

UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY

WEST POINT, NEW YORK

The 18th
Sol Feinstone Lecture

on

THE MEANING OF FREEDOM

by

Dr. John Stoessinger

19 September 1990

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 the late Mr. Sol Feinstone, a dedicated American patriot whose commitment to the ideals of the American Revolution 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 ensures 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 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

Dr. John G. Stoessinger

Thank you very much for that most generous introduction, General Palmer. I've just returned from a seven-nation tour of Eastern Europe. The question they ask these days in Czechoslovakia is, "What is the difference between the United States and Eastern Europe?" Answer. "The United States still has a Communist Party." It is an amazing thing.

I would like to divide my comments here this evening into three main segments. First, what did I see in Eastern Europe? In that sense, why did we have to wait so long--forty years--for freedom to be born in that part of the world? Why did I have to teach the same boring course for thirty years about the Soviet Union when nothing ever happened? Now everything is different. Also, is Gorbachev going to last and what if he doesn't? What does the future hold for that part of the world? You know we can call this segment appropriately the "fall of the communist empire."

Secondly, I would like to turn to our country, the United States, and here I must confess to a kind of malaise that I feel, and that is why I want to discuss this at West Point because one of your key words, of course, in addition to "Duty, Honor, Country," is discipline. You live by that, and I notice an absence of discipline in the United States. And I would like to illuminate this by three examples from abroad: the Iraqi situation, the German unification issue, and Japan and how these three problems now impinge on the United States and what that means.

And, third, I would like to reflect personally about my own odyssey, if I may, in coming to this country and what this means and dedicate that final segment to Mr. Ezra Stone, who is among us and who is the son of the founder of this generous endowment, of which I am the beneficiary this evening.

So, to begin with, ladies and gentlemen, the first thing one notices, you see, is the speed with which this happened. No one in my field whom I know, myself included, predicted the sheer velocity of the decline of communism. Just to show you the dynamics of this, it took the Poles ten years to dump the communists. It took the Hungarians ten months. It took the Germans, once the Wall came down, ten weeks. It took the Czechoslovakians last November ten days. It took the Romanians, once they got rid of Ceausescu, ten hours. It's a mind-boggling thing.

Perhaps even more amazing is the relative absence of violence in this phenomenon. With the exception of Romania, this has been a peaceful revolution. And, as an historian, I know that revolutions of such magnitude are usually accompanied by

enormous violence or at least considerable violence, the French Revolution, the Bolshevik Revolution. In this case there was very little violence. For example, when the Wall came down in Berlin the East Germans went over to West Berlin and went shopping. That was it. Nobody died. It had a certain charm to it, you might say. And, indeed, now every communist leader in Eastern Europe has been dumped, with a single exception of Albania, as if anybody cared any longer. Albania is sort of a communist theme park on how things used to be in the days of Stalin.

The first question one has to ask is, why now? It is not all that easy to answer, but I would like to attempt an answer here or at least offer three hypotheses to this question: Why 1990? Why didn't this happen in 1980, or '70 or '60? Why now? In the first place and most obvious, of course, is the catalyst Mikhail Gorbachev, without whom none of this could have happened. He has been in power for five years. I happen to know the event that made him really become the reformer that he became--that he is today. He witnessed for several years the economic, intellectual, and moral bankruptcy of his homeland. And one example was just too many.

Four years ago the Soviets decided to go into the automobile export business. They produce a car called "Lada." I rode in one in Budapest a few weeks ago. The Lada makes the Yugo look like a Lincoln Continental--it is an absolute piece of junk. They exported a few thousand of these Ladas to Romania in Ceausescu's time. But as the cars were being unloaded in Bucharest, a Rumanian inspector was present who wanted to make sure that the cars actually worked. He took a look at them and discovered to his infinite dismay that every key of each of these cars fitted every ignition. Every key started every car! So, of course, the key was totally useless, and the Ladas had to be shipped back to the Soviet Union, to be let loose, I suspect, on unsuspecting KGB members, probably for service faithfully rendered. At this point Gorbachev said, "No. This has got to stop. Unless we do something about this, we shall become the laughing stock of the world and Ronald Reagan's prophecy that we are going to end up in the garbage pail of history would be proven accurate."

And, at that point he made a dramatic decision, which is the essence of Gorbachev and remains so to this day. He said that the Soviet Union was going to reallocate resources from the military sector to the economy. To put it slightly differently, Gorbachev said, "We have now enough nuclear missiles to blow up the planet eighty times. I am going to settle for forty. And the nuclear missiles which we don't need we'll engage in disarmament negotiations with the Americans. We're going to save

ourselves a lot of money by reallocating these resources." So, he didn't do this to do us American any favor; he did this for them. But the by-product of this decision was a far less abrasive relationship between the Soviets and the United States, which, of course, is now bearing fruit.

Now, unlike his predecessors who also knew about the bankruptcy of this system but who never had the integrity to admit it, Gorbachev was the first Soviet leader to really take action about it. The first thing he did was to remove Soviet troops from Afghanistan. This is the first time since Austria, that the Soviets ever removed troops from an occupied country. And he meant it; he did it. Then, as you remember, he went to Cuba and to his ally Castro. There was Fidel giving a very incendiary speech about the need to expand communism to the Latin American hemisphere, and after it was over, Gorbachev took him aside and said, "Hey, Fidel, cool it." Or, whatever "cool it" means in Russian. "Things are different these days," he said "I can't afford this anymore. I'm liquidating these military ventures on the periphery of the Soviet Union. And why don't you take your 50,000 soldiers home from Angola and take them back to Cuba?"

Well, Castro didn't like that. He continued on his Marxist course and two weeks ago, to my infinite amazement or maybe amusement, I saw an article in Pravda in which Gorbachev accused Castro of running a "police state." Now, this is a new height of irony that I've never seen before, especially, if this particular Soviet leader meant what he said.

