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President's Notes: Challenge!

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CHALLENGE!

It was a practice in our Navy in the days of sail for seamen to have the letters for the words "HOLD FAST" tattooed just below the knuckles of each finger. A seaman's life frequently hung on this brief maxim. Half prayer, half superstition, it reflected the unswerving determination of the person so adorned, and its effectiveness may have been far greater than imagined, for the beholder was reminded constantly of the stark importance of those two simple words. As a command or as an entreaty, their message was clear, concise, and absolutely vital.

The oracle-like quality of these simple words echoes through the utterances of "Teddy" Roosevelt, one of our most resolute military leaders. On 2 June 1897, before he had become our Commander in Chief, Mr. Roosevelt lectured at the Naval War College. The predictive wisdom and unshakable determination which his remarks reflect illustrate clearly his strength of purpose and grasp of situation. Today, we can take great profit from the reiteration of his statements.

In his opening remarks, Mr. Roosevelt quoted General Washington: "To be prepared for war is the most effectual means to promote peace." There was no doubt that Mr. Roosevelt subscribed fully to the meaning of these words. "In the last resort," he continued, "we can only secure peace by being ready and willing to fight for it. A rich nation which is slothful, timid, or unwieldy is an easy prey for any people which still retains those most valuable of all virtues, the soldierly virtues."

He viewed arbitration as "an excellent thing," but he was careful to point out that a "first class fleet" was far more to be relied upon than a treaty devised by the wit of man. For, in the



words of Admiral Nelson, "The British Fleet was the best negotiator in Europe."

Mr. Roosevelt went on to remind us that "an ignoble peace is worse than any war," and "some forms of peace are fought with more bloodshed than most wars." We have seen the truth of these words in Poland and Hungary.

Within the two short centuries that span the existence of the United States, peace and national integrity have been bought dearly. The stalwart men at Trenton, Bunker Hill, Yorktown, Saratoga, New Orleans, and Mobile Bay can testify to their initial price. They were paid for further at Gettysburg and Appomattox, Chateau-Thierry and Belleau Wood, at the Battle of the Bulge and Iwo Jima. Their cost is still being exacted in Vietnam and Korea.

Yet, as Mr. Roosevelt astutely observed in 1897, "There are some educated men in whom education merely serves to soften the fiber and to eliminate the higher sterner qualities which tell for national greatness; and these men prate about love of mankind, or for another country, as being in some hidden way a substitute for

love of their own country." We have seen evidence of this in the recent trial of a group of educators charged with the subversion of the youth of our nation through attempted draft evasion. In the words of Mr. Roosevelt, "Short-sightedness, good humored indifference, sheer ignorance, and selfish reluctance to insure against future danger by present sacrifice are the chief obstacles to building a proper Navy and carrying out a proper foreign policy." Note his chronology of Navy and foreign policy.

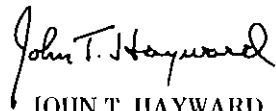
He continues, "This applied in 1812 — then as now it was the Navy upon which the country had to depend in the event of war with a foreign power." And note the relevance of these words in today's context: "Events move fast in the West, but this generation has been forced to see that they move even faster in the oldest East." Taken in this same context, note the illuminating statements with which Mr. Roosevelt continues.

Tame submission to foreign aggression of any kind is a mean and unworthy thing, but it is even meaner and more unworthy to bluster first and then submit. It is *not* enough to parry a blow. The surest way to prevent its repetition is to return it. Diplomacy is utterly useless when there is no force behind it; the diplomat is the servant, not the master, of the soldier. This nation cannot stand still if it is to retain its self-

respect and to keep undimmed the honorable tradition inherited from the men who with the sword founded it and by the sword preserved it. No nation should ever wage war wantonly but no nation should ever avoid it at the cost of loss of national honor.

These are the resolute words of a leader who stood foursquare in the face of opposition both at home and abroad.

We must look back to the heritage which leaders like "Teddy" Roosevelt have fathered, for these truths do not change no matter how the change of circumstance may seem to modify the situation. As Mr. Roosevelt said, it is through the "readiness for strife that a nation must win greatness." This greatness must be maintained at all costs: by a strong Navy and a national armament sufficient to assure the nation's need. And the honorable peace which we must seek is not a granted gift. Like freedom, it must be earned through a resolute will, and it must be kept in being by the daily exercise of those prerogatives which assure its continuance.



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