. Humanity needs a massive international permanent peace movement that will insist on banning all nuclear weapons and develop the international institutions necessary for monitoring and enforcing this ban. This is the goal of today's international movement to ban all nuclear weapons.

On October 6th, 2017 the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. If you think the idea of banning nuclear weapons is outside the mainstream, know that none other than former US Secretaries of State Henry Kissinger, George Shultz, and Colin Powell, former US Secretary of Defense William Perry, and former US Senator Sam Nunn are all on public record advocating the complete banning of all nuclear weapons.

To confirm this, go to the Nuclear Threat Initiative website:
nti.org/about/global-nuclear-policy

GRASPING THE IRON LOGIC OF THE NUCLEAR AGE

The notion that “nuclear deterrence” is a myth and that we are in a nuclear war is deeply disturbing and may be rejected outright by many. The idea implies that we have been unwittingly led onto a path toward extinction through a false notion of security. But this idea of having been unwittingly led onto a path toward extinction is coming to us from another source as well – the looming threat of climate change. Is there a common link here? Is there some essential truth about the nuclear age that we must grasp, if we are to survive?

Today the United States and Russia possess 90% of the nuclear weapons in the world. When it comes to nuclear weapons and nuclear war, the fates of the United States and its people and Russia and its people are linked. What we do to them will be done to us. If we threaten them, they will threaten us. We cannot make ourselves more secure by making them less so.

We will be secure together or else we will be insecure together. The logic of the situation is that whatever we do to them will be done to us. Banning nuclear weapons requires that the United States and Russia see each other as “partners in survival.” Only if the leadership of the United States and Russia understand this, can the movement to ban all nuclear weapons succeed.

The logic of this situation is: *“What we do to the other, (In this case Russia) will be done to us.”* If this is the case, then we must do unto them as we want them to do unto us. The moral imperative *“Do unto others as you would have them unto you”* has become a practical necessity. This is the iron logic of the nuclear age.

If this is the iron logic of the nuclear age, is it possible that what is being revealed to us is the fallacy that security can be found in domination – dominating other people, dominating other nations, dominating nature? If what we do unto others will be done unto us, then in the end we and the other are not separate. What we are doing to others, we are doing to ourselves. An awareness of this reality can be the basis of an awakening in our thinking, feeling and imagination, an awakening of our actions informed by a new sense of human solidarity and collective responsibility.

APPLYING THE IRON LOGIC OF THE NUCLEAR AGE

People in the United States hear a great deal of discussion of how to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons to other countries. The United States is a party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Article VI of that treaty states as follows: “Each of the Parties to the Treaty undertakes to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race

at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control.”

If we want countries without nuclear weapons to abide by this treaty and not acquire them, doesn't it make sense to do everything we can to reach an agreement amongst the nuclear powers to abolish nuclear weapons. If we want other countries to forgo trying to achieve security through acquiring nuclear weapons, are there other ways to help them be more secure? In the midst of the looming danger of climate change, imagine how nuclear disarmament and disarmament in general might affect our world. By relinquishing the quest for security through destructive power and developing an international framework for security based on peaceful cooperation, might we develop the social institutions, the spiritual perspective, and the material resources to get out of the nuclear war we are in and deal with the threat of climate change?

In the United States at this moment for the most part we have leaders who are pursuing a new 'Cold War' with Russia and China and a new nuclear arms race. We can oppose these developments by seeking out sources of information and analyses from non-corporate media that are willing to challenge "cold war" stereotypes. A list of some of these alternative sources is provided on page 11. Instead of accepting the idea that Russia or China are "enemies," "hostile foreign powers," or even competitors, we can work to have leaders who think about Russia and China and encourage Russia and China to think about us as partners in survival. In the current climate, such an idea may seem completely unreal, but history suggests otherwise. In order to see this, we must study a little known year in the history of the United States.

