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ADDRESS BY SECRETARY-GENERAL DAG HAMMARSKJOLD
AT A LUNCHEON AT CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY,
ONE P.M., THURSDAY, 5 JUNE 1958

Mr. Chancellor, Mr. Vice-Chancellor, My Lords,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

To return to Cambridge is to experience again the quiet strength of tradition and the vitality of spirit which have borne this University through the ages. We, whom you have honoured in the beautiful ceremony this morning, will remember this day with pride and joy. We express to you our deep gratitude for the privilege which you have had us share.

You will, I hope, permit me to add a personal note. I came over, as a student, to this University. What I learned from my friends here and from teachers like Lord Keynes has meant very much for me and makes me cherish the honorary degree you have given me also as a symbol of a reunion with a school of learning which has always held a special place of honour in my heart.

The name of Cambridge stands for one of the proudest traditions of the Western world, a tradition and an ideal of the search for truth and the maintaining of spiritual freedom. Its task as a seat of learning and a center of research is more important than ever.

We are glad that there is a Cambridge, as a fact and as a symbol. We are proud and grateful, indeed, now to be counted among its alumni.

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We meet in a time of peace which is no peace, in a time of technical achievement which threatens its own masters with destruction.

We meet in a time when the ideas evoked in our minds by the term "humanity" have switched to a turbulent political reality from the hopeful dreams of our predecessors.

The widening of our political horizons to embrace in a new sense the whole of the world, should have meant an approach to the ideal sung in

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Schiller's "Ode to Joy", but it has, paradoxically, led to new conflicts and to new difficulties to establish even simple human contact and communication.

Korea, China, Indonesia, Kashmir, Palestine, Hungary, North Africa.

There are fires all around the horizon, and they are not fires announcing peace. More perturbing than all these smoldering or barely controlled conflicts are the main underlying tendencies, which we all know only too well and which preoccupy our minds and darken our hopes.

We may well rejoice in having taken the first steps towards the establishment of an international democracy of peoples, bringing all nations - irrespective of history, size or wealth - together on an equal basis as partners in the vast venture of creating a true world community. But we have taken only the first steps, and they have often proved painful. There is a maturity of mind required of those who give up rights. There is a maturity of mind required of those who acquire new rights. Let us hope that, to an increasing extent, the necessary spiritual qualities will be shown on all sides.

Today we are in the middle of this development and, naturally, we tend to judge it from the viewpoint of our own past and our own immediate interests. This may explain why many now show reactions which seem to reflect a kind of despair of Western civilization. But, where is the reason for such defeatism? Is it not possible to establish and maintain a spiritual leadership, whatever the changes in other respects?

Our lives today are coloured, first of all, by the long and bitter strife between the Western world with its traditional ideals, and a new power bloc, grown out of the great revolutions after the First World War and representing views of society and of man's place in society, different from ours although partly inspired by thinkers of the West. However, this is not the place to comment on that strife and the harassing political problems to which it gives rise.

The conflict between different approaches to the liberty of man and mind or between different views of human dignity and the right of the individual is continuous. The dividing line goes within ourselves, within our own peoples and also within other nations. It does not coincide with any political or geographical boundaries. The ultimate fight is one between the human and the sub-human. We are on dangerous ground if we believe that any individual, any nation or any ideology has a monopoly on rightness, liberty and human dignity.

When we fully recognize this and translate our insight into words and action, we may also be able to re-establish full human contact and communications across geographical and political boundaries, and to get out of a public debate which often seems to be inspired more by a wish to impress than by a will to understand and to be understood.

This generation can boast of scientific achievements, the scope of which goes beyond the sum of what had come out of scientific research up to our days. In laboratories here in Cambridge and many of its sister institutions Rutherfords and Diracs - may the names of these two Cambridge men of different generations be permitted to represent them all - have laid the basis on which the potentialities hidden in matter have now been explored up to a point where the use of nuclear energy has become a practical reality.

