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The First Annual
Sol Feinstone Lecture

THE
MEANING OF FREEDOM

by

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USA Retired

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The United States Military Academy is pleased to sponsor an annual lecture series on the Meaning of Freedom. It is significant that this lecture program has been made possible by the generosity of Mr. Sol Feinstone, a dedicated American patriot whose commitment to the ideals of the American Revolution has led him to devote many years of effort, as well as considerable personal resources, to the collection of important letters, manuscripts, and books dealing with our heritage of freedom. His donation of these items to libraries and educational institutions will insure that the message which they proclaim will be preserved and transmitted to future generations of Americans.

Mr. Feinstone's abiding faith in *a brotherhood of free nations of free men* has found further expression in several lecture series which he has endowed in order to permit prominent Americans to interpret The Meaning of Freedom.

The U. S. Corps of Cadets and the staff and faculty of the Military Academy are pleased to recognize the generosity and loyalty of this great American for providing a living endowment in the defense of freedom.

THE MEANING OF FREEDOM

Nineteen hundred years ago two men met in the military barracks of the great temple in Jerusalem.

One was a Roman army officer. The other had just been arrested for creating a disturbance in the temple. The chief captain ordered the arrested man to be scourged to force him to disclose the cause of the commotion.

As his hands were being tied, the prisoner quietly asked:

“Is it lawful to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?”

Consternation swept the group. One of them went to the chief captain. “Be careful what you do. This man is a Roman citizen,” he said.

Hurriedly, the chief captain came into the room.

“Tell me,” he demanded, “are you a Roman citizen?”

“Yes.”

“With a great sum I obtained my freedom,” the officer said.

“But I was free born,” was the reply,

Quickly the bonds were taken from his wrists and he was treated as a free Roman, not as a slave or criminal.

Free born — freedom. What is the meaning of these words? Why are they important to us?

We do not know when the idea of freedom was born. It may have been in the anguished cry or the reasoned but unrecorded thought of some prehistoric person. But we do know what prompted the creation. The spark of freedom glows in the heart of every man. That spark is extinguished only when the heart ceases to beat.

The antithesis of freedom is slavery — bondage.

One definition of slavery is "the social sanctioning of involuntary servitude imposed by one person or group on another."

"Slavery," wrote Voltaire, "is as ancient as war, and war (as ancient) as human nature."

Slavery is one of the oldest human institutions. It goes back into prehistoric times and has flourished in nearly every civilization, including our own, and in every region of the world, except one. There is no record of slavery in the polar regions.

Slavery may have begun when man entered the second stage of civilization--when he began tilling the ground to raise the fruit, grains and animals needed for subsistence, instead of hunting for his subsistence in the forests or on the plains.

Needing extra help for the back-breaking work which was new to him, man may have pressed less fortunate persons into his service. It may have been someone he captured out in the woods, or it may have been someone to whom he offered a better way of life as compensation for work in his fields.

As civilization advanced, the demand for slaves increased. Powerful tribes would raid weaker tribes, not only to seize their land, but to obtain more human help for their own activities.

Tribes became nations and nation warred against nation. Countries were overrun, cities seized or destroyed, and populations taken into captivity.

Often male prisoners were emasculated; eunuchs lost their individuality. They were more docile and had no tendency to rebel under the yoke of servitude or oppression. Virgin females would be distributed among conquerors for their harems, for service in homes, for brothels and temple service. Small children and women who had known men were put to the sword; they were regarded as worthless.

Prisoners of war usually became the property of the ruler. He might give some to favorite aides as a goodwill gesture. Other prisoners were sent to mines, the quarries, the forests, or to work in the industrial complex which had begun to develop.

One extreme example of this form of sentence was the Jewish people who were forced to make brick from mud and straw under the stinging lash of cruel taskmasters.

In later ages, particularly during Roman domination, recalcitrant or rebellious slaves were sent to the galleys to spend the remainder of their short lives plying the oars. Or they might be trained as gladiators to provide amusement for rulers and the elite in hand to hand mortal combat on some festive occasion. In either case, their life expectancy wasn't very long.

In the early days slaves were found to have market value. When demand exceeded supply, slave markets developed. And slave traders appeared, raiding nearby lands or distant shores to seize humans of all colors and race as chattels for auction blocks, where they were bought and sold like cattle.

Once purchased, or otherwise obtained, a slave was the property of his owner who could do whatever he wished with him. The power of life and death was in the hands of the master/owner.