The most amazing thing about all this is that we Americans began to do pretty much the same thing for pretty much the same reasons. We also discovered that some of our nuclear establishment was perhaps no longer needed as much as it was before--and I'm not talking conventional weapons, I'm talking nuclear here--and that not only was the Soviet economy wounded but so was ours. The Russians might be in Chapter 11, but we were in debt--unfortunately, to a large extent to the Japanese. So, at the same time we also began a disarmament process. For example, these days one doesn't hear very much any longer about the Strategic Defense Initiative, the "Star Wars." One doubts these days very seriously whether this enterprise will ever be built in the light of the present economizing. Or, for that matter, now there is talk about whether the B-2 bomber is really needed. And, again, I am not talking conventional weapons; I'm talking about the B-2 bomber. A lot of people had sticker shock when they first heard about this weapon--five hundred million bucks a plane and it's supposed to be invisible at that!

You know, I must confess to an idea at some point. Maybe we should tell the Russians we built the damn thing and forget about it. Be that as it may, we began to do pretty much the same thing. In other words, both we and the Soviets discovered at the exact moment and time that our economies were wounded and that a

certain measure of economizing had to be extended to our nuclear establishments and that was the first reason why this began to happen.

That led to the second reason: that the leaders of the two countries had to relate to each other. Ronald Reagan used to call the Soviets the "evil empire." When he met Gorbachev a couple of times, he changed his mind, and he met with him in Washington in December to put together the first INF Disarmament Treaty, the first disarmament treaty in history in effect. They began to relate to each other. George Bush, after some initial hesitation, also decided that Gorbachev's Soviet Russia was a different society. And now that the leaders began to relate, now we have the ultimate expression of this. There is a *de facto* alliance being shaped in the UN Security Council right now between the Soviets and the United States against Iraq. And this, of course, is totally unprecedented.

The third reason why this is happening now is that Gorbachev needs our help. He needs it desperately because he is facing three horrendous problems right now in his own back yard. He faces hunger, which is very serious and which I saw with my own eyes. He faces an explosive nationality crisis which threatens to turn the Soviet Union into the Soviet disunion. And he also has to tell his own people that for seventy years the communist experiment was a fraud, to put it very bluntly. Now the hunger situation is very serious. I saw it, when I was in Romania, for example. There is a Stalinist monstrosity in Bucharest, the Romanian capital, which was the presidential palace of Ceausescu, whom they executed last December. And leading up to it you see a kind of replica of the Champs d' Elysées in Paris. But aside from this Orwellian structure, the people there are starving. They're despondent. There is nothing to buy in the store. The stores are empty. People wait for potatoes, for shoes that don't fit. It's tragic. And now that the winter is approaching, the combination of hunger and cold can be a lethal revolutionary situation, and Gorbachev knows it. They tell him there, well, it's nice that you are so popular in Washington, but "where's the beef?" We have nothing to eat here. And that's true, of course.

And then you have a nationality crisis. Look how serious this is. The Soviet Union is in effect virtually disintegrating. Not only Lithuania, which is now on the back burner, but the minute Lithuania was more or less postponed that giant from Siberia, Boris Yeltsin, has now hurled the gauntlet at Gorbachev. He said, "Look, first of all, the Communist Party is a waste of my time, and I'm am resigning from it." But not only that, but they have an economist now Stanislaus Shatalin, who says, "I want to, within 500 days, turn the Soviet Union into a market economy." And Yeltsin says, "I preside today over the most populous of the fifteen Soviet Republics, the Russian Federation, and if the laws of my republic conflict with those of the Soviet Union, it's too bad for the Soviet Union." And there is a real possibility that the Soviet Union might become a confederal state

of the type that we had two hundred years ago before we became a federal state. And this nationality crisis will haunt that country for years to come. And no one quite knows how it will come out. That's the second crisis he faces.

Then there is the third: he has to tell his people that all the leaders of the Soviet Union were a bunch of liars, that the whole experiment was really a sham. And he's doing it. He told them recently that Stalin was a murderer and a criminal. There went twenty-five years of Soviet history down the tubes. Then he said Khrushchev was an idiot. There go another ten years down the drain. Then he said Brezhnev was a mediocrity, running the country in an atmosphere of stagnation for eighteen years. There goes the rest of Soviet history. Now he's working on Lenin, the founder of the Soviet State. It's like us working on Washington. It's incredible. There's is a referendum now before the Soviet Chamber of Deputies whether to rename the city of Leningrad "St Petersburg." I don't know whether it's going to pass, but the very fact that it exists is mind-boggling.

My first question to myself was, "What does the typical Soviet citizen think about all of this going on there?" You sense that a tremendous weight has been lifted. You know, there is nothing to eat, but they laugh because they are no longer afraid of the Gulag. No one goes to the Gulag anymore for political reasons. So they stand in line and tell each other jokes. I might as well tell you a couple because they are not bad. For example, when Gorbachev said that Stalin was a murderer, the following story made the rounds in Moscow. The story went that the Soviet postal service had just issued a new commemorative postage stamp of Joseph Stalin. There was a problem with the stamp, however. It didn't stick so well because people kept spitting on the wrong side. That was a Soviet joke. Now for a joke like this five years ago, you would go to the Gulag. Forget it. You're finished. Now they laugh.

Here's another one which I liked in Leningrad. What is the definition of a string quartet? Answer, a string quartet is the Leningrad Symphony Orchestra after a tour in the United States. That's a string quartet.

Okay, one last one. You seem to enjoy these jokes. One last one. Do you remember this guy Konstantin Chernenko? You know the guy, the last one who waved feebly from the Kremlin with a limp wrist and then dropped dead. Well, the story goes before Chernenko died, he had a conversation with Gorbachev. He said, "Listen, Mikhail. They have a big problem here in the Soviet Union. Too many of our fellow citizens want to defect. They want to go to America. We have too many loopholes here. We have to really plug them up. Unless we do, there will be no one left here in the Soviet Union except you and me." Gorbachev said, "Don't count on me."

