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Edmund S. Muskie Papers

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New Directions Toward Peace and Security - Remarks by Senator Edmund S. Muskie to the Commonwealth Club

Edmund S. Muskie

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For Dave Anderson

NEW DIRECTIONS TOWARD PEACE
AND SECURITY

AN ADDRESS BY

SENATOR EDMUND S. MUSKIE

TO
THE COMMONWEALTH CLUB
SHERATON PALACE HOTEL
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIF.
SEPTEMBER 18, 1968
12:45 P.M.

A POLITICAL CANDIDATE, WHATEVER OTHER PROBLEMS
HE MAY HAVE TO ENDURE, AT LEAST GETS TO SEE A LOT OF
OUR GREAT COUNTRY, AND MANY OF ITS CITIES AND TOWNS.

THERE ARE HAZARDS IN THIS, OF COURSE. SOME OF
YOU MAY HAVE READ ABOUT A PROBLEM I HAD A COUPLE OF
WEEKS AGO IN OHIO. I WAS MAKING A TALK IN CAMPBELL.
UNFORTUNATELY, I BEGAN MY REMARKS BY SAYING WHAT A
PLEASURE IT WAS "TO BE HERE IN YOUNGSTOWN." WHEN THE
SHOUTS AND LAUGHTER HAD DIED DOWN I CONFESSED TO SHARING
EVERY POLITICIAN'S FEAR THAT HE WOULD DO SOMETHING LIKE
THAT SOONER OR LATER--ALTHOUGH I HAD TO ADMIT I HADN'T
EXPECTED TO DO IT QUITE SO EARLY IN THE CAMPAIGN.

I AM GLAD TO BE HERE IN SAN FRANCISCO.

THIS IS ONE OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL CITIES IN
AMERICA, PERHAPS THE MOST BEAUTIFUL OF ALL AMERICA'S
CITIES. ITS POLITICS ARE NORMALLY DEMOCRATIC--A FACT
OF NO SMALL COMFORT THIS YEAR--AND YOU HAVE ONE OF

THE OUTSTANDING LEADERS OF ANY COMMUNITY IN MAYOR ALIOTO. EVEN SAN FRANCISCO FOG IS COMFORTING TO A MAN FROM THE STATE OF MAINE, WHERE WE HAVE BEEN KNOWN TO HAVE A COUPLE OF DAYS OF FOG A YEAR.

AS WE LOOK OUT AT THE WORLD IN THE FALL OF 1968, WE ARE CONSCIOUS THAT IT IS NOT A COMFORTING TIME FOR US OR FOR MANKIND. ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THIS OCEAN OUR YOUNG MEN AND THE PRESTIGE OF OUR COUNTRY ARE COMMITTED IN THE FRUSTRATING AND DIFFICULT STRUGGLE IN VIETNAM. AND AS WE LOOK EAST ACROSS OUR COUNTRY AND THE ATLANTIC OCEAN, IT DOES NOT TAKE MUCH IMAGINATION TO SEE THE FRESH TEARS IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA, WHERE YOUNG FREEDOMS WERE RECENTLY DEALT A SAVAGE BLOW.

FACED WITH SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES IT IS EASY TO FEEL FRUSTRATED AND DISILLUSIONED. IN VIETNAM SOME ARE TEMPTED TO REMOVE OURSELVES ABRUPTLY FROM THE ARENA OF FRUSTRATION. OTHERS ARE TEMPTED TO LASH OUT WITH OUR MILITARY MIGHT TO CRUSH THE FORCES THAT TORMENT US AND OUR ALLIES.

IN EUROPE, SOVIET RUSSIA HAS RE-OPENED THE DOOR TO THE VERBAL RETALIATIONS AND THE IMPLACABLE DISTRUST OF THE COLDEST DAYS OF THE COLD WAR IN THE 1950'S.

THESE CIRCUMSTANCES OFFER EASY TEMPTATIONS FOR STRONG REACTIONS. IT IS NOT SURPRISING, THEREFORE, THAT

MR. NIXON HAS PROPOSED WITHHOLDING RATIFICATION OF THE NUCLEAR NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY IN RETALIATION FOR SOVIET ACTIONS IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA. IT IS NOT SURPRISING, EITHER, THAT MANY AMERICANS FEEL THE URGES OF A NEW ISOLATIONISM, THAT FICTITIOUS STATE OF EASE IN WHICH--THEORETICALLY--WE WOULD BE FREE TO PURSUE SOLUTIONS TO OUR VERY REAL NEEDS HERE AT HOME.

