10-2-1947

The Uneasy World and Universal Military Training. (National Convention of American Veterans)

Strom Thurmond

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Recommended Citation
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ADDRESS OF J. STROM THURMOND, GOVERNOR OF SOUTH CAROLINA, TO THE NATIONAL CONVENTION OF AMERICAN VETERANS, AT MEMORIAL AUDITORIUM, COLUMBUS, OHIO, THURSDAY, OCTOBER 29, 1947, 3:00 P. M.

THE UNEASY WORLD AND UNIVERSAL MILITARY TRAINING

In the past two years, a great many Army, Navy, and Air Force officers, diplomats, and journalists have spoken and written of the probable shape of the beginning of the next war. These experts agree almost entirely as to how it will begin. Let me give you a composite picture drawn from their ideas.

**First,** war will come with lightning swiftness. There will be no buildup such as the assassination of an Austrian archduke, or an incident at the Marco Polo Bridge, or the rantings of a Central European politician. The Japanese gave the world an elementary object lesson on how modern war will begin. The next time, there will be even less warning than Japan gave.

**Second,** the United States will undoubtedly be the first target. Twice before, nations bent on aggression have failed to take the United States into accounting soon enough. In both of those wars, the industrial productivity of the United States turned the tide. No one will make that mistake again.
It is most improbable that the enemy will select a military or naval concentration such as Pearl Harbor for his initial target. Instead, we may expect our next Pearl Harbors to be New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Detroit, Chicago, Cleveland, New Orleans, Houston, Des Moines, Seattle, San Francisco, and Los Angeles. Once our great production centers are destroyed, the enemy can conquer the rest of the world at his leisure.

Third, the weapons will be vastly more devastating than those we know now. Guided missiles will streak over oceans and the poles. Pre-concealed explosives will boom in a hundred American cities. Biological weapons, more thorough killers than the atom bomb, will be let loose to ravage the land. Saboteurs and fifth-columnists, organized with an efficiency hitherto unknown, will spring up like dragon's teeth. Air invasion forces will come down at strategic places all over the nation.

Luckily, this bleak prospect lies some time in the future. We could not cope with it now. And if we do not strain ourselves to prepare, we cannot deal with it when it comes.

In order to survive such an attack, and in order to take the offensive in a war which may be won or lost in perhaps
a few weeks, we must have millions of citizens trained before war begins. It would be national suicide for us to think that we can again, as we have in all our wars of the past, take months and years to get ready for action.

We must institute Universal Military Training immediately. We cannot depend upon volunteers or a draft. By the time their hasty, incomplete training would get under way, the war could well be over.

The citizens of our country have many privileges. But the continued enjoyment of those privileges requires the assumption of definite obligations. The foremost is the obligation to preserve, protect, and defend our nation. They can best be fitted for this duty through the agency of Universal Military Training. It is the most orderly plan yet presented for employing our manpower resources most fully.

The regular military establishments, the Organized Reserves, and the National Guard, are obviously inadequate for modern war without Universal Military Training. Right now, with peace most seriously menaced by Russia, the Army is running 25 percent short of replacements needed to substitute for discharges.
The National Guard is 84 per cent below strength. The Organized Reserve is 86 per cent below strength. The unassigned Reserve pool is 65 per cent below strength. The Navy and the Air Force are likewise severely hampered by manpower shortages. Universal Military Training will be the quickest, easiest, and most democratic solution for these problems.

Let's consider a few of the major reasons who we must have Universal Military Training.

1. A strong America is the world's best guarantee of peace. Two world wars have been fought because America was weak. We know now that Hitler advanced his schedule of conquest four years because he thought America and the other democracies had not the strength to resist.

2. All of our major wars have been fought chiefly by civilians. Our Regular forces made up less than 10 per cent of the men involved. This being the case, we owe it to ourselves to give our citizens adequate training well in advance of the time they may be called upon. An untrained soldier, as you all know, is very likely to become a dead soldier.