So now the question is, is this guy going to last? I tend to think that he may just hang in there, even though a lot of people now in this country as well as in Soviet Russia predict his imminent demise. It's just overwhelming what he has to face. But the guy understands political power about as well as Machiavelli did, which is very well indeed. He gets rid of people who get in his way, but he does it nicely by promoting them to insignificant jobs.

Do you remember this German kid some time back who flew that little plane into Moscow? Well, when Gorbachev heard about this he pretended to be very upset and said, "What? A plane from Germany? Where was our radar? Where is the defense minister?"-- as if he didn't know. Now, the defense minister was an 82-year-old by the name of Sokolov. Gorbachev said, "Give this guy a medal. Give him a nice hydroelectric power station to run, but get him out of the defense job. And while I'm at it," he said, "I got a list here, how about Comrade Gromyko, our foreign minister?" Also 82 years old. "Have him retired. And Comrade Dobrynin, our UN ambassador?" By the time he was through with his list, fourteen guys were running hydroelectric power stations and were out of their jobs.

Now he can do this because he's head of the Communist Party. He's still general secretary, which is like being the personnel chief. You can hire people whom you want and fire people whom you don't. The history of that job, by the way, is very revealing. Under Lenin, Stalin had it. Under Stalin, Khrushchev got it. Under Khrushchev, Brezhnev got it. Under Brezhnev, Andropov got it. Under Andropov, Gorbachev got it. And then under Gorbachev, guess what? Gorbachev kept it because that is where the power was. But in the last few weeks, notice what he has done. Very clever. He refuses to be addressed as General Secretary of the Communist Party. He now insists on being called President Gorbachev. Because he realizes, not surprisingly, that being head of the Communist Party "ain't no trip to Hollywood" any longer. It has become an albatross. So he now wants to be known as president and wants to run the country the way Charles De Gaulle used to run France in the days of the Fifth Republic. So, I wouldn't sell this guy short yet.

Why do I tell you all this? Because the overwhelming feeling one gets these days as an American walking down the streets of Prague or Moscow or Leningrad is we're no longer Public Enemy No. 1; they come and talk to you. They want to know answers about the American Constitution. I saw an American in Leningrad, for example, you know, who had a Hawaiian shirt and a couple of cameras. Very typical. And he was approached by two emaciated-looking members of the Chamber of Deputies of the Soviet Union who were reading, of all things, the American Constitution. And they approached this guy with the shirt and said, "Sir, are you American?" "Yes." "Well, we have a question," they said. "How do you in America protect the rights of a minority against majority rule without slowing down the pace

of legislation to a snail's pace?" The guy with the Hawaiian shirt did not know what hit him. But he is now reading the American Constitution probably for the first time. The Russians told him to. We have now become mentors--teachers, if you will, or role models--no longer enemies.

Now this is not to say, obviously, that there are no longer any problems between ourselves and the Soviet Union. There are legions of problems. But what one definitely senses in that part of the world today is that there is a watershed change going on, a major, major historic change, as if "Old Man History" had shaken the kaleidoscope. And all the old pieces of that kaleidoscope, which had been frozen into immobility like an iceberg in the Arctic, now all of a sudden are shifting and forming a brand new configuration which we are in the process of figuring out.

What you sense there very strongly is the birth of freedom. That really is the bottom line. You sense that these poor people who had not been able to breathe for so many decades, first under the Nazis, then under the Stalinists, now at long last have real elections. And almost all of them now, with the exception of Albania, have made the communists a minority party like it is in Spain, or Italy, or France. The distinction between Eastern and Western Europe is rapidly disappearing. And what you sense very strongly is the birth of a new freedom in that part of the world.

I would like to suggest to you, I know that your vacations at West Point are not very long, is it two weeks in the summer, three weeks in the summer? I would like to suggest that at some point you go and see this for yourselves. Take a trip there and look at it yourselves because I am convinced in my heart that 1990 will be a very special year. I cannot think of any country in the last five years, as a matter of fact, that has switched from democracy to dictatorship. But I can now name you about twenty, not just in Eastern Europe but also in Latin America and Africa, which have moved from the darkness of tyranny into the sunlight of democracy. And I believe, you see, that your grandchildren thirty, forty, fifty years hence in their history books might very well look at 1990 as the "Year of Democracy." And one day, maybe, your grandchildren will ask you and, "Hey, Grandad, where were you that year?" And you can say, "I was there; I saw it. Hop on my knee; I'll tell you the story." And that will be worth the trip all by itself, you see. I believe that--deeply. It's a thrilling adventure which happens, in my judgment, once in a couple of lifetimes. And you are witnesses to this. And you should really see it for yourselves!

Let me turn now to the second topic which worries me, I must say, a great deal. And that is a malaise that I feel in my heart about the country which I love, the United States. Let me use three different examples from three different continents, each of which illuminates the same problem, a slackening of self-discipline in the United States. I deeply believe these days

that America has more to learn from West Point than West Point from America because the key to your success, among other things, is your self-discipline.

Let me give you these examples the way I see them. First there is Iraq. Let me simply give you some reflections about the Iraqi situation. I believe that had we done what we should have done ten or fifteen years ago in terms of becoming energy self-sufficient when crude oil was selling at 10 or 15 bucks a barrel we would not be in Saudi Arabia today. But we forgot the oil shock of the 1970s very, very quickly then. And very quickly we went back to the gas guzzlers and the same old bad habits, and now we're looking at oil at 30 bucks a barrel and more. Not only are we in hot water because we were undisciplined when it came to energy, but now we have to face higher interest rates because the Federal Reserve is now talking about inflation because of the doubling of oil prices. And it is therefore reluctant to lower interest rates, which they should do because we are now living in a sluggish economy. So we face a dual problem double the oil price and interest rates going up when they should be going down. Now, I think we are our selves at fault for not having done what we should have done with energy ten or fifteen years ago.