IT IS EASY TO UNDERSTAND SUCH TEMPTATIONS, IF NOT TO ADMIRE YIELDING TO THEM. BUT I BELIEVE IT IS EVEN MORE A TIME FOR A NEW COMMITMENT TO REASON, INSTEAD OF EMOTION, IN DEVELOPING OUR FOREIGN POLICY FOR THE YEARS AHEAD.

I KNOW IT IS HARD TO LOOK BEYOND VIETNAM IN THE PACIFIC. I DO BELIEVE THERE ARE CERTAIN PRINCIPLES WHICH MUST GUIDE OUR POLICIES IN RELATION TO VIETNAM, HOWEVER, AND THEY SHOULD BE REITERATED BEFORE WE CAN EVEN ATTEMPT TO DISCUSS OTHER MATTERS.

FIRST, WE MUST BRING THIS WAR TO AN END. AND WE MUST BRING IT TO AN END JUST AS SOON AS IS REASONABLY POSSIBLE.

SECOND, WE REALIZE THAT THE WAR IN VIETNAM MUST BE ENDED THROUGH NEGOTIATIONS. IMPLICIT IN THIS STATEMENT IS THE FACT THAT THERE WILL BE NO WINNER--AND NO LOSER--OF THIS WAR, IN THE HISTORICAL SENSE OF THOSE LABELS.

THIRD, WE MUST REALIZE THAT IN ORDER TO EFFECT THESE NEGOTIATIONS WE MUST MAKE CONCESSIONS. ANOTHER WAY OF PUTTING IT IS TO SAY THAT WE ARE GOING TO HAVE TO TAKE CERTAIN CALCULATED RISKS IN THE PURSUIT OF PEACE, JUST AS WE HAVE LONG ACCEPTED THE NECESSITY OF TAKING CALCULATED RISKS IN WAGING WAR.

ONE SUCH INSTANCE MAY WELL BE A WILLINGNESS TO END THE REMAINING BOMBING OF NORTH VIETNAM, JUST AS WE HAVE ALREADY ENDED THE BOMBING OF NEARLY 80 PERCENT OF NORTH VIETNAM'S LAND AREA, WHICH HOLDS SOME 90 PERCENT OF NORTH VIETNAM'S CIVILIAN POPULATION. BUT WE CANNOT RESPONSIBLY THROW SUCH CONCESSIONS AWAY, ONLY TO WATCH THE OTHER SIDE UP THE ANTE STEP BY STEP. WE WILL NOT GET A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT UNTIL EACH SIDE IS COMMITTED TO ONE IN ITS OWN INTEREST; AND SURELY IT IS REASONABLE TO ASK THE OTHER SIDE TO GIVE US EVIDENCE OF ITS COMMITMENT IN RETURN FOR ENDING THE BOMBING.

FOURTH AND FINALLY, WE MUST PURSUE THE SAME SPIRIT OF FLEXIBLE, RESPONSIBLE ACTION AS WE MOVE INTO THE SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES OF NEGOTIATION

--A CEASE-FIRE

--PROVISIONS FOR THE WITHDRAWAL OF FORCES;

--AND ELECTIONS PROTECTING THE RIGHTS OF ALL SOUTH VIETNAMESE CITIZENS.

ONLY IN SUCH A SPIRIT OF REASON CAN WE HOPE TO BRING THIS WAR TO AN HONORABLE AND RESPONSIBLE END. AND WE MUST PERSEVERE IN THIS SPIRIT IF WE ARE TO REACH A GOAL THAT WILL BE CONSISTENT WITH OUR INTERESTS AND OUR CHILDREN'S FUTURES.

WHAT OF EUROPE, AND THE LARGER QUESTION OF OUR RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION? IN THE WAKE OF EVENTS IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA MUST WE ABANDON OUR QUEST FOR NEW DIALOGUES OF REASON AND NEW SAFEGUARDS AGAINST THE THREAT OF A WORLD CONSUMED BY NUCLEAR HOLOCAUST? MUST WE BURN OR ABANDON THE BRIDGES BUILT AND STILL UNDER CONSTRUCTION?