A REMARKABLE YEAR IN UNITED STATES HISTORY

In our quest for a different vision and path for the United States and the world, it is critical to educate ourselves about a twelve month period from the fall of 1962 until the fall of 1963, when President John F. Kennedy was assassinated. Very few are aware of this year in US history. It was during this twelve month period that the United States took a fundamentally different approach to the 'Cold War,' nuclear weapons, nuclear war, and the conflict with what was then the Soviet Union. This was the result of a radical change in US policy, because of the dramatic shift in President Kennedy's thinking after he had endured the Cuban Missile Crisis. During this period President Kennedy publicly displayed an understanding of much that is being said in this pamphlet and began to implement this thinking by turning it into policy.

By understanding the concerns of the leaders of the Soviet Union and their people and expressing that understanding in words and actions, President

Kennedy was able to recruit a similar reaction from the other side. In this brief period we can see clearly how instead of the United States and the Soviet Union viewing each other as evil empires and enemies, they began to see each other and work together as partners in survival.

The murder of President Kennedy terminated this process because we, ordinary citizens, were not sufficiently aware and not sufficiently organized to demand that the process of peace building and partnership continue. This is our responsibility -- to understand President Kennedy's legacy and to carry it forward.

In order to understand President Kennedy's thinking, we must turn to a speech he gave at American University on June 10, 1963.



*Premier Nikita Khrushchev and
President John F. Kennedy*

In this speech Kennedy discussed the challenges of peace in the nuclear age. Anyone concerned about pursuing this partnership for our survival should read, or listen to, or watch this speech. While Kennedy was speaking about US relations with the Soviet Union, his insights are just as relevant today in regard to US - Russia relations.

Here are just a few quotations from the speech:

“What kind of peace do I mean and what kind of a peace do we seek? Not a Pax Americana enforced on the world by weapons of war. Not the peace of the grave or the security of the slave. I am talking about genuine peace, the kind of peace that makes life on earth worth living, the kind of peace that enables [people] and nations to grow, and to hope, and build a better life for their children — not merely peace for Americans, but peace for all men and women, not merely peace in our time but peace [for] all time....”

“War ... makes no sense in an age where a single nuclear weapon contains almost ten times the explosive force delivered by all the allied air forces in the Second World War... World peace, like community peace, does not require that each [person] love his[/her] neighbor; it requires only that they live together in mutual tolerance, submitting their disputes to a just and peaceful settlement....”

“... let us re-examine our attitude towards the Soviet Union... and the cold war... [conducting] our affairs in such a way that it becomes in the Communists' interests to agree on a genuine peace....

See the full text of President Kennedy's remarks on peace at American University at the end of this pamphlet. To watch this speech online:

ratical.org/JFK061063.html

We urge you to think about what has been said here, and not turn away. Study President Kennedy's speech and see to it that family and friends do so also. This is not something any of us can face alone. We must face it together. Today the struggle to ban nuclear weapons is perhaps the leading edge of the peace movement, but the struggle for peace is complex and the forces behind nuclear weapons and war in general are powerful. If we cherish our children's future, we must take up the challenge.

USING THIS PAMPHLET

One way to use this pamphlet is to join in an effort to insure that we have a Congress and a President who understand what has been said here and are working to abolish nuclear weapons.

1. Come together with a group of 5 - 10 people or more if possible. Study this pamphlet, including links and references so that the entire group understands the danger of nuclear weapons, the fallacy of the concept of "nuclear deterrence," "the iron logic of the nuclear age," and the essential concepts that President Kennedy articulates in his speech.
2. Go as a group to your US Congressional Representative with a copy of this pamphlet and insist that he or she read it and sit down with your group to discuss the contents. We want this to happen in every Congressional district of the United States. Also, groups need to do this with US Senators. It is fine for an aide of the representative or senator to read the pamphlet, but that is not enough. The political representative himself/herself must read it and discuss it with you. Approach this as a matter of accountability on the part of the representative to you as people being represented.
3. In the discussion with elected officials, make sure they understand what you understand and are in agreement with you. If they do, arrange to have continuing conversations so that the representatives are aligned with us in supporting the continuing effort for the complete international abolition of nuclear weapons.