Now having said this, let me turn to the Iraqi situation at present. Only God knows whether there will be a war or not. I don't know. I hope in my heart that there won't be, although I cannot think of a single deployment as massive as this one in Saudi Arabia that has not led to a military conflict in our history. So if we avoid a war, it would be a precedent.

A couple of more reflections about it. At the moment I think we are edging toward war because neither side knows how to escape from it. We are getting ourselves boxed in. Now I teach a course in the Middle East, and I do happen to know that "saving face" is a very important element in that part of the world. The way we got out of the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, which I remember very well and which you no doubt are studying in your history courses, is that Jack Kennedy and his brother Robert spent a great deal of time trying to figure out how they could give Khrushchev an honorable face-saving device way out, so he could go into Moscow and say, "Okay, I got something out of this anyhow, so I was able to pull out without losing face." And they did it. They gave Khrushchev a pledge that the Americans wouldn't invade Cuba again after 1961. Nobody intended to do that anyhow after the fiasco, the "Bay of Pigs." But Khrushchev was able to say I got something, even though he lost his job ten months later, and that's how we avoided nuclear war back in 1962.

Now, what can we do with Saddam Hussein to save his face? It's not easy. We can't give him Kuwait, obviously. But there are a couple of thoughts that I had. One was that a few days ago he said that he would love to go on television with Maggie Thatcher and with President Bush, who turned him down cold. I say, so what? The whole world would see what a schmuck he is,

you see. It wouldn't have been the worst thing, you see, and it would have saved his face to look like a statesmen, "Mr. Macho," to be on television.

Also, now I have another thought. Now that we have the Soviet Union on our side in the UN Security Council. If we could manage to persuade Gorbachev or Yeltsin or at the moment whoever runs the situation to send 10,000 troops or so to Saudi Arabia, that would finish off Saddam Hussein's hope right then and there, I think. I do believe if we could persuade the Russians to stand with us, it would help enormously. And also of course, under the table, we might promise them considerable economic help which they need desperately. A joint US-Soviet Military presence under the UN flag might just make Saddam Hussein blink.

One last thought on this. I cannot help but think that before the invasion of Kuwait our official American policy with the Arab world was that, on any intra-Arab dispute, the United States would take no position; we were to be neutral. I sometimes think that maybe this gave Saddam Hussein the wrong signal. Maybe he thought this was the green light for him to attack Kuwait. Now these are some thoughts that maybe might not have not occurred to you. I don't know, of course, whether war will break out. I hope and pray that it will not.

At any rate, the main point that I am making here is that because of lack of discipline as a nation in the energy field we now have to be in Saudi Arabia, among other things, to protect our strategic and economic interest. Had we done this fifteen years ago, I doubt very much whether we would have done what we are doing now because, let's face it, Kuwait is not a democratic country. I know the abstract principle is, invasion must not stand, which is a perfectly legitimate principle. But it's also true that there is some ambiguity in this because a lot of Americans would say in case of war, "What are we fighting for here? To put some Arab billionaire back on his throne in Kuwait? We are not fighting here for a democratic government." This troubles me because in case of a long land war, the home front might weaken as it did in Korea and Vietnam.

Now the second example about lack of national discipline has to do with Germany. Germany is revisited. The bottom line, which I've never said quite so bluntly, is this: West Germany has bought itself a country called East Germany. They are paying about 600 billion bucks to buy East Germany. We Americans are going to pay 600 billion bucks, to bail out the S&L crisis. And we're not going to get even peanuts for it. Because we weren't vigilant, and we weren't really watching the Congress, the Congress is now sitting in Washington trying to figure out the deficit-reduction passage. They are very quick to raise their salaries, I see. I say, put them on commission until they figure this thing out. Not only that, but the fact that we're going to pay more than half a trillion bucks and get nothing because a bunch of crooks ripped us off in the S&L's shows again a national

sloppiness and lack of discipline, which in Germany would not occur. There, for the same amount, they are buying themselves a country.

Third example, Japan. I saw Japan for the first time, ladies and gentlemen, when I was a kid of eighteen in 1945. I'll later tell, you the story of how I got there just after the bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Then we saw General MacArthur, one of the most famous graduates of West Point, come into Japan and lead the American military occupation, probably the most successful military occupation in modern history. This took six years during which General MacArthur taught the Japanese, let's face it, virtually everything they know today about democracy, about business, about productivity, about efficiency. And when General MacArthur left Japan in 1951 and the Japanese got their sovereignty back, they were launched on the most miraculous economic recovery of the century.

Now if you fast forward this tape by forty years to 1990, you see the most mind-boggling, role reversal in modern history. In 1950, the Japanese were prostrate. They were pulverized. No one expected them ever to rise again in a meaningful way. Today, they are one of the richest countries on the earth. Everybody owes them money. But, they have the habits of a poor country still. They hate to spend money. They love to save. Their savings rate is 25 percent. They hate to go into debt. Instead, they buy up American stocks and bonds and American real estate. They are a rich country with the habits of a poor and disciplined country.

The United States, alas, is the very opposite. In 1950 we were the richest country on earth. Victorious, we thought we were invincible, even immortal. And, now in 1990, we are the biggest debtor country in the world. With the habits, however, of a spendthrift country. We're a poor country with the habits of a rich country. And that is the major difference, the major paradox when you compare the United States with Japan.

Now this, ladies and gentlemen, has major practical consequences. Every month, like clockwork, this country, our country, goes into debt to other countries. This is called a trade deficit. It means we import more than we export. Yesterday, it was announced again, like every month, a nine-billion-bucks trade deficit, most of which we owe the Japanese. What happens? The Japanese are very nice to us because they trust us. They finance our trade deficit.

