

# Intellectual and Moral Preparedness

By WILLIAM BENNETT BIZZELL

Excerpts From Convocation Address September 17

**T**HE University is opening today under rather unusual circumstances. So many tragic and surprising things have happened since the University closed its regular session last June that it seems like a very long time ago. During the intervening summer months, our outlook on life and destiny has greatly changed as the result of German aggression which has caused the government of this country to enter upon a program of preparedness and military training unprecedented in peace times.

The University, like similar institutions throughout the country, must fulfill its obligations to society in these critical times. We must support the government in its preparedness program and measure up fully to every requirement of good citizenship.

But I remind you that there is much more to be done than merely utilizing our facilities for military preparedness. The American people must be prepared in mind and heart for any emergency that may arise. While we are all committed to the building of a great navy, a great air force, and a great army, those of us behind these lines of defense must be prepared to support our military organization loyally and faithfully. In other words, intellectual and moral preparedness is a vital part of every program of national defense. It is the peculiar obligation of our educational institutions to serve our country in this regard as we move toward what appears to be the most critical experience in our national history.

As thousands of our young men are being called to the colors for more intensive training, other thousands of our youths are being called back to college where they can make better preparation for whatever demands may be made upon them in future years. The Selective Service and Training Act just passed by Congress recognizes the value of academic and technical training by providing for the exemption of young men of draft age in order that they may continue in college for the academic year 1940-41. This policy on the part of the government places unusual responsibility upon every college student this year. Students will be expected not only to support actively and defend our preparedness program, but to measure up fully to every other requirement of good citizenship. I hope every student enrolled in the University this year will feel that in entering college he

## Professors and Students Are Warned of Responsibility To Defend Our Free Institutions

is fulfilling an obligation to our democratic society. I think a sense of this responsibility should sober us all and cause us to feel that we should make the most of our opportunities while they are available to us.

Our educational institutions have done much in the past to sustain our democratic institutions and to inspire the youth of the land with a love for them. We must do more in the future than we have done in the past to bring about these results. It is not enough now for the educators of youth merely to teach American history and democratic principles of government. We must arouse in the minds of youth an appreciation and love for all that is best in our democratic society.

**T**HE fact that democracy is on the defensive as never before in modern times should cause us to appreciate the form of government under which we live more than we have in the past. The Bill of Rights of our Constitution has become something more than a declaration of principles. To keep effective in our society the freedom provided in this declaration has become the most challenging obligation of the American people. Teaching this year, in the light of the world situation and our own experiences, should become much more than a perfunctory public service. Our opportunity as teachers in all the realms of learning should become a supreme opportunity reinforced by a sense of consecration.

I believe we will take our responsibilities more seriously if we will consider the fact that international wars are the result of conflicting philosophies of statecraft. Back of every war between nations is the conflict of ideas and ideals. This is certainly true in the present situation. The issues of the present war in Europe are clearly defined. While broken promises and aggression precipitated the war in Europe, we should recall that back of these causes for war is a conflict of ideal and purpose.

On one side, we have national leaders who believe that the end justifies the means and that the murder of defenseless women and helpless children is of little

importance in their march toward the domination of the world. Those responsible for this type of ruthlessness think of the loss of man power on the battle field in the same terms as the loss of tanks, gunboats, and flying machines.

The philosophy of life in conflict with this materialistic conception is that social institutions, including the state, are established for the benefit of the people, that all social agencies are designed merely to promote the welfare and the happiness of those for whom they are established. The historians of the future will have no trouble in defining the issues and explaining the philosophies that lie back of this conflict.

But I doubt if any of us fully realize the power of ideas and ideals in human society. If teachers in our schools and colleges think that their influence is not very great and the work they do is not very important, I would remind you of the terrible results of the teachings of a few professors in Germany. About a generation or more ago there lived in Germany a great teacher of history. His name was Treitschke. He taught his generation that war was necessary to progress and national greatness. "The living God will see to it," he said, "that war shall always recur as a terrible medicine for humanity."

Schlegel, another great German thinker, said that "War is as necessary as the struggle of the elements in nature." And Bernhardt declared that "War, begun at the right time, has effected the happiest results, both politically and socially," and that "War gives a biologically just decision."