4. If a representative is unable or unwilling to understand what is being said in this pamphlet, then that representative is unable to protect the most fundamental right of the people he or she represents. If his or her mind can't be changed, we need a different representative.

5. Keep in contact with others involved in the same effort by sharing your experiences at peacetaskforceFCCPR@gmail.com. The experiences of others will be shared with you.

6. Contact people in other states and congressional districts and provide them with the pamphlet or direct them to our email so that we can send it to them. Provide us with contacts in other states and districts who may be interested in this project.

We want groups in every state and every congressional district approaching every member of Congress in both the Senate and the House of Representatives on this matter. We also want to have a President who supports nuclear weapons' abolition. You can receive more copies of the pamphlet by contacting the email address below. Or make your own copies of the pamphlet. We welcome any feedback on the contents of this booklet.

Contact us at [**peacetaskforceFCCPR@gmail.com**](mailto:peacetaskforceFCCPR@gmail.com).

Organizations Working to Ban Nuclear Weapons:

Below you will find a partial list of organizations working to ban nuclear weapons as well as resources for further study and discussion.

Two national campaigns in the US aimed at banning nuclear weapons are ***Back From the Brink*** and ***NuclearBan.us***.

Back From the Brink is sponsoring a Call that has been endorsed by many individuals, church groups, peace organizations, municipalities, including city councils of large cities. You can find out more about it by going to their website [**preventnuclearwar.org**](http://preventnuclearwar.org).

"We call on the United States to lead a global effort to prevent nuclear war by:

1. Renouncing the option of using nuclear weapons first;
2. End the sole, unchecked authority of any U.S. President to launch a nuclear attack;
3. Take U.S. nuclear weapons off hair-trigger alert;
4. Cancelling the plan to replace it entire nuclear arsenal with enhanced weapons;
5. Actively pursuing a verifiable agreement among nuclear-armed states to eliminate their nuclear arsenals."

Nuclear Ban is organizing at the local level to get municipalities and states to be in compliance with the International Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and at the national level for the U.S. government to sign the treaty. See their website at **NuclearBan.us**

Other organizations working to ban nuclear weapons:

Black Alliance for Peace - **blackallianceforpeace.com**

Center for Citizen Initiatives - US/Russian citizen exchanges - **ccisf.org**

Code Pink - **codepink.org**

Don't Bank on the Bomb: Who Profits from Nuclear Weapons?
dontbankonthebomb.com

Global Zero - **globalzero.org**

International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons - **icanw.org**

International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification - **ipndv.org**

International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War - **ippnw.org**

Institute for Policy Studies - **ips-dc.org**

Massachusetts Peace Action - **masspeaceaction.org**

Mayors for Peace - **mayorsforpeace.org**

Nuclear Age Peace Foundation - **wagingpeace.org**

Nuclear Threat Initiative - **nti.org**

Peace Action - **peaceaction.org**

Physicians for Social Responsibility - **psr.org**

Reaching Critical Will - **reachingcriticalwill.org**

Stockholm International Peace Research Institute - **sipri.org**

Win Without War - **winwithoutwar.org**

World Beyond War - **worldbeyondwar.org**

REFERENCES / FURTHER READING:

For further details on the Year 1962-1963:

Norman Cousins, *The Improbable Triumvirate* — John F. Kennedy, Pope John, Nikita Khrushchev: Asterisk to the History of a Hopeful Year 1962 - 1963. (NY, W.W. Norton, 1972)

For an article on current US plans to build new nuclear weapons:

Michael T. Klare, "Making Nuclear Weapons Menacing Again: The Pentagon's plan to overhaul the US nuclear arsenal is as costly as it is dangerous", *The Nation*, March 21, 2019

www.thenation.com/article/us-nuclear-arsenal-triad/

For a “thorough refutation of every major argument used to justify wars...”:
David Swanson, *War Is A Lie*, (Charlottesville, VA: Just World Books, 2016)

For critiques of US ‘Cold War’ thinking:

Stephen F. Cohen, *War With Russia? From Putin & Ukraine to Trump & Russiagate* (NY: Skyhorse Publishing, 2019). Near the front is a short chapter on who Putin is not. It also includes a commentary on the new nuclear arms race.

