

## Introductory Remarks

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# SYMPOSIUM ON THE GULF WAR

## INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

EDWARD D. RE\*

Dean Hasl, my colleagues and friends on the faculty, distinguished guests on the panel and in the audience, ladies and gentlemen:

We meet at a remarkable time in world history to discuss a topic that implicates the most important of human values, the value of the human person reflected in the lives of countless human beings. Specifically, our subject is the most recent war in which our country has been engaged, the war of the Persian Gulf. Our general topic, of course, is war, the ultimate in violence, destruction, and devastation.

This moment in history is extraordinary because we gather to discuss questions of war and peace following recent great world events such as the unification of Germany and the dissolution and collapse of the Soviet Union. We also meet at a time when there is a revival of nationalism in many areas of the world, when Europe is seriously preparing to unite to achieve maximum economic benefits, and when there is a resurgence of democratic values in Eastern Europe.

It is no exaggeration to say that, with the end of the cold war and the momentous world events that have taken place and are

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now in progress, we have come to the end of a crucial era in world history. It was an era rooted in World War II, the great world war that followed a war heralded as the war to end all wars.

The closing of this post-World War II period of distrust, disorder, and fear is in fact the opening of a new era. Notwithstanding serious regional problems, the era that has come to a close also illustrates the untold benefits that can be gained from mutual understanding and cooperation. The changed world conditions have also resulted in inevitable anxiety and instability among the world community. Beyond the challenges posed by the dramatic recent events, what is more important is to grasp the new and unprecedented opportunity that lies ahead. The new challenge affords the opportunity to build the foundations for a world political and social order that may lead to peace. To achieve an era of peace there must be an appreciation of the necessity for attitudes of *conciliation* and *cooperation*.

Experience teaches that only attitudes of conciliation and cooperation are the lubricants that lead to the indispensable compromises that will result in acceptable solutions to the problems that plague the world. Since these problems are obstacles to peace, they must be solved in order to make possible mankind's yearning for a lasting peace.

At the outset, *peace* must be perceived and accepted as the overarching dominant goal of all nations, large and small. All efforts must be devoted to the attainment of peace, to the exclusion of distrust, discord and violence. Surely, this ancient quest for peace must be central to all our efforts and actions in a nuclear age when war should be unthinkable. Have we not progressed far beyond the efforts of the past to limit wars and mitigate their horrors? Is not the time *now* to remove the conditions that led to war, and to establish justice and a world order that renounces war? How much more killing and devastation must be endured before we revive and make a reality the fervent hope of more than half a century ago for the pacific settlement of all international disputes and the total renunciation of war?

Secondly, attitudes of conciliation and cooperation must be accepted as indispensable if we are to succeed in our efforts to avoid and remove existing animosity, bitterness, distrust, and hate that inevitably lead to violence. Although desirable in all negotiations, in a world that is not shrinking, but has already shrunk to the point where all countries are neighbors, only our utmost and

most determined common efforts will be adequate to attain the common good of peace. Hence, if we are serious and wish genuinely to strive for peace, conciliation and cooperation are today the indispensable attitudes of heart and mind for a world order where peace is the dominant common good.

National leaders throughout the world state that the world is a dangerous place. If it is, it is because we have made it so. Hence, we must reexamine the actions of the past that have brought us to a period of history that regards the world as perilous. What have we permitted, and what have we done in the past that have led to the conclusion that violence and war are to be accepted as inevitable? One conclusion seems inescapable: If it is true that the world is no closer to peace than it was when the Great War was fought to end all wars, it cannot be doubted that war is not the road to peace.

Our symposium permits us to reexamine and reassess the views and writings of philosophers and world leaders who have long asserted that wars do not solve world problems, but merely sow the seeds for future wars. Hence, the war that is fought on the premise that it will "settle" a world problem, will not only *not* solve any problem, but will, in reality, be the cause of future wars. Sadly enough, with the accelerating pace of all events in the modern world, it cannot even be said that the war of today sows the seeds of the war of the next generation. The tragedy of today is that human beings of the same generation have been, and may be called to fight in several wars but in a single lifetime. Indeed, there are men and women in certain parts of the world who for generations do not remember and have not experienced a day of peace.

I speak of the exalted status of the human being, because in a topic such as ours we must be reminded of the Socratic question, "How should one live?" For world leaders in particular, and all of us in general, the answer must be to strive increasingly and with unparalleled determination to promote the establishment of a world political and social order where peace will prevail because it is founded upon a just society, and respect, dignity and freedom for the individual.

With these preliminary thoughts that exalt the human person and life above all things, we have gathered to listen to the thoughts of qualified lawyers, scholars and experts who will discuss the most recent war in which our country, together with other nations of the world, has been engaged.

