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OPENING REMARKS
by
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Governor Garrahy, Secretary Claytor, ladies and gentlemen. For those of you whom I have not met, my name is Jim Stockdale; I had the good fortune to come here as President about six months ago. I know that the program says I'm just to say hello and introduce the keynote speaker, but I'm going to take something less than 15 minutes to make a first step toward getting acquainted with our civilian guests. So please don't be nervous; I'll get to the introduction promptly.

To give you a better handle on who I am, you should know that I've always wanted to be a schoolmaster. I like the academic environment, particularly when the subject matter involves institutions and issues dear to my heart, like a Navy which has been my home and life for 35 years, and like a country which I love very much -- one which I want to see survive and prosper. So coming here has truly been an answer to my prayers. I like the give and take, the scrimmage of the classroom, and will commence conducting courses personally next term.

That's who I am, and I think I have a pretty good idea of who you are. As I've studied your distinguished backgrounds, I've seen names that I've admired from afar for years, and others belonging to people who have been near and dear to me during the most important times of my life. Among you are (now) civilian businessmen who were naval and Marine officers with me as postgraduate students, destroyer sailors and fighter pilots. There are in this audience active duty officers who shared my exciting days as a test pilot and others who shared my even more exciting days as a prisoner of war. There are college professors here whom I have known as carrier landing signal officers and as classroom mentors, past and present.

So I welcome you all. It's the time of year when we gather together a widely representative group of American citizens -- all with different backgrounds, different interests, different professions, different faiths, different disciplines,

and certainly different convictions -- but Americans all, and all concerned about how this Republic fares.

We're here for two days to focus on the subject, "The Navy and National Strategy: What Kind of a Future Navy and Why?". This is a very basic issue, one which I hope we can avoid obscuring with programmatic gobbledegook. It's a basic issue first because it's about force and power -- national power. I know some of you abhor that subject, but I think it's regrettably true that war is the way of the world. The most thorough and talented historic scholars I know, Will and Ariel Durant, have been able to find only 268 among the last 4000 years of recorded history which avoided the blight of war on this planet.

Incidentally, I asked the Durants to come here to speak (not at this but at another occasion). I had met them previously at a meeting of the American Academy of Achievement, where each of us discussed the affairs of the world and our careers with honor students from across the country. The Durants took the stage, she behind him on a walker. She had fallen and broken her hip. He's over 90 and deaf. It came time for questions and she would have to repeat each, yelling in his ear. He said, "What? What was it?" And she said, "Will, they want to know what you think about American foreign policy." You'll notice I've been vague about when this meeting was held, and thus leave open the issue of what Administration was in power. When Will Durant understood the question, he said, "Ah, I think we're all mixed up; we seem to be working on the assumption that if we're nice to other people they'll be nice to us. I can tell you that in the last 4000 years there's practically no evidence to support that view."

If you don't like the Durants' view of the utility of power, perhaps you will accept the way my predecessor, Alfred Thayer Mahan, saw it. "The purpose of power," said Mahan, "is to permit moral ideas to take root." I think that given the realities of this contentious world, there's a lot of truth in his statement.

The subject of the Navy and national strategy is basic, particularly for Americans, for a second reason. It concerns the sea and we Americans are children of the sea. Now it is true that from platforms such as this it is often specified on the first day that this is an island nation and that for commercial and other reasons we behave like an island. Or, as Henry Kissinger said a little more eloquently from this platform about two weeks ago, our history may be seen in three segments vis-à-vis the sea: first we saw the sea as

a moat of protection, then as a haven for our ally -- the British and their navy which protected us. And finally now it threatens to become a lair for our enemies with their missile submarines. But I mean we in America are children of the sea for much deeper reasons which have to do with the intellectual history and the cosmology of the Western mind. Because, you see, America was not discovered, it was invented.