George Kennan, *The Nuclear Delusion: Soviet American Relations in the Atomic Age.*(NY, Pantheon Books, 1982)

For a source of information on how Russians and Russian leaders see the world

you can subscribe for no fee to receive “Johnson’s Russia List” (JRL)
A project sponsored through the Institute for European, Russian, and Eurasian Studies (IERES) at The George Washington University’s Elliott School of International Affairs

JRL homepage: www.russialist.org

For a history of US nuclear war strategy:

Daniel Ellsberg, *The Doomsday Machine: Confessions of a Nuclear War Planner*, (NY, Bloomsbury, 2017)

For a study of the rise of the military industrial complex:

Seymour Melman, *The Permanent War Economy: American Capitalism in Decline*, (NY, Simon and Schuster, 1974)

For a study of President Kennedy’s turn toward peace:

James W. Douglass, *JFK and the Unspeakable: Why He Died and Why It Matters*, (Maryknoll, NY, Orbis Books, 2008)

For organizing for change:

Jane McAlevey, *No Short Cuts: Organizing for Power in the New Gilded Age*, (NY, Oxford University Press, October, 2016)

For a history of struggles against nuclear weapons:

Confronting the Bomb: A Short History of the World Nuclear Disarmament Movement, Lawrence S. Wittner (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2009)

**An abbreviated version of the author’s trilogy: The Struggle Against the Bomb*

African Americans Against the Bomb: Nuclear Weapons Colonialism, and the Black Freedom Movement, Vincent J. Intondi (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2015)

For extensive online nuclear issue archive: ratical.org/radiation

Non-corporate News Sources that challenge “Cold War” stereotypes:

Consortium News – consortiumnews.com

Dissident Voice – dissidentvoice.org

Global Research – globalresearch.ca

Information Clearinghouse – informationclearinghouse.info

OffGuardian – off-guardian.org

Reader Supported News – readersupportednews.org

Speech at American University

by John F. Kennedy, June 10, 1963

... I have ... chosen this time and place to discuss a topic on which ignorance too often abounds and the truth too rarely perceived – and that is the most important topic on earth: peace.

What kind of a peace do I mean and what kind of a peace do we seek? Not a Pax Americana enforced on the world by American weapons of war. Not the peace of the grave or the security of the slave. I am talking about genuine peace – the kind of peace that makes life on earth worth living – the kind that enables men and nations to grow and to hope and to build a better life for their children – not merely peace for Americans but peace for all men and women – not merely peace in our time but peace in all time.

I speak of peace because of the new face of war. Total war makes no sense in an age where great powers can maintain large and relatively invulnerable nuclear forces and refuse to surrender without resort to those forces. It makes no sense in an age where a single nuclear weapon contains almost ten times the explosive force delivered by all the allied air forces in the Second World War. It makes no sense in an age when the deadly poisons produced by a nuclear exchange would be carried by wind and water and soil and seed to the far corners of the globe and to generations yet unborn.

Today the expenditure of billions of dollars every year on weapons acquired for the purpose of making sure we never need them is essential to the keeping of peace. But surely the acquisition of such idle stockpiles – which can only destroy and never create – is not the only, much less the most efficient, means of assuring peace.

I speak of peace, therefore, as the necessary rational end of rational men. I realize the pursuit of peace is not as dramatic as the pursuit of war – and

frequently the words of the pursuers fall on deaf ears. But we have no more urgent task.

Some say that it is useless to speak of peace or world law or world disarmament – and that it will be useless until the leaders of the Soviet Union adopt a more enlightened attitude. I hope they do. I believe we can help them do it. But I also believe that we must re-examine our own attitudes – as individuals and as a Nation – for our attitude is as essential as theirs. And every graduate of this school, every thoughtful citizen who despairs of war and wishes to bring peace, should begin by looking inward – by examining his own attitude towards the possibilities of peace, towards the Soviet Union, towards the course of the Cold War and towards freedom and peace here at home.