How do they do this? Every three months the U.S. Treasury auctions U.S. Treasury Bonds, about 30 billion dollars worth to the highest bidder. And every three months for the last thirty years, the Japanese are there bidding for these bonds, 30 or 40 percent. They sock them away. We pay them interest on it, and

the whole thing is papered over like we didn't owe anybody anything. We became hooked on borrowing too much money from foreigners. Now this has been going on for thirty years.

But this year, 1990, for the first time, there is a problem. The Japanese are in trouble. Their stock market has declined by 35 percent. They cannot buy our Treasury Bonds any longer. They are now becoming net sellers, not net buyers, of our Treasury Bonds. What that means is that in the United States interest rates that should be going down because of our sluggish economy are going up again. And this is not good. Again we have formed a dependency relationship on a foreign power. It's a unhealthy relationship.

What I'm saying, ladies and gentlemen, is this: The events which are taking place abroad now in the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, in German unification, and in the problems in the Japanese economy impinge negatively on us because we are no longer masters of our economic destiny because of lack of discipline. And that bothers me as an American, I must say. We've got to learn as a country to pay as we go and no longer to go into that kind of debt and that kind of dependency.

Let me make the same point as a teacher, if I may. I've taught American students all over this country, as the Superintendent generously pointed out, for the last thirty years. I've also taught Japanese students. The differences are amazing to me. You know the best quality of my students where I have taught in the past few years has been their creativity. My students talk back to me. They are not intimidated. They've got "chutzpah." They don't give me back at exam time what I give them. They're free spirits. And I'm not astounded, you see, that the great technological breakthroughs, the conceptual breakthroughs, are American inventions. The computer, the airplane, the telephone are American inventions because of that freedom of creativity.

But the weakest part, alas, of some of my students whom I teach all over the country these days is that, again, they lack discipline. You know, they're not tough enough, I notice. They think the good times will always roll along. They have a couple of cars in the garage. If I give them a "C," they don't even come and argue with me anymore. They say a "C," okay. They don't want to work for the government. There are no bucks to be made. They want to get rich a little bit too quickly. And that bothers me too.

I gave an exam when I taught in New York City before I went to Texas. I gave a final exam in which I asked the question, an essay, "What do you think is the greater danger facing the United States today, ignorance or apathy?" My best student wrote the following answer. "Ignorance or apathy," he writes. "I don't know and I don't care." It was a classic. One doesn't know whether to laugh at it or cry about it.

Two weeks after that melancholy episode, I gave a speech in Long Island which cheered me up. I saw the following birth announcement in the Long Island Jewish news. The birth announcement read, "Solomon and Ethel Rosenbaum proudly announce the birth of their son, Dr. Irving Rosenbaum." That cheered me up immensely.

Anyway, now my Japanese students are exactly the reverse of this. When it comes to creativity, they are not so terrific. You know creativity doesn't flourish as easily in a Japanese framework. The individual maverick is not encouraged that much. Promotions take place by seniority, not so much by merit. Creativity is not so outstanding. But when it comes to discipline, my Japanese students are superb. When I say we have a make-up class tonight at 8 o'clock, they say, "Yes, sir." Not a murmur of opposition. If I said this down in Texas to my kids more than once, I know what would happen. They would say, "Let's go see the Dean about this guy. There should be an investigation into his life, all of it, as soon as possible." It's a different attitude.

So what I'm saying now, and of course I'm talking about the country at large not West Point, that as a country, we Americans now are ahead of Japan in creativity. But, they're ahead of us in discipline. And excellence in the classroom and in the work place, in my judgment, is the combination of these two qualities. You've got to have both creativity and discipline. And that is why I sense that West Point today has a great deal to teach our country. And that leaves me, ladies and gentlemen, to the third topic, my concluding reflections, which are dedicated to Mr. Ezra Stone here.

I am deeply thrilled by the procession of democracy, by the birth of freedom, which I saw a few weeks ago in Eastern Europe and which also extends now to other countries, all over the globe. Even though I worry about the lack of discipline in our national fiber, I'm still thrilled about this birth of freedom. Because in my younger years, you see, I lived in "unfreedom." And I would like to tell you about this, at least briefly.

I grew up under Adolph Hitler as a Jew, which was not terrific. Let's face it. I saw Adolph Hitler in 1938, when he marched into my home town in Vienna, Austria. I saw him with my own eyes when I was ten years old. My mother said at this point, "We better get out of town. This is an ill wind. Let's go move to Prague, to Czechoslovakia," where my mother's parents had a little shoe store, my grandparents. So we moved to Prague. Hitler, unfortunately, developed a curious passion to follow me around. He wound up in Prague the next year 1939, déjà vu. Things, of course, now became worse as you know from history. Hitler built the concentration camps now, Dachau, Sobybor, Treblinka, Auschwitz. Elie Wiesel, who is a close friend of mine, no doubt spoke to you about this when he was here as one of my predecessors in this endowment. And, my grandparents had this

little shoe store. They never harmed another person in their lives. They were innocent people, loving, caring people. Hitler caught them nonetheless and shipped them to Auschwitz. And killed them in the gas chambers. Now, you don't get over something like this probably ever. My mother said at this point, "We've got to leave Europe for good. He's going to kill us next."

But, by now it's 1940. The western escape route is cut off by Hitler. Virtually everything except England is occupied. The only way to run away in those days was to go east to Russia. So we wind up in Soviet Russia, Stalin's Russia, not exactly an improvement over Hitler's Germany. We track across the frozen waste of the Soviet Union just before the Nazi invasion, across most of Russia and Siberia, which took many months. And finally we wind up in Vladivostok on the Soviet Pacific coast, from which on a clear day you can look across the Bering Sea and see Alaska. And there we caught a small Japanese fishing boat and made our way to Japan and from there to Shanghai, China. That's how I got to China.