Last Saturday night I spent all too many hours reading a fascinating book written 20 years ago by a Latin American scholar named Edmundo O'Gorman. Its title is, The Invention of America. In well-footnoted detail he describes the terrible upheavals in scientific and religious thought rent by Christopher Columbus' cruise reports in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Admiral Columbus was not much help in calming these upheavals because he clung to the myth that he had got to Asia. He made four cruises, and he patched together more or less the same rationalizations after each one. His arrival in Asia had become an obsession with him, a matter of faith, in spite of evidence he was clearly too intelligent not to recognize. But you see he had been paid to go to Asia, and his reputation was staked on the issue. He was not, as is commonly said, on the outs with Amerigo Vespucci. (Amerigo's early western explorations overlapped Christopher's later ones.) By a tacit agreement, Amerigo ultimately announced the truth, that there was a new continent, when it was politic to do so.

I want to talk a little more about these upheavals in scientific and religious thought. Columbus' claim that he arrived in Asia after so short a trip drove the mathematicians up the wall. Of course we all know that educated Westerners, way back to the Greeks, had known that the world was round; they also had a very good idea of how large it was. This half-size world of Columbus was throwing off all their astronomy calculations. Furthermore, Columbus' hypothetical world would have had to be mostly land. Science, folklore and religion had all, for centuries, held that the world was mostly water. All three turned out to be correct, of course. In the Book of Genesis if you will remember, God parted the waters and made the earth. The earth was the exception. He created a world of islands, not a world of lakes. Western man grew up with great awe of the power of the sea. The Old Testament God was also a strict disciplinarian and He combatted evil with mighty weapons -- with hordes of locusts, with famine, with draught, with pestilence. But after His Flood, even He had second thoughts, and went on record agreeing never to repeat it.

Theologians had many problems with a new continent. They had Adam and Eve problems, original sin problems. In those days there was a well-established "island of the earth" theory. Even St. Augustine's celestial city was open only to residents of Europe, Asia and Africa. In other words, Columbus raised some very delicate problems and we should be thankful that we did not have instant news analysis then as now or there would have been a lot of very disturbed people around. In the ways of the venerable institutions of those years a measured accommodation was made. It took 15 years, but in 1507, one of the most important documents in geographic science appeared: "The Introductory Cosmology" by the Academy of St. Dié. (That title is my translation of O'Gorman's Latin.) This document said that although the land was still divided into three parts (Europe, Asia and Africa), there was a fourth special part of the world. It was something like an island, something like a continent, but special, and called America, after its only discoverer with enough credibility left to lend it his name. Thus, the term "new world" which emerged with this document had deep symbolic meaning. It did not refer merely to some distant location which might be profitable for economic development or exciting for residence. The "new world" concept had much more impact on human minds than would result today, say in case of the discovery of a new celestial body, or resulted yesterday, say in the landing of the astronauts on the moon.

Why all this about intellectual history? Well, because we live in our minds, reality to each of us is largely what we want to believe. The reality of the association of the sea and the United States is that it has driven our history -- not only our military and diplomatic history, but every brand of our history -- our intellectual history, our economic history. As one of dozens of seldom cited examples of the latter is the great change a single seaport brought to this country in the early nineteenth century. In the year 1820, the records tell us that slavery was all but dead in America. Its economic utility was drying up. So also drying up at an alarming rate was the very economy of the nation. The final successful cure for the latter originated in the minds of the traders of the great port of New York. They collaborated with the agronomists of the South and launched an industry that kept the country going for decades. That industry was cotton. Throughout that nineteenth century America grew cotton, grew cotton, and grew cotton -- and always exported most of it to Europe. Now this had many effects. Plantations grew, slavery grew, Indian tribes were kicked off valuable lands in Alabama, the industrial revolution of the North was spurred, the nation was rent by a Civil War, a post-war capital and credit system grew in the great Northern cities, and so on and on. But it was our great seaports that made the difference, kept us alive, and gave us our unique American vitality, and all the good and all the bad that comes with it.

And so I say, is it not reasonable that we Americans, we men of this special place, this fourth place, this new world, very likely come by our national defense concept of a forward strategy naturally? What is more consistent with our cosmology, our self-image of differentness, our centuries-old habits of aloofness, than our tradition of keeping our ramparts at our adversaries' gates rather than at our shores?

Maybe we naturally assume we own the sea. Can we afford to give it up? Should we make ourselves afford it for the protection of our grandchildren? It will be a pleasure to address these issues with you this week. . . .

(VADM Stockdale went on to introduce Secretary of the Navy Graham Claytor)