In early days if the master killed his slave, he was not held accountable. In some later societies, homicide was ruled, subject to punishment, if the slave was killed outright. But if the slave was flogged, yet lingered for at least two days, no crime was involved. The law held that the slave was the master's personal investment and thus removed from the responsibility of society.

Slave ownership was protected. In ancient Babylon, 40 centuries ago, the Laws of Hammurabi provided death for any person harboring a fugitive slave.

While wars and raiders provided most of the slaves, some came from other sources.

There were debtor slaves. A person in debt might voluntarily or involuntarily become a slave of his creditor. In fact, the debtor's entire family might be forced into servitude. In many cases the debt was never paid. No matter how long or how hard a person or family worked, the debt remained. After death the creditor might try to collect from relatives.

Jewish law, however, was more humane where a fellow Jew **was** involved. The debtor had to be freed when the debt was paid. But no matter whether the debt was paid or not, he had to be released in his seventh year of servitude.

Abandoned children were considered slaves of those who found them, and children born in bondage were considered slaves of their masters. In some instances, parents sold or gave their children **into** slavery. Jealousy provided a few slaves. The best example of such a motive is the story of Joseph who was sold to slave traders for 20 pieces of silver by his jealous brothers.

Race, creed, color and social standing were no guarantee against slavery. When Rome's Legions swept over the earth, many highly skilled and well educated people became slaves. Some of them would be equivalent to our Doctors of Philosophy and Phi Beta **Kappas** today.

At various times in history, slaves rose to hold important positions. We have the Biblical stories of Joseph who became second in command in Egypt and Daniel who was next to the king in ancient Babylon.

Highly educated Greeks became tutors in Roman households. Twenty-five centuries ago in Babylon, slaves carried on business as merchants, bankers, artisans, tenant farmers. Some even owned slaves of their own. Some held high political or military offices. While they enjoyed many of the creature comforts and amenities of life, they were not free men. Their bodies might be marked with the brand of slavery. They had no voice in government, and no matter how much they advanced in society, they were the property of another, either the state or an individual.

In addition to involuntary individual slaves, we have voluntary political slaves. In every society, a small group become leaders and the rest become followers. The majority, although free within certain limits, are willing to become subjects for the promise of security.

Two examples are contained in the Bible, which is the most complete record of the earlier ages of man. More than 3600 years ago

a small nomadic tribe traveled down into Egypt to escape a famine which swept their land. The group consisted of 75 relatives of Joseph, who had preceded them to Egypt through the chicanery of his brothers, or an irony of fate. They were willing to surrender their freedom and become subjects of a foreign ruler for the privilege and security of grazing their cattle on the plush plains of Goshen. For years they were welcome guests in the land. But as time passed and Joseph died, the memory of his deeds faded from the minds of Egyptians. Their attitude toward the House of Jacob changed, particularly as the Hebrew population grew and expanded into the hundreds, the thousands, passed the million mark--and continued to grow.

Concern gave way to apprehension, apprehension to suspicion and suspicion to suppression. "What if they should revolt?" was one big question in the minds of Egyptian rulers. They tried to arrest the population growth, but failed. Then they imposed bondage on the once free people. The security that attracted them to the land resulted in slavery, ultimately.

After many years, Moses appeared and led more than two million people out of the country, in spite of Egyptian opposition. For 40 years they lived as a gigantic, wandering, nomad tribe. Led into the Promised Land by Joshua, each tribe settled in its own part of the country. For nearly 400 years they existed as independent tribes. They had no king, no ruler. They were guided by religious leaders. In times of emergency, special leaders, or deliverers, appeared to remove the shackles of more powerful neighbors.

Agitation developed. The tribal people wanted to be like others--they wanted a king. They ignored warnings of the Prophet Samuel and insisted that one man be chosen to rule all 12 tribes. Their wish was granted. For a while their fondest dreams were realized. They had a leader to look to, a leader to follow in battle. They had security. In less than a hundred years those 12 tribes were welded into the greatest nation of its time. But they were paying and would continue to pay the price. When Solomon decided to build his temple, 153,000 persons were pressed into service. Some went to the quarries, some to the forests and others were carriers of burdens. They weren't hired. They weren't asked to volunteer. They were commanded.

At the same time taxes went up, and up, and up, to meet soaring government costs. When Solomon died, the nation split over the tax issue. Civil war developed. Neighboring countries invaded the land. Some of the people were carried off to Assyria ; others to Babylonia. Jerusalem was re-established following the subjugation, but years later fell to the domination of first the Greeks and later the Romans. Nearly 1900 years ago this once great nation passed out of existence and was revived only within our generation.

