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Andrew Jackson

[From The Cincinnati, Ohio, Record, January 7, 1916.]

What this country has most to fear is not the invasion of a foreign army, but the invasion of a foreign spirit.

And what is the spirit of America? Forms count for little. For centuries the Caesars preserved the forms of the Roman republic.

On the eve of one of the holy days of the nation it is becoming that we should address ourselves to the venerated and revered fathers, and from their word and example steer the true course in the mad sea of hysteria that lashes the world today.

Let us at this sad and solemn time hark to the voices of Thomas Jefferson and Andrew Jackson.

On the morrow throughout the land men will speak of "Old Hickory," that dauntless democrat, who, though a lion in war, warned against the poison of militarism.

Both of these men knew the distinction between militarism and navalism and real preparedness. Militarism is a system, the enthronement of a military caste. Jefferson and Jackson said it was inconceivable that the people would ever surrender their liberty save under a delusion. So militarism seeks to sneak in under the mask of preparedness.

Persia had militarism. Greece had preparedness. And the most effective weapon of the Greek was not iron and steel, but the spirit that fired the hearts of the heroes of Marathon. Possessed of this the mighty armies of the great king broke before the scanty militia of Athens like the surges on the rock.

Jefferson and Jackson did not look to Europe for their models. There was nothing in the old world monarchies and aristocracies that attracted them.

They had faith in America. Differing from the vile slanderers of today, of which Theodore Roosevelt is the type, they did not scorn the American ideal for that of kings, kaisers and the "man on horseback."

Jefferson and Jackson believed America to be a world power.

They believed America had a "place in the sun."

Hear their words.

Jackson, in his last address to the people, said: "You have the highest of human trusts committed to your care. You have been chosen as the guardian of freedom to preserve it for the benefit of the human race. May you with pure hearts and pure hands, and sleepless vigilance guard and defend to the end of time the great charge committed to your keeping."

But guard and defend from whom? The British? The Germans? Let Jackson answer: "It is from within, among yourselves, from cupidity, from corruption, from disappointed ambition and inordinate thirst for power that liberty will be endangered. It is against such designs, whatever disguise the actors may assume, that you have to especially guard yourselves."

Referring again to the "world mission" of America, Jackson in his message of January 16, 1833, said: "The rich inheritance bequeathed by our fathers, has devolved upon us the sacred obligation of preserving it by the same virtues. They bequeathed to us a government of laws founded upon the great principle of popular representation. It is now the object and hope of the friends of civil liberty throughout the world."

So the traitors to the American republic, those who "within, among ourselves" would strike the blow; who, in envy of the military "glory" of old world monarchies would throw down democracy and place upon the

nation the despotism of militarism; who would have us step down from the proud pedestal of liberty enlightening the world to enter the arena of blood and iron, these traitors would have fared badly, indeed, could "Old Hickory" have laid hands upon their scoundrel hides.

But hear the voice of that other great patriot, Jefferson. Writing during a period similar to the present in a letter to J. W. Eppes in 1811, he said: "I am far from believing that our reputation will be tarnished by our not having mixed in the mad contests of the rest of the world that, setting aside the ravings of the pepper-pot politicians, I believe it will place us high in the scale of wisdom to have preserved our country tranquil and prosperous during a contest which prostrated the honor, power, independence, laws and property of every country on the other side of the Atlantic. Would we accept their infamy in exchange for our honest reputation, or the result of their enormities, despotism to the one, bankruptcy and prostration to the other, in exchange for the prosperity, the freedom and independence, which we have reserved safely through the wreck?"

Writing again to Richard Rush and to John Hollis, he said: "It is our sacred duty to suppress passion among ourselves, and not to blast the confidence we have inspired of proof that a government of reason is better than a government of force. When we reflect that the eyes of the virtuous all over the earth are turned with anxiety on us, as the only depositories of the sacred fire of liberty, and that our falling into anarchy would decide forever the destinies of mankind and seal the political heresy that man is incapable of self-government."