First: examine our attitude towards peace itself. Too many of us think it is impossible. Too many think it is unreal. But that is a dangerous, defeatist belief. It leads to the conclusion that war is inevitable – that mankind is doomed – that we are gripped by forces we cannot control.

We need not accept that view. Our problems are man-made – therefore, they can be solved by man. And man can be as big as he wants. No problem of human destiny is beyond human beings. Man's reason and spirit have often solved the seemingly unsolvable – and we believe they can do it again.

I am not referring to the absolute, infinite concept of universal peace and good will of which some fantasies and fanatics dream. I do not deny the value of hopes and dreams but we merely invite discouragement and incredulity by making that our only and immediate goal.

Let us focus instead on a more practical, more attainable peace – based not on a sudden revolution in human nature but on a gradual evolution in human institutions – on a series of concrete actions and effective agreements which are in the interest of all concerned. There is no single, simple key to this peace – no grand or magic formula to be adopted by one or two powers. Genuine peace must be the product of many nations, the sum of many acts. It must be dynamic, not static, changing to meet the challenge of each new generation. For peace is a process – a way of solving problems.

With such a peace, there will still be quarrels and conflicting interests, as there are within families and nations. World peace, like community peace, does not require that each man love his neighbor – it requires only that they live together in mutual tolerance, submitting their disputes to a just and peaceful settlement. And history teaches us that enmities between nations, as between individuals, do not last forever. However fixed our likes and dislikes may seem,

the tide of time and events will often bring surprising changes in the relations between nations and neighbors.

So let us persevere. Peace need not be impracticable, and war need not be inevitable. By defining our goal more clearly, by making it seem more manageable and less remote, we can help all people to see it, to draw hope from it, and to move irresistibly towards it.

And Second: Let us re-examine our attitude toward the Soviet Union. It is discouraging to think that their leaders may actually believe what their propagandists write. It is discouraging to read a recent authoritative Soviet text on Military Strategy and find, on page after page, wholly baseless and incredible claims – such as the allegation that “American imperialist circles are preparing to unleash different types of war . . . that there is a very real threat of a preventative war being unleashed by American imperialists against the Soviet Union” . . . [and that] the political aims” – and I quote – “of the American imperialists are to enslave economically and politically the European and other capitalist countries . . . [and] to achieve world domination . . . by means of aggressive war.”

Truly, as it was written long ago: “The wicked flee when no man pursueth.” Yet it is sad to read these Soviet statements – to realize the extent of the gulf between us. But it is also a warning – a warning to the American people not to fall into the same trap as the Soviets, not to see only a distorted and desperate view of the other side, not to see conflict as inevitable, accommodation as impossible, and communication as nothing more than an exchange of threats. No government or social system is so evil that its people must be considered as lacking in virtue. As Americans, we find communism profoundly repugnant as a negation of personal freedom and dignity. But we can still hail the Russian people for their many achievements – in science and space, in economic and industrial growth, in culture, in acts of courage.

Among the many traits the peoples of our two countries have in common, none is stronger than our mutual abhorrence of war. Almost unique among the major world powers, we have never been at war with each other. And no nation in the history of battle ever suffered more than the Soviet Union in the Second World War. At least 20 million lost their lives. Countless millions of homes and families were burned or sacked. A third of the nation's territory, including two thirds of its industrial base, was turned into a wasteland – a loss equivalent to the destruction of this country east of Chicago.

Today, should total war ever break out again – no matter how – our two countries will be the primary target. It is an ironic but accurate fact that the

two strongest powers are the two in the most danger of devastation. All we have built, all we have worked for, would be destroyed in the first 24 hours. And even in the Cold War, which brings burdens and dangers to so many countries, including this Nation's closest allies – our two countries bear the heaviest burdens. For we are both devoting massive sums of money to weapons that could be better devoted to combat ignorance, poverty, and disease. We are both caught up in a vicious and dangerous cycle with suspicion on one side breeding suspicion on the other, and new weapons begetting counter-weapons.