Parallel with this development - and also in this case, ironically enough, partly as a by-product of war efforts - we see the beginning of a penetration into outer space, with all the possibilities for new progress and new difficulties which this entails.

May it be enough to recall here how, through these achievements, doors that were locked have been broken open to new prosperity or to new holocausts. Warning words about how the development of social organization, and how the growth of moral maturity in the emerging mass civilizations, has lagged behind the technical and scientific progress, have been repeated so often as to sound hackneyed - and to make us forget that they are true.

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What, then, is wrong? Why is it that a situation with so many achievements both in the political and in the technical fields should lend itself to comments of this kind? The reasons, of course, are many and complicated. I guess that we, all of us, may have developed our own views on what has led up to the present situation.

It is easy to turn the responsibility over to others or, perhaps, to seek explanations in some kind of laws of history. It is less easy to look for the reasons within ourselves or in a field where we, all of us, carry a major responsibility. However, such a search is necessary, because finally it is only within ourselves and in such fields that we can hope, by our own actions, to make a valid contribution to a turn of the trend of events.

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With your permission, I would in this context like to quote one of the influential thinkers of our time, whose personal history and national experience have given him a vantage point of significance.

In an address in Carnegie Hall in New York, in 1952, Martin Buber had the following to say:

"There have always been countless situations in which a man believes his life-interest demands that he suspect the other of making it his object to appear otherwise than he is In our time something basically different has been added One no longer merely fears that the other will voluntarily dissemble, but one takes it for granted that he cannot do otherwise The other communicates to me the perspective that he has acquired on a certain subject, but I do not really take cognizance of his communication as knowledge. I do not take it seriously as a contribution to the information about this subject, but rather I listen for what drives the other to say what he says for an unconscious motive Since it is the idea of the other, it is for me an "ideology". My main task in my intercourse with my fellow-man becomes more and more to see through and unmask him With this changed basic attitude the mistrust between man and man has become existential. This is so indeed in a double sense : It is first of all, no longer the uprightness, the honesty of the other which is in question, but the inner integrity of his existence itself Nietzsche knew what he was doing when he praised the 'art of mistrust', and yet he did not know. For this game naturally only becomes complete as it becomes reciprocal Hence one may foresee in the future a degree of reciprocity in existential mistrust where speech will turn into dumbness and sense into madness".

I excuse myself for having quoted at such length from this speech. I have done so because out of the depth of his feelings Martin Buber has found expressions which it would be vain for me to try to improve.

If I have wanted, on this occasion, to draw attention to the aspect of the troubles of our time to which the quoted words have given such an impelling expression, this is because it is in a basic way related to the tasks and the spirit of an institution like this University.

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Scientists of genius, working here and in other research centers around the world, have made a unique contribution to progress, prosperity and peace. If their achievements have been turned to uses sometimes very far from their original intentions, it is not their fault. Nor is it the fault of their colleagues in the fields of theology, law, medicine, history and philosophy, or other branches of humane letters, if their contributions have not sufficed to create such psychological and political safeguards as would guarantee that the achievements of science be turned to man's benefit and not to his destruction.

But all of us, in whatever field of intellectual activity we work, influence to some degree the spiritual trend of our time. All of us may contribute to the breakdown of the walls of distrust and toward checking fatal tendencies in the direction of stale conformism and propaganda. How can this be done better or more effectively than by simple faithfulness to the independence of the spirit and to the right of the free man to free thinking and free expression of his thoughts. So, attitudes in line with the liberal traditions of this University emerge as a deeply significant element also in our efforts to master the political difficulties.

I have used strong words, but they reflect deep concern. For someone active primarily in the field of international politics it is today natural to appeal to the spirit for which Cambridge may be taken as a symbol. Deeprooted conflicts which have run their course all through history and seemed to reach a new culmination before and during the Second World War, continue. And destructive forces which have always been with us make themselves felt in new forms. They represent, now as before, the greatest challenge man has to face.

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