Surely it is impossible that we should turn our backs on the bright path of world distinction so eloquently described by Jackson and Jefferson and follow a mountebank like Roosevelt into the mire of militarism. While some have lost their heads there are others, a Spartan band, who have not passed under the delusion. Jefferson in a letter to Nath Niles in 1801, said: "While frenzy and delusion like an epidemic gained certain parts, the residue remained sound and untouched, and held on until their brethren could recover from the temporary delusion."

Both Jackson and Jefferson believed standing armies and navies would be a constant temptation to get this country into war.

Jackson in his fourth annual message said: "Neither our situation nor our institutions require or permit the maintenance of a large regular force. History offers too many lessons of the fatal result of such a measure, not to warn us against its adoption here. The expense which attends it, because it exists, and thus to engage in unnecessary wars, and its ultimate danger to public liberty, will lead us, I trust, to place our principal dependence for protection upon the great body of the citizens of the republic."

No one, not even * * * Roosevelt can call Andrew Jackson a "mollycoddle." But this man, this hero of the battle of New Orleans, did not believe in being a bully in international affairs. In his fourth message he continued:

"The relations of our country continue to present the same picture of amicable intercourse. This desirable state of things may be mainly ascribed to our undeviating practice of the rule which has long guided our national policy, to require no ex-

clusive privilege in commerce and to grant none. It is daily producing its beneficial effect in the respect shown to our flag, the protection of our citizens and their property abroad, and the increase of our navigation and the extension of our mercantile operations. Nor have we less reason to felicitate ourselves on the position of our political, than of our commercial concerns. They remain in a state of prosperity and peace, the effect of a wise attention to the parting advice of Washington to cultivate free commerce and honest friendship with all nations."

In his message of December 7, 1830, Jackson said: "Sincerely desirous to cultivate the most liberal and friendly relations with all; ever ready to fulfill our engagements with scrupulous fidelity; limiting our demands upon others to mere justice; holding ourselves ready to do unto them as we would wish to be done by, and avoiding even the appearance of undue partiality to any nation; it appears to me impossible that a simple and sincere application of our principles to our foreign relations, can fail to place them ultimately upon the footing upon which it is our own wish they should rest."

Did Jackson believe in a big navy any more than a big army? He did not. Here is what he said in his first annual message: "On this subject there can be little doubt, that our best policy would be to discontinue the building of ships of the first and second class, and look rather to the possession of ample materials, prepared for the emergencies of war, than to the number of vessels which we can float in a season of peace, as the index of our naval power."

In the same message Jackson said: "With foreign nations it will be my study to preserve peace, and to cultivate friendship on fair and honorable terms; and in the adjustment of any differences that may arise, to exhibit the forbearance becoming a powerful nation, rather than the sensibility belonging to a gallant people."

But "Old Hickory" knew after all that the real strength of any nation is in the well-being of the great mass of its people, something that can only come through the exclusion of privilege. Writing in 1829 Jackson said: "As long as our government is administered for the good of the people, and is regulated by their will; as long as it secures to us the rights of person and property, liberty of conscience and of the press, it will be worth defending; and so long as it is worth defending, a patriotic militia will cover it with an impenetrable shield. Partial injuries, and occasional mortifications we may be subjected to, but a million of armed freemen, possessed of the means of war, can never be conquered by a foreign foe."

With a large regular army what security would the liberties of the people have from some such desperate humbug as Roosevelt? Jefferson saw the possibility of such a man in the tumult of war seizing the military as a means to the institution of imperialism. Writing to Samuel Adams in 1800, Jefferson said: "Bonaparte has transferred the destinies of the republic from the civil to the military arm. I read it as a lesson against the danger of standing armies."

Writing to Gen. Henry Knox in 1801, Jefferson said: "There is a class among us that is ardent for the introduction of monarchy, eager for armies, making more noise for a great naval establishment than better patriots. I am not for a standing army in time of peace, which may overawe the public sentiment."

To John Adams, in 1822, Jefferson referred to "those collisions between