I BELIEVE THE ANSWER TO THAT QUESTION MUST BE, NO. TO ABANDON HASTILY OUR STEP-BY-CAREFUL-STEP PURSUIT OF PEACE WOULD NOT BE CONSISTENT WITH OUR PAST NOR RESPONSIBLE TO THE NEEDS OF THE FUTURE.

THE CZECHOSLOVAKIAN INCIDENT HAS REMINDED US THAT THE SOVIET UNION IS FEARFUL OF ITS NEIGHBORS' YEARNINGS FOR REASONABLE NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE AND PERSONAL LIBERTY. THERE IS SOME EVIDENCE THAT SINCE THE INVASION OF HUNGARY IN 1956 THE SOVIETS HAVE DEVELOPED SOME SENSITIVITY TO THE CONDEMNATION OF WORLD OPINION. WE CAN HOPE THE CZECH PEOPLE WILL EMERGE FROM THE CRISIS WITHOUT THE PERSONAL BRUTALITIES THAT OCCURRED TWELVE YEARS AGO.

THIS IS NOT ALL THAT HAS CHANGED SINCE THE 1950'S. IF THE WESTERN ALLIANCE, PARTICULARLY NATO, HAS DEVELOPED

A FEW CRACKS, THE PRINCIPAL COMMUNIST ALLIANCE BETWEEN CHINA AND RUSSIA HAS COLLAPSED INTO VIRULENT ENMITY. AND INTERNATIONAL COMMUNISM HAS PROVEN ITSELF NO MORE COMFORTABLE A BEDFELLOW FOR OLD NATIONALISM IN EUROPE AND NEW NATIONALISM IN ASIA AND AFRICA THAN WAS COLONIALISM BEFORE IT.

CZECHOSLOVAKIA HAS UNDERSCORED THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN COMMUNISM AND DEMOCRACY. BUT THE UNITED STATES AND THE SOVIET UNION, DISCONTINUING THE EMOTIONAL COLD WAR RHETORIC OF THE 1950'S, HAVE BEEN ABLE TO FIND CERTAIN AREAS WHERE THEIR NATIONAL INTERESTS--AND WORLD INTERESTS--ARE MORE IN CONSONANCE THAN IN OPPOSITION.

THE PRINCIPAL AREA OF CONSONANCE, OF COURSE, LIES IN TAKING STEPS TO PREVENT THE CATASTROPHE OF NUCLEAR WAR BETWEEN THE MAJOR POWERS, AND IN ACTING TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF THE NUCLEAR CAPABILITY INTO AN EVER-INCREASING NUMBER OF NATIONAL HANDS.

JUST AS WE HAVE LEARNED HERE AT HOME THAT VIOLENCE BEGETS MORE VIOLENCE, SO WE CAN SEE THAT THE SPREAD OF THE NUCLEAR CAPABILITY ABROAD ENHANCES THE DANGER TO MANKIND'S SURVIVAL.

CONSIDERING THESE ARE THE STAKES, IT SEEMS TO ME THAT WE CANNOT SLAM THE DOOR ON FURTHER AGREEMENTS IN SUCH AREAS. TO DO SO WOULD BE AS RECKLESS AS WOULD BE UNILATERAL DISARMAMENT OR A FAILURE TO KEEP OUR DETERRENCE CAPABILITY ADEQUATE TO THE DEMANDS OF NATIONAL SECURITY.

FINALLY, I BELIEVE THAT WE CANNOT AFFORD TO LOSE OUR VISION OR OUR PERSPECTIVE IN THE FOGS THAT BESET US FROM TIME TO TIME IN THIS UNCERTAIN AND COMPLICATED WORLD. WE CANNOT AFFORD TO LET THE VIETNAMS AND CZECHOSLOVAKIAS--REAL AND TAXING THOUGH THEY ARE--BLIND US AS A NATION AND A PEOPLE TO OUR ROLE AND COURSE IN THE YEARS AHEAD, AFTER THESE EVENTS CAN BE VIEWED IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF HISTORY.

I THINK THE TIME HAS COME FOR US TO CHART A NEW DIRECTION FOR OUR FOREIGN POLICY TO INSURE THAT OUR SUPPORT OF FREEDOM AND PEACE WILL BE CONSISTENT WITH OUR OBJECTIVES, COMMENSURATE WITH OUR CAPACITIES AND APPROPRIATE TO GIVEN CIRCUMSTANCES.

