A Lesson to Learn

Address

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I THANK CAPTAIN JEFFS for his remarks. In many respects, I think, he spoke our minds. It was also pleasing to note he has learned to speak the "Low German" dialect.

It is obvious his years in Bremen have not been in vain. He has become thoroughly familiar with our thoughts and ideas. And from numerous discussions and conferences which I have had with him in the course of these years I can confirm that in Captain Jeffs we have a devoted friend. This is also proven by his initiative in helping to reopen the US Information Center.

This center opened its doors on Oct. 2. Thus our opening ceremony is somewhat late. However, it will help to focus the attention of the public on this institution. This is not the old house but another location with certain innovations; if they prove their worth, they will be incorporated in US Information Centers all over Germany.

A few days ago, I talked to some of the young people visiting here and asked for their opinions. I wanted to know what they think of these institutions, what can be improved, and how the work can be facilitated. In general, their opinion was that the facilities available are sufficient and suitable for their purposes. But they thought that the time had come to build a "House of Europe," too. Because, after all, European relations are so dear to everyone's heart. They said we should have contact with the French, the Belgians, Dutch, Swiss, Spanish, the British and others, and learn their customs, habits and institutions.

While I agree with this suggestion I believe you will find here in this house all the material you need for thinking along European lines: America is similar to Europe in many respects.

WHEN YOU REALIZE that it is the peoples of Europe who make up the American population — there are 38,000,000 descendants of Germans among the 135,000,000

Audience at opening of Bremen's new US Information Center.
Americans — when you realize that just as many British, French, Belgians, Dutch, Spanish as Germans settled over there, why in the world can not a lesson be learned by us in Europe from what has happened in America in the last four centuries.

It is so remarkable that all the people who went over there as Europeans, as nationals of certain countries, became Americans in the first place, and thought only secondarily of their former homes and customs. Of course, these continue to live in their minds and they observe some of the old holidays within families and groups. But they are Americans and they have built up their states, their social, economic and other institutions in such a way that from them we can learn very, very much.

Moreover, had the Americans taken up the racial principles of Hitlerism they could never have made the progress you find there.

How did this happen? What was the striking new idea that accomplished this? It is what you can see here in this house, in the library, in lectures, and so on. It is what we have to learn. We must learn to emerge from our time, to find new motivations — in doing so, American history can serve as an example in many respects.

IT IS BASED ON ONE fundamental principle; those who came to America from all parts of the world; those who spoke the different languages of the world; those who came to an unexplored country where, for some time, might made right; those who found confused conditions and civil war; those who came to a country which was a former colonial possession of England and France, found one thing that united them. It was the constitution, the law to which all Americans submit.

Respect for the law is the bond which has enabled them to become such a fruitful nation in this confused world and to outstrip Europe in the last few decades. This is the basic secret of American development.

Here in Europe we hear gangster stories about America, scandal stories, sensational stories and Lord knows what else. But what does an individual in Germany know about the American way of life, the American character, the American mind, American literature and culture? Very, very little. The truth is what we have to find.

The principles which apply in America today in politics and economics also apply in the relations between nations over here. They are principles which at the turn of the century were still valid with us too. At that time there was no question that an international treaty was binding.

LET ME REMIND YOU of the outbreak of the war in 1914, when the Germans marched through Belgium to get behind the French line. We were not at war with Belgium, it was a breach of peace. But the German government, which committed this breach of peace, stated it was willing to indemnify Belgium at the earliest possible moment. It admitted that its action was illegal. Later, under Hitler, this principle was not even considered. He who had the power was right. This is barbarism, barbarism of the kind which has now broken out again in the East, in Russia, in Korea.

In Korea there was an agreement that the new constitution should be outlined in a peace treaty. This agreement was deliberately violated by an act of aggression. That is the crime. It is one of America's beliefs that international law must be observed. It is observed by America, where the United Nations meet and act to repel aggression and to reinstate a rule of law.

Believe me, what I say here is not a philosophical essay. It is a bitter, a very bitter necessity that these fundamentals be learned by all nations from the two great catastrophes which we have witnessed.

THESE INFORMATION CENTERS will help us. They can assist us so that this lesson is learned, discussed and understood. Their information is not propaganda. Propaganda means inventing slogans, and piling slogans on slogans and using them to drive all mankind in a certain direction. These centers serve an entirely different purpose. They are here to promote thinking, free thinking, that people may learn that there still is something that lifts us above the humdrum of daily life, that there still is a goal which we should strive for.

I think this institution will be successful in Bremen because our relations with America are rooted in the spirit of commerce and economic exchange. For this reason this house is welcome to us from another point of view, too. A young man or woman can add to his or her professional knowledge, and enlarge his or her horizon.

In conclusion, let me state that I welcome this house on behalf of the Senate. I had a prepared speech — actually I had planned to say something entirely different... Yet, what I have told you is, in my opinion, of such tremendous importance at this moment that it must be emphasized again and again. I hope that this center will serve the great project of at last restoring peace and rebuilding a world in which all nations can live, including a reunited Germany as a partner with equal rights. May this Information Center be a help in disseminating these thoughts and ideas. That is my wish on the occasion of the opening of this house.

Examining one of the many volumes in the newly-reopened Bremen Information Center's library are, l-r., Wilhelm Kaisen; Dr. Frederick Burkhardt, special consultant to HICO; Mrs. Patricia Van Delden, Information Centers chief, and Rear-Adm. Charles R. Jells (USN, Retired), US state commissioner for Bremen. (FRB OLC Bremen photos)