27

THE READING TIMES (16)

June 6, 1939.

U. S. Aim Is Peace, Says Messersmith

Backs Foreign Policy In Albright Speech

The often criticized foreign policy of the United States was defended yesterday as a policy based squarely on the principle of maintaining peace and security here and abroad, by George S. Messersmith, a native of Fleetwood, who climbed the diplomatic ladder to the post of an assistant secretary of state.

Messersmith offered his defense of the nation's foreign policy at the eighteenth annual commencement exercises of Albright College in which he visioned the United States as a champion of democracy in a world "faced by a situation in which certain totalitarian states are determined to force their ideologies on other parts of the world."

During the exercises, held on the campus of the college, the degree of doctor of laws was conferred on the diplomat by Dr. Harry V. Masters, president of Albright, with Dean George W. Walton presenting the citation.

Referring to the criticism directed against the foreign relations of the United States, Messersmith declared that often youth is of the opinion "that comparatively older men are bringing about a situation by which our country may become involved in war, and that in war, if it came, the younger generation would be sacrificed in consequence of the ineptitude of these older men."

Basic Principles

"I believe I am warranted in asking you to believe that I speak with a knowledge of the facts when I affirm that the foreign policy of our government is based squarely on the principles of maintaining the peace and security of our country and using our country's influence towards the maintenance of peace and prevalence of security as world conditions," he declared.

"There is one indisputable fact which we must recognize, young and old—those who are beginning and those who are approaching the end of their careers—that there are abroad in the world forces, fundamental and elemental if you wish, which are making for destruction of all that is finest in the civilization evolved through so many centuries of painful and costly experience and effort.

Propaganda Machines

"There are nations which, for purpose of policy, have reverted to force accompanied by intimidation, coercion, perversion of truth and, in general, practices which we had believed far behind us as discredited methods of the darker ages of the history of mankind. Propaganda machines using every means of modern communication, and reaching out into every part of the world, have been set up, and fact and truth are being cleverly and subtly distorted to persuade, to convince or to compel."

Under such circumstances, he continued, the nation has formulated a foreign policy through which it attempts to maintain friendly and peaceful relations with the entire world. This policy, he explained, is predicated on the belief that such relations can only be maintained if there is a recognition by all states of the full sovereignty and rights of others, abstaining from interfering with the affairs of other nations, and keeping open the avenues of trade on the basis of equality and abstention from discrimination.

Holds Policy Is Firm

"There has been no change in our policy—which remains that of safeguarding this country's peace and security, not only for today but for tomorrow as well," he continued. "No foreign policy is sound which does not envisage both the problems of today and the problems of tomorrow. In order to maintain these principles, it has been found essential, as cardinal elements of our policy, to retain at all times this country's liberty of action, to maintain our defensive strength always at such a standard as to be able to repel attack from whatever source it might arise, and to be prepared to play our full part in cooperating with the other American republics in keeping the Western Hemisphere free from any form of aggression. Any government which would neglect to do these things with the knowledge that we now have of developments elsewhere would be failing utterly in a primary duty to its people."

There has been a tendency of some people, he said, to view the formulation of the nation's foreign policy and relations as some mysterious if not secret procedure when actually this is not so because of the democratic form of government. On the other hand, Messersmith pointed out, dictatorships have reverted to "practices in internal and external policy . . . which has led to a breakdown of international morality that is bringing states into a status where their relationships in which the threat of war is constantly on the horizon and more than one part of the world is becoming an armed camp."

Will of the People

Because of these conditions, Messersmith explained, a nation whose foreign policy is designed to be expressive of the will of the people is faced with grave problems. He expressed confidence, however, that the policy of the United States will continue to be responsive to the will of the people.

Messersmith dwelt at length on an explanation of the workings of the state department and declared that under present circumstances "we can count ourselves fortunate that there is today no chief of state who has a broader and more exact knowledge of what is happening in every part of the world, or greater vision of what it means for us and our people and others than President Roosevelt." By the same token he said, Secretary of State Cordell Hull has similar knowledge and vision.

Commenting on the "persistent tendency on the part of some very well-meaning groups . . . to believe that merely by so willing it we shall be able to live on a continental island in the middle of this disturbed world," he pointed out that a policy of isolation for the United States would not be realistic and would lead the nation into "troubled waters."

"It is well for us to realize that, whether or not we wish it to be so or like to have it so, the United States can speak today among the nations with a weight of authority which is perhaps not equalled by that of any other country. The responsibility which rests upon this country is great, for whether we wish it or not, and no matter how much we may endeavor to avoid it, what we say and do in these troubled times will influence to a considerable degree the policies of other nations," Messersmith said. (16)

Scenes at Albright Commencement Exercises

Marked by the presence of George Strausser Messersmith, Assistant Secretary of State of the United States, a native son of Berks, the 1939 Albright College commencement exercises held today on the campus were both colorful and impressive. On Messersmith was conferred the honorary degree of doctor of laws. At the top a general view of the speakers' stand is shown as Lewis A. Briner, highest ranking boy student, delivers the class oration before an audience of about 2,000 people. Bottom shows (left to right), The Rev. Hermann F. Miller, pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church, who rendered the invocation; Dean George W. Walton, and Messersmith.

Scenes at Albright College Commencement

Members of the Class of 1939 are shown above as they were inducted into the Albright College Alumni Association in front of the library at the conclusion of the college's eightieth commencement exercise yesterday. Below: George S. Messersmith, native of Fleetwood and an assistant secretary of state, is shown at left as Dr. Wilson I. Miller, of the faculty, confers the honorary degree of doctor of laws from Albright.—Times Staff Photo.