Attacks on social injustices and demands for reform were heard thousands of years ago. They are recorded in Judaic writings. They were voiced by Confucius and his followers in China about 550 B.C.

The words “freedom” and “liberty” appeared in the writings and speeches of such men as Epictetus, Seneca, Cicero, Diogenes, Homer, Tacticus, Virgil, Ariatides, Horace and Quintillian.

Silent during the Dark Ages, the voice of Freedom and Liberty was heard again as the Reformation and Renaissance began to sweep through Europe. The Divine Right of Kings was questioned ; so was the king’s authority over the life, death, freedom and imprisonment of his people.

The first revolt against the king occurred among the barons of England. In 1215 they forced King John to sign the Magna Charta which limited his authority. Further limitations were imposed by parliamentary action during the 17th century.

Late in the 17th century, John Locke initiated the Age of Enlightenment and Reason. He denied the Divine Right of Kings and the absolutist theory of government. He held that government is a trust and can be justified only as long as it operates in the public good.

“Freedom of men under government,” he wrote, “is to have a standing rule to live by a liberty to follow my own will in all things where that rule prescribes not, not to be subject to the inconstant, uncertain, unknown arbitrary will of another man.”

To attain this freedom, Locke advocated a legislative body elected by the people, and an executive, with a separation of execu-

tive and legislative powers. He held that people ultimately are sovereign and have the right to withdraw or overthrow government if it fails to fulfill its trust. The theory was to revolutionize government in many parts of the world.

Locke's writings were widely known and accepted by American colonial leaders. His theory gained wider acceptance as England, through sovereign and parliamentary action sought to control industrial expansion, limit foreign trade, impose taxes, and generally harass the colonies. The repressive measures stimulated demands for a separation from the Mother Country and prompted organization of a Continental Congress to consider the issue as a collective problem instead of the separate responsibility of each colony.

One might picture the spirit of Locke looking over the shoulder of Thomas Jefferson as he wrote:

"We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. That, whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundations on such principles and organizing its power in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness."

The actual fight for freedom already was in progress. The battles of Lexington, Concord and Bunker Hill, and the capture of Fort Ticonderoga occurred more than a year before Congress voted to declare Independence for the colonies. George Washington had been appointed commander-in-chief of the Continental Army. Britain was massing its own and mercenary land and naval forces to put down the rebellion. More than five years of bitter fighting, with many tragic defeats, would follow before independence was won.

The 56 signers of the Declaration realized the seriousness of their action. They would be traitors to the crown, fugitives from British authorities ; yet their signatures appeared immediately following the paragraph which closed with this statement:

“And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the Protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.” No price was too high to pay for freedom. Many of them paid the supreme price -with their lives and the lives of loved ones.

After operating nearly six years as a loose confederation of states, a Constitutional Convention was called to create a federal government. In a little more than four months delegates to this convention wrote a constitution which William E. Gladstone, prime minister of England, describes a hundred years later as “the most remarkable work known to me in modern times to have been produced by the human intellect, at a single stroke (so to speak) in its application to the political affairs.”

The Constitution was submitted to the states for ratification; and it drew immediate opposition. It provided for three branches of government — executive, legislative and judicial ; provided for selecting members of each ; and it outlined duties. But there was a general feeling that there was an inadequate guarantee of individual rights. Some states refused to approve the document until there was assurance that a Bill of Rights would be drafted and submitted to them for ratification as soon as the new government was established.

Immediately after the first Congress met, a group of amendments was adopted and submitted to the states. Ten were ratified and became known as the Bill of Rights.

Five were guaranteed in the first amendment which says “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech or of the press; or the right of people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.”

Three of these warrant a review of the reasons for adoption.

First there was the matter of religion. Our Founding Fathers and early national leaders were deeply religious men. God and the Bible occupied prominent places in their lives. They knew that in ages past uncounted numbers of people had been put to death for

their religious beliefs. They knew that many of their forefathers came to the New World to find religious freedom and to escape from the bonds of state religions in their homeland. Religious freedom was the main reason for Pilgrims establishing Plymouth Colony; for Roger Williams founding Rhode Island and for the establishment of Maryland. While commercial aspects may have prompted other colonies to be found, religion was an important aspect. Our forefathers wanted to be sure that no state religion would be established here and that each individual would have the right to worship when, where and if he pleased.