In short, both the United States and its allies, and the Soviet Union and its allies, have a mutually deep interest in a just and genuine peace and in halting the arms race. Agreements to this end are in the interests of the Soviet Union as well as ours – and even the most hostile nations can be relied upon to accept and keep those treaty obligations, and only those treaty obligations, which are in their own interest.

So, let us not be blind to our differences – but let us also direct attention to our common interests and the means by which those differences can be resolved. And if we cannot end now our differences, at least we can help make the world safe for diversity. For, in the final analysis, our most basic common link is that we all inhabit this small planet. We all breathe the same air. We all cherish our children's futures. And we are all mortal.

Third: Let us re-examine our attitude towards the Cold War, remembering we're not engaged in a debate, seeking to pile up debating points. We are not here distributing blame or pointing the finger of judgment. We must deal with the world as it is, and not as it might have been had the history of the last 18 years been different.

We must, therefore, persevere in the search for peace in the hope that constructive changes within the Communist bloc might bring within reach solutions which now seem beyond us. We must conduct our affairs in such a way that it becomes in the Communists' interest to agree on a genuine peace. And above all, while defending our own vital interests, nuclear powers must avert those confrontations which bring an adversary to a choice of either a humiliating retreat or a nuclear war. To adopt that kind of course in the nuclear age would be evidence only of the bankruptcy of our policy – or of a collective death-wish for the world.

To secure these ends, America's weapons are nonprovocative, carefully controlled, designed to deter, and capable of selective use. Our military forces are committed to peace and disciplined in self-restraint. Our diplomats are

instructed to avoid unnecessary irritants and purely rhetorical hostility. For we can seek a relaxation of tensions without relaxing our guard. And, for our part, we do not need to use threats to prove we are resolute. We do not need to jam foreign broadcasts out of fear our faith will be eroded. We are unwilling to impose our system on any unwilling people – but we are willing and able to engage in peaceful competition with any people on earth.

Meanwhile, we seek to strengthen the United Nations, to help solve its financial problems, to make it a more effective instrument for peace, to develop it into a genuine world security system – a system capable of resolving disputes on the basis of law, of insuring the security of the large and the small, and of creating conditions under which arms can finally be abolished.

At the same time we seek to keep peace inside the non-Communist world, where many nations, all of them our friends, are divided over issues which weaken Western unity, which invite Communist intervention or which threaten to erupt into war. Our efforts in West New Guinea, in the Congo, in the Middle East, and the Indian subcontinent, have been persistent and patient despite criticism from both sides. We have also tried to set an example for others – by seeking to adjust small but significant differences with our own closest neighbors in Mexico and Canada.

Speaking of other nations, I wish to make one point clear. We are bound to many nations by alliances. These alliances exist because our concern and theirs substantially overlap. Our commitment to defend Western Europe and West Berlin, for example, stands undiminished because of the identity of our vital interests. The United States will make no deal with the Soviet Union at the expense of other nations and other peoples, not merely because they are our partners, but also because their interests and ours converge.

Our interests converge, however, not only in defending the frontiers of freedom, but in pursuing the paths of peace. It is our hope – and the purpose of allied policy – to convince the Soviet Union that she, too, should let each nation choose its own future, so long as that choice does not interfere with the choices of others. The Communist drive to impose their political and economic system on others is the primary cause of world tension today. For there can be no doubt that, if all nations could refrain from interfering in the self-determination of others, the peace would be much more assured.

This will require a new effort to achieve world law – a new context for world discussions. It will require increased understanding between the Soviets and ourselves. And increased understanding will require increased contact and communication. One step in this direction is the proposed arrangement for

a direct line between Moscow and Washington, to avoid on each side the dangerous delays, misunderstandings, and misreadings of other's actions which might occur at a time of crisis.

We have also been talking in Geneva about our first-step measures of arm[s] controls designed to limit the intensity of the arms race and reduce the risk of accidental war. Our primary long range interest in Geneva, however, is general and complete disarmament – designed to take place by stages, permitting parallel political developments to build the new institutions of peace which would take the place of arms. The pursuit of disarmament has been an effort of this Government since the 1920's. It has been urgently sought by the past three administrations. And however dim the prospects are today, we intend to continue this effort – to continue it in order that all countries, including our own, can better grasp what the problems and the possibilities of disarmament are.