We got to China in October 1941. Lousy timing once again. Just in time for Pearl Harbor. And the subsequent Japanese occupation of Shanghai, which got us into another ghetto for another three years. In August 1945, not too far from Shanghai, the first atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and shortly after that, of course as you know, the Japanese army surrendered, and the Americans then came into Shanghai and liberated the city and liberated me. I was not too much younger than many of you are now. I was 18 years old then.

Well, I might as well tell you. Like many teenagers in those distant days, I became a shoe shine boy. I'll tell you exactly the way it was. I would polish the shoes of the American GI's and other officers who would come into town in the hope that one of them, somehow, would help me build some kind of a future. And one day I got lucky. One day I was polishing the shoes of an American Army lieutenant who was a decent guy, decent through and through. And when I was done with his shoes he said to me, "Johnny," he said, "you might be able to get an education in America." I said, "America? How can I get from this ghetto to America?" And the lieutenant said, "Look, I went to a small college in the middle of America, in a state called Iowa. It's called Grinnell College and Gary Cooper went there." I've never heard of Iowa let alone of Grinnell College, but I had heard of Gary Cooper, whom I had seen in the movies. So, I say to this lieutenant, "What can I do to get to this place?" The lieutenant said, "Look, I will write you a letter of recommendation to my alma mater. Here is the address. Write them your own letter and ask for application forms for admission."

So I sat down in Shanghai, China, and in my broken English composed a letter, which I posted across the Pacific Ocean, all the way to this unknown place called Iowa, which I'd never heard

of before. And I waited. And three weeks later, to my astonishment, an envelope comes back with an American stamp on it. And there were these application forms, which I filled out and posted back to Iowa. And three months later, to my amazement, that little college in Iowa admitted me as a freshman with a full scholarship. It was a miracle. Well, at that point, of course, there was no holding me back. I packed up my worldly goods in a bundle and got myself a job as a deck hand scrubbing the decks of an American troop ship, the *General Gordon*, which was taking the American soldiers home from the war from China back to the United States. I kissed my mother good-bye and said, "I'm going to America."

So, in September 1947, I stepped on board that ship, destination United States. And eighteen days later that little American ship docked underneath that graceful arch, the Golden Gate in San Francisco. And when I got off that ship, long ago, ladies and gentlemen, many, many years ago, I don't mind telling you, my knees gave way. I fell to the ground and kissed the American soil. I never quite got over that.

I remember, I took a Greyhound bus from San Francisco all the way to Iowa. And every time the bus driver would say, "Well folks, we are crossing a state line, we're crossing into Nevada, Colorado, or Nebraska," I would whip out my papers because every foreigner knows when you cross a boundary, you have to show ID. It took me a year to get over this sort of thing. Then the bus rolls into Grinnell, Iowa.

The next morning I put on my suit and tie and walked into my first American college class, forever etched in my memory. There were about twenty-five or thirty students. They were in shirt sleeves, looking very comfortable. In the back of the room was a phenomenon that I have never seen before, an American football player, a huge intimidating chap about 6 foot 6, with a blackened face and shoulder pads. And what was most intimidating of all, he was wearing a helmet. Now my relationship with helmets had not been the greatest in the past two years. Now a few minutes afterwards, the professor walked in, who was one foot shorter than the football player. A history professor he was. The football player leaps out of his chair and says, "Hi, ya' prof. How ya' doing?" I said to myself, "God in Heaven, where have I landed? What sort of a planet is this? There is going to have to be a purge here soon you know. No student talks like this to a professor and lives to tell the story."

I was wrong. The next day I was back again. So was the football player. He might be there to this day, come to think of it. Again the football player said, "Hi, prof," and again nothing happened. In this second time around, I had a kind of illumination, a kind of insight, sharp and clear that happens to a person maybe once in a lifetime. The insight was quite simply stated: I am free now. I am a free person. I can say what I want now at last. And, neither the Gestapo nor the KGB is going

to come get me at 3 o'clock some morning and cart me off to some Gulag or to some concentration camp. I tell you this, ladies and gentlemen, because sometimes immigrants like myself and Mr. Stone's dad, who originated this endowment, who came from Lithuania in 1902, isn't that right? People like us who are immigrants from tyranny and oppression, we remember the Hitlers and the Stalins and the Tojos and the Mussolinis. We know deep in our hearts that freedom is not free. That if you don't stand for something, you might just fall for anything.

And I'll tell you something else in conclusion, ladies and gentlemen. You ladies and gentlemen of West Point are, the chosen few. You combine the best qualities of our nation. You combine creativity and discipline and a whole lot else. But we are now living in a country in trouble. And I wanted to bring to your attention, if you will, what the nature of that malaise is because you can help restore discipline to our nation. You should thrill to the adventure of the birth of freedom in Eastern Europe and elsewhere. But also, help our country regain control of its destiny because we are now in peril of losing it. I worry about my students these days because they take the American democracy a bit too much for granted. They don't quite understand that the American Constitution is truly a political miracle. That the American democracy is absolutely unique on this earth. That it exists in the American form nowhere else on this entire planet. And, therefore, I suggest that all of us teach our children that the American democracy must never be taken for granted. Not even for a single moment by anyone, anywhere. That quite on the contrary it must be cherished, nurtured and defended. And, thank you for having me here, ladies and gentlemen.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER ...

Dr. John G. Stoessinger is a distinguished professor and one of America's internationally renowned political analysts and prize-winning authors. He, like Dr. Feinstone, learned the meaning of personal freedom as a youth, when he fled Nazi-occupied Austria on the eve of World War II only to become a refugee in Hitler's Czechoslovakia. Three years later he made his way to China, but when the Japanese arrived he found himself a war refugee, living in a prison camp in Shanghai with his mother.