3. The fact that the United States will be the first
target requires millions of trained citizens always ready.

We must be ready to deal with devastation in many cities, and many simultaneous air invasions. Unorganized, untrained citizens would be helpless in the face of multiple disasters. Even though men may have undergone Universal Military Training many years before, and may not then be qualified for offensive service, they will be absolutely essential for civilian defense. The value of such a trained reserve cannot be overestimated in time of need. They will be scattered all over the nation, and the entire nation will be the enemy's target.

The opponents of Universal Military Training -- many of them sincere -- argue along these lines:

1. That Universal Military Training is of European derivation and would make America a militaristic nation. That objection does not square with the facts. Of the major world powers, the United States alone does not have such a system. We have suffered heavily because we do not. George Washington was the first of our many Presidents who favored universal training of our citizens. We have graves scattered widely over the world as reminders that we should have followed Washington's advice.
A militaristic America is a fanciful pipedream conjured up by hysterical opponents of Universal Military Training. Nearly 14,000,000 of our citizens have just completed up to 7 years of service in uniform, and they came out far less warlike than they were when they went in. Considering the present strength of our armed forces, it is clearly evident that militarism has not caught on in this country. Besides their service during the war, Americans for many years have worn the uniforms of Reserve Corps, the National Guard, and the Citizens Military Training Camps. They have served in the CCC and Civil Defense. Most of these citizens have left the military with increased enthusiasm and appreciation for the freedoms and privileges of civilian life.

2. That the atom bomb and other developments will make large manpower forces obsolete. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Technological advances almost always require larger numbers of men. During the War Between the States only one man was required behind the line to support the soldier at the front. During the just ended war, 100 were needed. Twenty years ago, a ground crew of three could keep a fighter plane in
the air. Today a P-80 requires 12. The vast complexity of weapons and instruments now under development will demand an enormous increase in men. Furthermore, these men will need intensive training which cannot well be improvised under the stress of sudden emergency.

3. That the atomic bomb and international agreements will eliminate war. Who can truly say that? Who could base the defense of America on that theory?

4. That the adoption of Universal Military Training would cast doubt on the adherence of the United States to the United Nations. A few of the nations in the United Nations who already have Universal Military Training are Russia, Great Britain, France, Brazil, and Sweden. The sincere devotion of all of these nations to the United Nations - with the sole exception of Russia - is questioned by no one.

5. That men of 18 would suffer moral deterioration in camps. Hundreds of thousands of men of this age fought in World War II and were exposed to similar influences. By the age of 18, most men have determined their moral code. It is interesting to note that out of each 100 civilian 18-year-olds, only 11 regularly
attend religious services. According to chaplains' records, 28.4 out of each 100 of 18-year-olds attended regularly while they were in the service. The Army's experimental Universal Military Training battalion at Fort Knox proved that men can be trained in comfortable, moral surroundings which make them better soldiers and better citizens. In addition, young men will get lifelong benefits from such training by virtue of vocation and trade instruction and the detection and correction of physical defects.

6. That Universal Military Training will be ruinously costly. We could train 1,000,000 men for one whole year on the money we would have saved if we could have shortened World War II by 3-1/2 days. No expenditures that we have ever known can compare with what it would cost us to lose a war.

The actual opposition to Universal Military Training is small in the United States. According to public opinion polls, in 1938, 37 per cent of the people favored it and 63 per cent opposed it. In June of 1940 opinion was evenly divided. By October of that year, with France under the Swastika, 84 per cent favored it and only 16 per cent opposed. Now, according to the July Gallup Poll, 75 per cent of Americans want Universal
Military Training.

Those who fight Universal Military Training are well organized and are highly vocal. They would make it appear that most citizens abhor the idea. Quite the reverse is true. We veterans must take it upon ourselves to keep pushing until democratic Universal Military Training is functioning in America.

We are toying with our national security every day we delay.

We must not, and we cannot, take chances with our freedom.