This philosophy of warfare had been widely disseminated throughout Germany before the first World War and has continued to dominate public opinion in Germany to the present time. Otto Tolischus, the famous World War correspondent who has spent many years in Germany, has just written a remarkable book entitled *They Wanted War*. He tells us that in Germany at the present time one of the popular slogans is "Blood knows no borders"; and one of the theme songs widely current in Germany at the present time is "Today we own Germany, tomorrow the whole world." All of which indicates that the philosophy of Germany's influential thinkers of the past still pervades the thinking of the German people

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today. As this great war correspondent says, the "battle now being fought is a life-and-death struggle between two cultures, two ways of living and dying, two moral concepts and two systems of social, political and economic organization." All of this illustrates how important it is for us to inculcate right ideals and to correct false impressions in the minds of youth.

Every individual has a philosophy of life whether he is conscious of it or not. It is the product of many influences—personal associations, instruction, reading, all of which influence in one way or another almost everything we hear or see. There are many intangible currents drifting through our lives that give direction to our thinking. Music and art play their part in influencing our destiny. Let me illustrate. Richard Wagner composed some of the greatest operas that have ever been produced. His operas are great favorites of Hitler and he has encouraged their production repeatedly throughout Germany. Why has Hitler been so partial to Wagnerian music? I suspect that Hitler's interest is inspired by something more than a genuine love of music. In the final scene of *The Mastersingers*, Wagner does not bring upon the stage some great hero. People representing all walks of life among the citizenship of ancient Nuremburg appear. They sing their folk songs, they play old popular melodies, they mingle together freely in a spirit of comradeship; but finally the hero of this opera rises to his feet and addresses the throng by singing these words which are familiar to every lover of operatic music:

"Fellow citizens and fellow workers, here together on this great day in the name of our people, let us unite. Let us cherish our homes and our work and our integrity, whatever task we do. Let us sing our own songs, remember our own faith, our own legends, our own ideals of humanity and truth and industry and beauty. Let us bring these things together and cherish them. And so long as we cherish these truths, all held together by this concept of life and work and honor and beauty, so long will this people endure, though empires fall and rise."

There is a sublimity about these words that stimulates our emotions and stirs our souls when conveyed to us by a golden voice, but there is in them an appeal to the pride of every German citizen and there is the insidious thought that if Germans will be loyal to their own ideals and traditions the German nation will endure while other nations about them are falling into decay. *Mein Kampf* is largely an exposition of this thesis.

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I am not referring to the great opera of Richard Wagner for the purpose of criticising it. I am only illustrating the various forms that are used to disseminate ideas and ideals and how important they are in the lives of people. My point is that back of all social and political upheavals, all revolutions and international wars, is the conflict of ideas and ideals. It behooves all of us, therefore, to base our thinking upon those philosophies of life and those ways of living that are worthy of defense and that contribute most to human happiness.

Our obligation to society gains significance when we think of the possible consequences of the present war in Europe. An example from history may help us toward a better appreciation of the issues involved in this struggle. "The period which intervened between the birth of Pericles and the death of Aristotle," wrote Shelley, "is undoubtedly, whether considered in itself or with reference to the effect which it has produced upon the subsequent destinies of civilized man, the most memorable in the history of the world." This was the period when Athens developed into a democratic state. During this time liberal reforms were promulgated, education was encouraged, and literature and art flourished. The Athenian democracy is one of the outstanding experiments in the history of government. The results of it challenged the admiration of the world for two and a half millenniums. In the hierarchy of the gods, Athena, the goddess of wisdom, became supreme. The statue carved by the greatest of Greek sculptors stood majestically in the Parthenon and the people worshipped at her shrine. The encouragement to literature brought forth some of the greatest productions of the human mind and her artists gave expression to a sense of beauty and symmetry in the form of majestic buildings and statuary that have been the envy and the admiration of men through the ages.

But while Athens was developing this glorious civilization another city state was developing on the basis of an entirely different conception of life. The Spartan Code required vigorous discipline. Any child born to a Spartan mother who had physical defects was put to death. Infanticide instead of being regarded as a crime was considered to be a virtue. A system of eugenics was practiced that resulted in developing a physical type of manhood far superior to that of any other city of the ancient world. The idea of the Spartan state was to develop a citizenship of great physical endurance and that systematically trained its men to endure every type of hardship with fortitude.

It was inevitable that Sparta and Athens would eventually come into conflict. The culture of Athens was obnoxious to the Spartans and a democratic conception of government was probably regarded as de-

cadent or superficial. While Greek historians give us many incidental causes of the Peloponnesian War, the supreme cause was a conflict in ideals and purpose. It resulted in the defeat of Athens by Sparta, which marked the destruction of democratic society in Athens and paved the way for the rise of the military dictatorships of Philip of Macedonia and his son, Alexander, who ultimately extended his empire from the Aegean to India. The destruction of Athens was one of the great tragedies of human history. The democratic ideal of society was forgotten and it was not to be revived again until modern times.