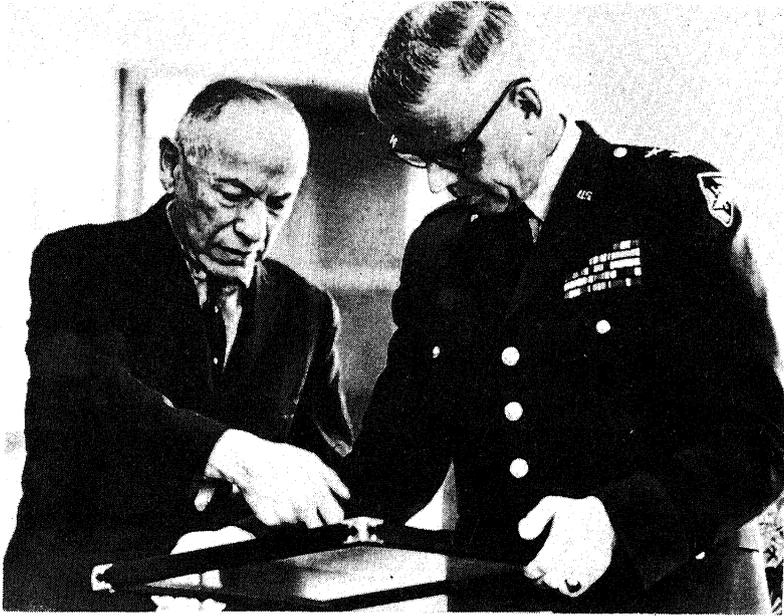
Following liberation, he obtained a student visa to the United States and attended Grinnell College in Iowa on a scholarship. His scholastic excellence there led to yet another scholarship to Harvard Graduate School, where he earned his Doctor of Philosophy. He later joined Harvard's faculty and continued his teaching career at the nation's top universities, including M.I.T., Columbia, and Princeton. The nation called upon his extensive international affairs knowledge with his appointment as the acting director of the political affairs division at the United Nations from 1967 to 1974. He remains a member of the Council on Foreign Relations.

Dr. Stoessinger's books, noted for his acute assessments of international power struggles, include *The Might of Nations: World Politics in Our Time*, *The Refugee and The World Community*, *Why Nations Go to War*, *Nations in Darkness*, and *Henry Kissinger: The Anguish of Power*.

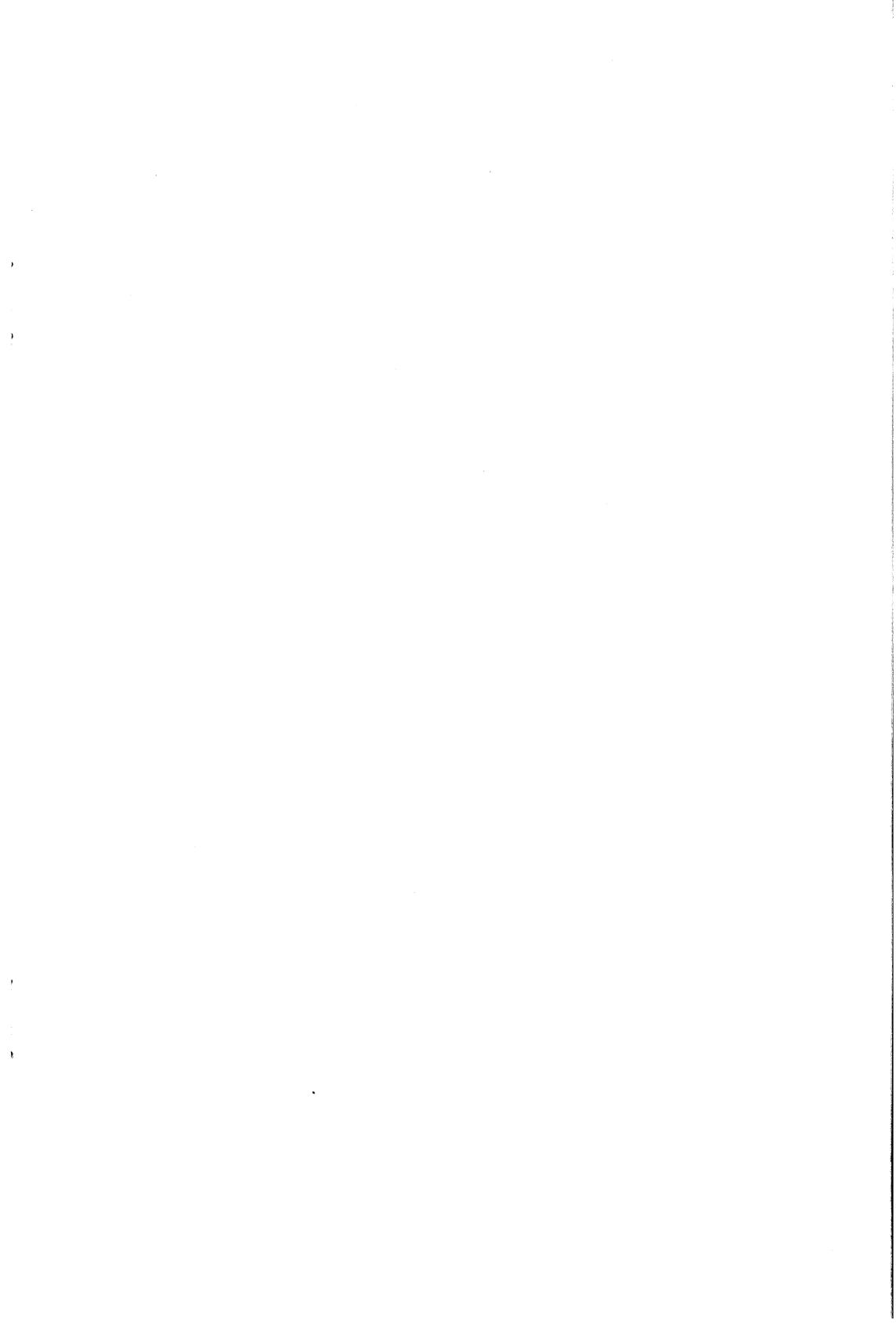
He is now the distinguished Professor of International Affairs at Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas. He lectures extensively throughout the United States and has spoken in more than twenty foreign countries, keeping audiences spellbound with his moving presentations that interpret and analyze contemporary international affairs. Wherever he goes, he urges both his students and his audiences to cherish, nurture, and defend American democracy.