Freedom of speech was guaranteed as a result of experience recalled from the past. From the dawn of recorded history men have paid with their lives for what they had said. Socrates was sentenced to drink the poisoned hemlock for expressing his philosophical thoughts. Treason, heresy, blasphemy have been charges hurled at nutspoken men and women down through the ages. Often they led to death in one of its many forms. But in this country, freedom of speech is guaranteed—even though the speaker might be threatening to overthrow government or incite civil disobedience or riot.

Freedom of the press was something won in this country only a half century earlier. John Peter Zenger, a New York newspaper publisher, had the courage to print the truth about actions of the British governor of New York and was held in jail under excessive bail for nine months. Friends persuaded a brilliant 80-year old lawyer, the victim of gout and probably arthritis, to make the long journey from Philadelphia to New York by carriage to defend Zenger. In a decision that established freedom of the press, Zenger was found “not guilty.”

Less than 10 years after the Bill of Rights was ratified, freedom of the press, freedom of speech and the right to petition government were jeopardized. Shortly after George Washington retired from the Presidency, Congress passed the so-called Sedition Law which forbade criticizing the government or its officials. Newspapermen were subjected to physical attack, their shops vandalized and their presses destroyed by angry mobs as a consequence of articles criticizing the law. A New York state legislator, dragged out of bed in the middle of night, shackled and thrown on a horse, was paraded through cities and towns on a ZOO-mile trip to New York

City where he was found guilty of circulating a petition to have the law repealed. Public protest over these events resulted in repealing the law within two years and ousting the administration that sponsored it.

More recently we have seen efforts to control the press by trying to prevent publication of classified documents on grounds of national security. We may question moral issues by which the papers were obtained, but that was not the issue in court. Our highest judicial tribunal held that freedom of the press means freedom of the press.

With ratification of the Bill of Rights, many of the liberties envisioned by Thomas Jefferson when he drafted the Declaration of Independence were guaranteed. But more than 70 years had to pass from ratification of the Bill of Rights until freedom was granted to all, regardless of race, creed or color under the Emancipation Proclamation and the 13th Amendment of our Constitution. And another 60 years elapsed before the right of franchise was guaranteed regardless of sex.

The continuing contest to interpret the true meaning of freedom is underway today. There are allegations that we are in the process of losing some of our freedoms through encroachment of forces that seek to replace our many actual blessings with theories and policies that have been proven impractical in other years. We see laws conceived and adopted to protect the innocent now being used to delay, and in some cases to obstruct the application of justice. We see crime, terror, and riots sweeping through many of our cities in the name of liberty and freedom.

This lecture is titled THE MEANING OF FREEDOM. WHAT DOES FREEDOM REALLY MEAN?

A few years ago a number of Americans were asked to define freedom. Many responded.

“Having been blessed since birth with freedom, I ashamedly and humbly find I cannot properly define it,” one man wrote.

Another wrote:

“Define freedom? You may as well define the air you breathe.

Democracy, economic rights, free enterprise, hope, opportunity—
put them all together and the common ingredient is freedom.”

Here are a few other responses :

“Freedom-God’s richest gift, man’s deepest longing and most precious possession.”

“Freedom is individual man’s birthright as a child of God—
sired by the grace of God and consummated in the precept that man
is a free moral agent. American Freedom, in particular, is the heri-
tage of our past—a Way of Life, purchased on the frontier of hu-
manity by a courageous band of brave men who staked their lives
on the principle that the legacy of man in the New World was to
seek his own particular fulfillment in life unencumbered by unrea-
sonable jurisdiction.”

“Freedom-Man’s inalienable right because it is bestowed by
God, not by a sovereign or a ruler.”

“Freedom is the natural right of every human being.”

“Freedom—a reward granted to those who win it; a duty bind-
ing those who preserve it ; a blessing bestowed upon those who be-
lieve in it; and the fear clutching those who suppress it.”

“Freedom is the wedding of man’s Spirit with the Infinite.”

“Freedom is a shining, fragile thing wrought from the dreams,
the yearnings and the sacrifices of men courageous enough to desire
responsibility for their own destiny. It is the highest expression of
man as an individual identity walking with dignity, erect in the
image of God and in the pathways of His teachings.”

“Freedom is the precious right and golden opportunity pre-
sented to each American as a gift at birth.”

“Freedom means liberty, not license; faith, not fear; courage,
not cowardice ; patriotism, not patronage; sacrifice, not selfishness ;
self discipline, not self debasement; the rule of law, not the rule
of man.”