The only major area of these negotiations where the end is in sight, yet where a fresh start is badly needed, is in a treaty to outlaw nuclear tests. The conclusion of such a treaty – so near and yet so far – would check the spiraling arms race in one of its most dangerous areas. It would place the nuclear powers in a position to deal more effectively with one of the greatest hazards which man faces in 1963, the further spread of nuclear arms. It would increase our security – it would decrease the prospects of war. Surely this goal is sufficiently important to require our steady pursuit, yielding neither to the temptation to give up the whole effort nor the temptation to give up our insistence on vital and responsible safeguards.

I am taking this opportunity, therefore, to announce two important decisions in this regard.

First: Chairman Khrushchev, Prime Minister Macmillan, and I have agreed that high-level discussions will shortly begin in Moscow looking towards early agreement on a comprehensive test ban treaty. Our hope must be tempered – Our hopes must be tempered with the caution of history – but with our hopes go the hopes of all mankind.

Second: To make clear our good faith and solemn convictions on this matter, I now declare that the United States does not propose to conduct nuclear tests in the atmosphere so long as other states do not do so. We will not – We will not be the first to resume. Such a declaration is no substitute for a formal binding treaty, but I hope it will help us achieve one. Nor would such a treaty be a substitute for disarmament, but I hope it will help us achieve it. Finally, my fellow Americans, let us examine our attitude towards peace and freedom here at home. The quality and spirit of our own society must justify

and support our efforts abroad. We must show it in the dedication of our own lives – as many of you who are graduating today will have an opportunity to do, by serving without pay in the Peace Corps abroad or in the proposed National Service Corps here at home.

But wherever we are, we must all, in our daily lives, live up to the age-old faith that peace and freedom walk together. In too many of our cities today, the peace is not secure because freedom is incomplete.

It is the responsibility of the Executive Branch at all levels of government – local, state, and national – to provide and protect that freedom for all of our citizens by all means within our authority. It is the responsibility of the Legislative Branch at all levels, wherever the authority is not now adequate, to make it adequate. And it is the responsibility of all citizens in all sections of this country to respect the rights of others and respect the law of the land. All this – All this is not unrelated to world peace. “When a man’s way[s] please the Lord,” the Scriptures tell us, “he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.” And is not peace, in the last analysis, basically a matter of human rights – the right to live out our lives without fear of devastation – the right to breathe air as nature provided it – the right of future generations to a healthy existence?

While we proceed to safeguard our national interests, let us also safeguard human interests. And the elimination of war and arms is clearly in the interest of both. No treaty, however much it may be to the advantage of all, however tightly it may be worded, can provide absolute security against the risks of deception and evasion. But it can – if it is sufficiently effective in its enforcement and it is sufficiently in the interests of its signers – offer far more security and far fewer risks than an unabated, uncontrolled, unpredictable arms race.

The United States, as the world knows, will never start a war. We do not want a war. We do not now expect a war. This generation of Americans has already had enough – more than enough – of war and hate and oppression. We shall be prepared if others wish it. We shall be alert to try to stop it. But we shall also do our part to build a world of peace where the weak are safe and the strong are just. We are not helpless before that task or hopeless of its success. Confident and unafraid, we must labor on – not towards a strategy of annihilation but towards a strategy of peace.

“The movement for peace ... is an irreversible process of the social awakening of the masses, a spiritual birth ... Humanity is proposing liberation from a universal humiliating terror, from a feeling of isolation, indifference, and cruelty – from everything that impudently inspires and provokes one through propaganda to serve insanity ... In the movement for peace, as in no other, concretely and not abstractly, the contemporary thought of humanity in all its fullness is reflected, tests itself and is realized ... we must find ... a path which transforms the idea of humanism into an activity which will be able to preserve peace.”

*—Chinghiz Aitmatov, Kyrgyz author
“Humanism – The General Language of Mankind”
1983*

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