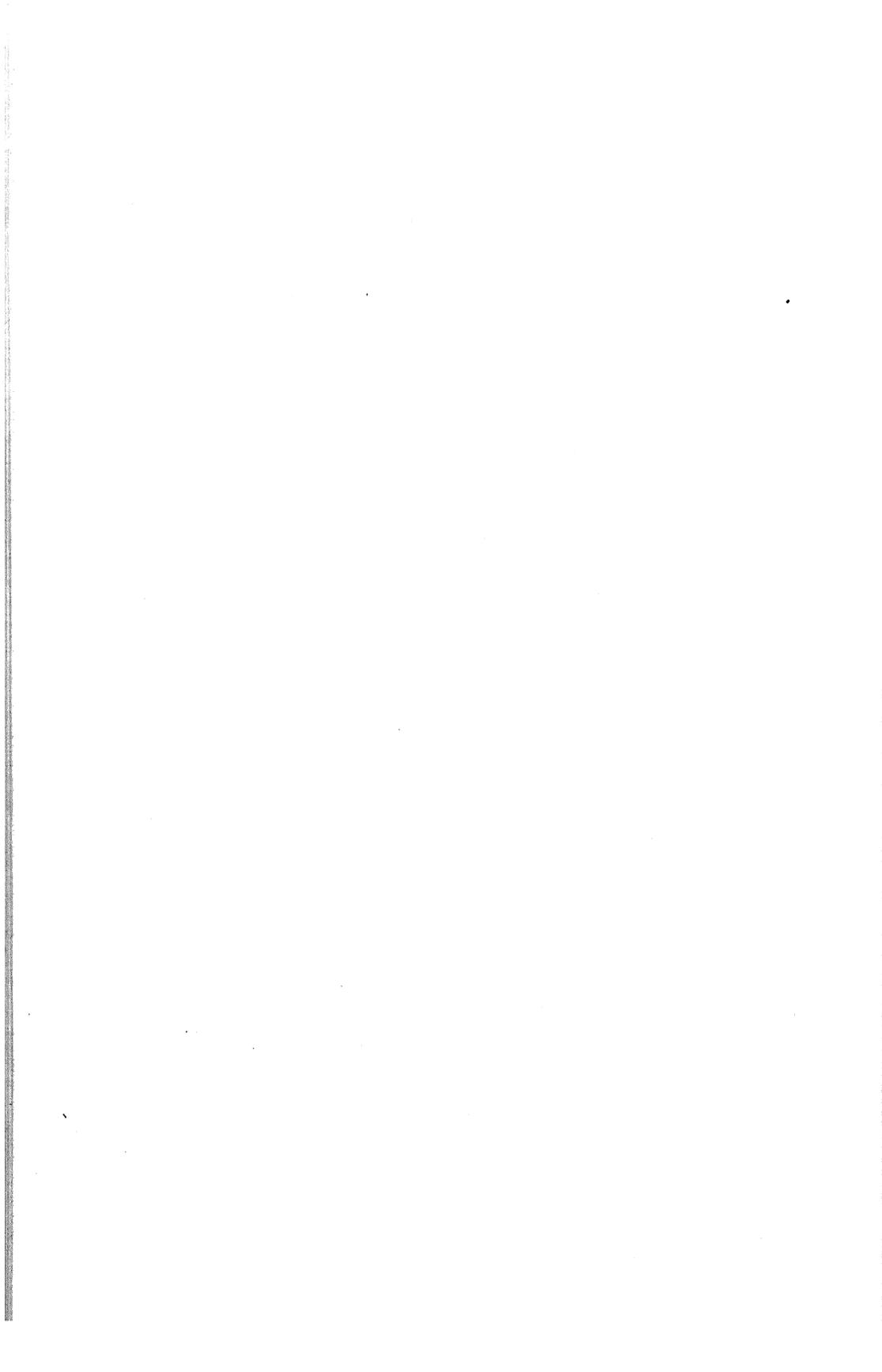
PAST FEINSTONE LECTURERS

- 1971 - General Harold K. Johnson
- 1975 - Rear Admiral Jeremiah A. Denton, Jr.
- 1976 - Herman Wouk
- 1977 - Sidney Hook
- 1978 - Vernon E. Jordan, Jr.
- 1979 - Barbara W. Tuchman
- 1980 - Alistair Cook
- 1980 - Isaac Bashevis Singer
- 1981 - Carl Sagan
- 1982 - George F. Will
- 1983 - Hanna H. Gray
- 1984 - Milton Friedman
- 1985 - Daniel Patrick Moynihan
- 1986 - Tom Wolfe
- 1987 - Elie Wiesel
- 1988 - A. Bartlett Giamatti
- 1989 - Dr. Richard Selzer



Dr. Sol Feinstein, (1888-1980), Founder and First Director of the David Library of the American Revolution, Washington Crossing, Pennsylvania, presenting to Major General J.B. Lampert, Superintendent, USMA, a gift of an original George Washington Letter (24 February 1965).





SOL FEINSTONE'S CREDO

DEDICATED TO

The Judeo-Christian commitment of self-sacrifice for peace on earth, and the brotherhood of free nations of free men;

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.

MY DEFINITION OF FREEDOM

In the beginning there was the void of sameness; the spark of life made everything different.

The stamp of sameness is the stamp of death.

Freedom to me means a social order based on individual freedom to live differently and to dream differently. I dream of a Brotherhood of Free Nations of Free Men.

Sol Feinstone