IT MAY BE WELL TO NOTE THAT THIS TEST WAS NOT APPLIED WHEN WE FIRST ACTED TO INSURE THE SEPARATION OF NORTH AND SOUTH VIETNAM IN 1954 AND EFFECTIVELY PREVENTED THE ELECTIONS SCHEDULED FOR 1956 UNDER THE GENEVA ACCORDS.

I BELIEVE WE MUST BEGIN TO CHART OUR NEW DIRECTIONS NOW, SO THAT OUR MAP WILL BE IN HAND WHEN THE CHOICES OF THE FUTURE CONFRONT US.

THE WORLD HAS CHANGED GREATLY SINCE WE DREW OUR OLD MAPS. IN EUROPE WE ARE NO LONGER AN UNCLE SAM OF UNRIVALED POWER. WE HAVE BECOME, AND WE SHOULD BE, A PARTNER IN EUROPE'S FUTURE PROGRESS RATHER THAN ITS DOMINATOR.

IN ASIA WE ARE NO LONGER LIBERATORS AND WE CANNOT RELY ON MILITARY SECURITY PACTS THAT UNILATERALLY GUARANTEE GOVERNMENTS THAT MAY NOT ENJOY THE SUPPORT OF THE GOVERNED.

OUR AID PROGRAMS HAVE LOGGED ACHIEVEMENTS UNIQUE IN HISTORY, RESTORING THE ECONOMIES OF WESTERN EUROPE AND JAPAN AND BUILDING THOSE OF KOREA AND TAIWAN TO THE POINT WHERE THEIR GROWTH IS NOW SELF-SUSTAINING.

NOW WE FACE MORE SUBTLE AND DIFFICULT TASKS AND, LIKE OUR ALLIANCES, OUR AID PROGRAMS MUST BE BROUGHT UP TO DATE TO ACCOMPLISH THEM.

AND JUST AS WE MUST DEFINE AND DEVELOP THE PROGRAMS THAT WILL NURTURE BETTER QUALITY IN AMERICAN LIFE AT HOME, SO MUST WE CONCEIVE A NEW GOOD NEIGHBOR POLICY FOR OUR ROLE ABROAD.

THIS NEW POLICY MUST RECOGNIZE THAT A GOOD NEIGHBOR DOES NOT INVITE HIMSELF INTO ANOTHER'S HOME AND TAKE OVER CONTROL OF IT. NOR DOES A GOOD NEIGHBOR STAY AWAY WHEN HIS NEIGHBOR NEEDS HELP.

NOW IS NOT THE TIME FOR ME TO LAY OUT A BLUEPRINT FOR NEW DIRECTIONS IN OUR INTERNATIONAL POLICIES.

BUT I CAN SUGGEST SOME CRITERIA:

(1) WE SHOULD ACHIEVE A BALANCE IN THE ALLOCATION OF OUR RESOURCES BETWEEN OUR RESPONSIBILITIES IN EUROPE, ASIA AND THE SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE;

(2) IN EACH AREA WE SHOULD CONVERT OUR ASSISTANCE - WHEREVER POSSIBLE - FROM UNITED STATES PRESENCE TO A SUPPORTIVE ROLE;

(3) OUR EMPHASIS IN ECONOMIC, DEFENSE AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE SHOULD SHIFT STEADILY IN THE DIRECTION OF MULTINATIONAL SUPPORT PROGRAMS; and

(4) OUR POLICIES AND TACTICS SHOULD BE GUIDED MORE AND MORE BY LONG-TERM CONSIDERATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL STABILITY AND GROWTH-AND OUR OWN NATIONAL SECURITY-RATHER THAN EXCLUSIVE RELIANCE ON TRADITIONAL ASSOCIATIONS.

SUCH AN APPROACH, IT SEEMS TO ME, OFFERS A WAY FOR THE UNITED STATES TO STAND AS AN EXAMPLE TO THE WHOLE WORLD - INCLUDING THE STRUGGLING SOCIETIES OF SOUTHEAST ASIA, AFRICA AND SOUTH AMERICA. THAT "A GOVERNMENT OF REASON IS BETTER THAN ONE OF FORCE" AND THAT A FREE PEOPLE CAN MAINTAIN A JUST AND REWARDING SOCIETY FOR EACH OF ITS MEMBERS.