I was one of those invited to send in my definition or descrip-

tion of freedom. The task defied my best effort for more than three years. Finally, I responded, much too late to be included in the collation of definitions :

“Freedom means the maintenance of an environment of order or a climate of stability within which a person may pursue or advance his individual dignity unobstructed, unimpeded, and unfettered-except-except that he not interfere with the ability or right of any other individual to do the same thing.” I like my own definition ; but it is not as touching and as beautiful as another response to that original request. Listen to this :

Dear God has given to each of us
A gift beyond compare.
It's like a polished precious stone
With many facets rare.

In one we find the sky and sea
The beauty of His World;
Another shows America
With Stars and Stripes unfurled.

We see the people kneeling
In deep and thankful prayer.
And homes with joyous faces
That tell that love is there.

Again, we find men speaking
And writing hopefully.
Their consciences are telling them,
“The truth shall make you free.”

The scientist and the artisan
Are working unafraid
So men may find new challenges
In everything that's made.

One facet shows those noble bonds
That grow 'twixt man and man,
When sacrifice and love are in
Their daily living plan.

This gem of many facets
Is old, yet ever new.
It has the name of “Freedom.”
Its other name is “You.”¹

¹ Allen H. Wetter, “Freedom,” Awake *Throughout the Land*, ed. Kenneth D. Wells (Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, 1968), p.108.

Freedom is one of the most fragile, intangible blessings we enjoy, seldom appreciated until it is lost.

Freedom is one of the most difficult possessions to retain, because it is the target of multiple visible, invisible and indeterminate forces seeking its destruction. Visible encroachments can be met ; invisible may not be known. Indeterminate forces may not be recognized at all in time to defend properly against them. These uncertain circumstances form the basis for the statement and warning that "eternal vigilance is the price of liberty."

From my experience, survival is the basic human instinct, freedom is a universal human aspiration. Freedom and survival come into conflict frequently. A few die in an effort to remain free. Many accept bondage in order to survive. Peace is indeed a noble goal; but not at the cost of freedom for mankind.

The price of freedom can be high, frightfully high. On 30 December 1964, a West Point graduate was killed in Nha Be, South Vietnam, leaving a wife and a two year old daughter. During my tenure as Chief of Staff, the family of every soldier who died in combat in Vietnam received a letter signed by me, personally. Part of the reason for the letter was a selfish one; I could never lose sight of the basic fact that the lives of our soldiers were on the line in Vietnam. This wife and mother wrote back : "I did not realize that the price of freedom was so high ; but it is a price that we must pay."

Yes, the price of freedom is high. It was high at Concord, at Lexington, at Brandywine, at Yorktown, at Chickamauga, Lookout Mountain, Gettysburg, at Appomattox, San Juan, Chateau Thierry, the Meuse-Argonne, Normandy, North Africa, Salerno, Pearl Harbor, Bataan and Corregidor, Okinawa, Korea and now in Vietnam.

You are destined to pick up a burden that can never be set aside ; to assume a task that will never be completed ; to defend a principle upon which men will never agree completely; to bear an obligation that has no parallel on this earth. You are the physical defenders of freedom. On your shoulders will fall the responsibility for guaranteeing during your productive lifetime that this country, under God, shall not perish from this earth. You are Defenders of Freedom.



ABOUT THE SPEAKER . .

West Point is indeed honored to have a great soldier, General Harold K. Johnson, inaugurate the Feinstone Lecture Series. Born in Bowesmont, North Dakota on 22 February 1912, he graduated from West Point in 1933 as a Second Lieutenant of Infantry.

He served in the Philippines during World War II and took part in the Bataan Death March after the fall of Bataan in 1942. He was imprisoned until 1945.

Service in Korea during the Korean War included both battalion and regimental commands. **Later**, he became Assistant Chief of Staff, G3 for I Corps.

Other assignments include that of Assistant Division Commander, 8th Division, in Europe; Commandant, Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth; and Deputy Chief of Staff for Military Operations.

General Johnson was appointed Chief of Staff of the Army on 3 July 1964, the youngest Chief of Staff at 52 since General Douglas MacArthur. He retired in 1968.

General Johnson continues to serve the cause of freedom today as President of the Freedoms Foundation at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania.

Sol Feinstone's Credo

Dedicated to

The Spirit of '76, a struggle of free men to remain free,

The immigrants who came after the revolution and helped build our
country in freedom,

The underprivileged of all races who, by uplifting themselves, will raise
all mankind to a higher humanity,

A brotherhood of free nations of free men.