There is a striking similarity between the Spartan conception of government and that of Germany today. In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler in his chapter on "The State" says with reference to education that "His (the German youth) whole education and training must be planned to give him the conviction that he is absolutely superior to others," and that the supreme object of education is to develop "physical strength and agility." Repeatedly, he emphasizes the supreme importance of physical training and what he calls "racial purity."

The present war, which has resulted in the subjugation of France, certainly has many characteristics that compare, in a way, with the conflict between Sparta and Athens. The French tradition of culture and enlightenment has many of the attributes of Athens in the time of Pericles. When we get a perspective of history, we may see in the subjugation of France as great a tragedy as that which came to Athens in the Golden Age. It is certain if England suffers the same fate as France in this struggle, future generations will

recognize it as one of the greatest disasters of human history.

If there are any among us who feel that in some way we may escape the tragedy of Western Europe and cling to an outworn belief in isolation, I would have you reread history and see how the world has been influenced by selfish and ambitious leaders. I have been reading again in recent days Edward Gibbon's *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. Gibbon tells us that in the sack of Athens by the Goths these ruthless conquerors were on the point of setting fire to the libraries for the purpose of destroying Grecian learning. Just as the torch was about to be applied one of their chiefs of more refined sentiments than his brethren dissuaded his companions by making the profound observation that "as long as the Greeks were addicted to the study of books, they would never apply themselves to the exercise of arms."

In this argument there is implied one of the handicaps under which France and England have labored in recent weeks, and it is one of our handicaps also. The people of democratic countries have encouraged learning and creative writing. Those who engage in these pursuits appeal to a vast number of intelligent people who abhor war and love culture. They covet peace not only because of the horrors of war, but because it enables them to promote and disseminate culture through the promotion of education and the building of schools, libraries, museums, and other facilities that contribute to the intellectual advancement of the race. For this reason, only the greatest threat to national existence will cause people imbued with these ideals to turn aside from their high purpose to prepare to protect their society from foreign aggression.



This explains why France and Great Britain were so slow to build up their national defenses. When they reluctantly recognized the inevitable, France mapped out her military program to be completed in 1941, and England in 1942; but Germany struck in 1939.

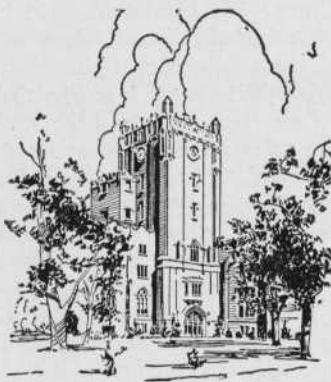
I remind you that the United States has mapped out a program that cannot be completed before 1945. In the light of what has happened during the last year, I shudder to think of all that could happen to America before we could possibly prepare adequately to defend our vast shore lines from aggression. While it is tragic beyond words that the thoughts of the American people must be concentrated upon military preparedness instead of the pursuits of peace, all of us appreciate the necessity of our national policies regardless of our deep regret that it has become necessary.

As we go forward now with the unprecedented policies of military preparedness, let us not forget that along with this must go intellectual and moral preparedness. By this I mean the earnestness of purpose, the discernment, courage, fortitude, spirit of sacrifice, and loyalty that should dominate our thoughts during the critical years ahead. The late John Buchan (Lord Tweedsmuir of Elsfield), in his remarkable autobiography which was finished just before his death and which has just appeared in print, said in speaking of democracy in the United States: "If democracy in the broadest and truest sense is to survive, it will be mainly because of her guardianship. For, with all her imperfections, she has a clearer view than any other people of the democratic fundamentals." Our democracy, which means so much to us as well as liberty loving people throughout the world, is threatened from within and without. We have heard much in recent weeks about fifth columnists and already sabotage is being practiced in some of our factories. Two or three days ago a large powder producing plant was destroyed and many people were killed and injured. While I do not know the cause of this disaster, it has caused anxiety and deep concern. We know something of the influence of disloyal groups in other countries that have become the victims of aggression. There is no place in America for any man who is not loyal to our democratic institutions and traditions. There is certainly no place in our educational institutions, particularly our publicly supported institutions, for any man who is not genuinely loyal to our country and thoroughly committed to policies of public welfare.

On the other hand, we must recognize the fact that hysteria is the inevitable by-product of war psychosis. We must see to it that while preparing for our protection from aggression we must not practice intolerance and injustice. Freedom of speech, the right of free assembly, and

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### Make Reservations Early

Facilities of the Oklahoma Memorial Union for luncheons, dinners and other group meetings are available to alumni, provided reservations are made in advance.

Due to increasing demand for use of these facilities, alumni groups wishing to use any part of the building—particularly on football weekends—are urged to make reservations as early as possible.

Oklahoma Memorial Union  
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honest opinion must be sustained at this time. The essential of a vigorous democracy is a decent respect for the opinions of mankind when honestly expressed and reasonably defended. One of the ways to promote solidarity of interests among our people is to recognize their rights as citizens and to protect them in those rights. Certainly, the intellectual and moral obligation of universities in these times is to maintain their freedom of expression as a means of helping to clarify the thinking of all our people in determining policies designed to promote the ongoing of the social process.

The moral and intellectual responsibility of scholars and writers is vigorously presented by Archibald MacLeish in a little book that is just off the press. He asks this question: "Why did the scholars and the writers of our generation in this country, witnesses as they are to the destruction of writing and of scholarship in great areas of Europe and to the exile and the imprisonment and murder of men whose crime was scholarship and writing—witnesses also to the rise in their own country of the same destructive forces with the same impulses, the same motives, the same means—why did the scholars and the writers of our generation in America fail to oppose those forces while they could—while there was still time and still place to oppose them with the arms of scholarship and writing?"

Mr. MacLeish charges that the intellectuals of our generation have failed to understand what has happened to their world. The opinion is expressed by this celebrated poet that essentially this war is a revolt against the common culture of the West and that the "intellectuals in America and elsewhere—writers, scientists, the men of learning" have ignored the fundamental issues involved. He expresses the belief that "they have one hope of success and only one—the destruction of the whole system of ideas, the whole respect for truth, the whole authority of excellence which places law above force, beauty above cruelty, singleness above numbers." He reminds us of the shining examples of the past who in times of crisis rose to defend freedom of the mind—men like Milton, Voltaire, Bartolome' de las Casas. Mr. MacLeish might have greatly extended the list of names of intellectuals who have served the cause of freedom by their pens. I realize that it is natural for the scholar and the student to assume an attitude of impartiality, objectivity, and detachment under ordinary circumstances; but in times like these students, teachers, scientists, and writers must come to the defense of free institutions and help mold public sentiment for correct objectives. Certainly, the college professor and other teachers of youth cannot escape this responsibility.

Let us enter, therefore, upon this new year's work with a full consciousness of

the great issues involved in the present world situation and our responsibilities as a people to protect our fair land and free institutions from any foreign aggression that would deny to us the use of our resources and enjoyment of the fruits of our heritage. Let us begin our work today soberly and earnestly with the full determination to make the most of our opportunities no matter what contingencies may arise. Let us resolve to make the best preparation possible to serve our country either in peace or in time of war. By so doing, we will justify the faith of the people of Oklahoma in us and merit the confidence of all right thinking Americans who love our country and cherish its ideals.

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## Association Progress

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Club, Western Oklahoma Alumni Association of Phi Kappa Psi, I. O. O. F. Lodge, Cosmopolitan Club International, Reserve Officers Association (judge advocate of state district in 1939), Junior Chamber of Commerce, Board of Directors of Y. M. C. A., Men's Council of St. Paul's Cathedral, and member and officer of various bar associations.

Mrs. Fellers is a member of the University Chapter of Kappa Alpha Theta and was on the *Sooner Yearbook* staff. In Oklahoma City she has been active in the Kappa Alpha Theta Alumnae Association and has served as president of the Cosmo-Pals, the women's auxiliary to Cosmopolitan Club International.

## Homecoming

The 1940 Homecoming for University of Oklahoma Alumni will be November 16, on the occasion of the Sooner-Missouri game.

The Alumni office last month was setting up committees and making other preliminary arrangements for a full celebration along the traditional lines of Homecoming in recent years.

Under the leadership of Joe Fred Gibson, '34ba, '36law, the Oklahoma City Alumni are completing details for the annual alumni dinner-dance to be held on Friday night, November 15, the evening before the Homecoming game in Norman. Detailed arrangements for the dinner dance will be announced soon.

## Directories

The Alumni Office has a few copies remaining from the Engineer Alumni Directory issue of *Sooner Magazine*.

Members of the Alumni Association are invited to tell their engineer friends not already belonging to the Association that they can obtain copies of the Directory by taking a membership subscription now