NEW YORK
Herald Tribune

Friday, May 30, 1952

Memorial Day, 1952

The Memorial Day parade is neither the most massive nor the mightiest of the city's annual military observances, but there is none more meaningful for those who participate in it and those who watch it. For this is the day of tribute to men who have died defending their country and their way of life. It began long ago as a memorial to the Union dead in the Civil War, but today it also honors the heroes of other great conflicts. That is why this morning's march will include veterans of the Spanish-American War, the two world wars, and the still continuing struggle in Korea. That is why, too, among the marchers will be not only American veterans, but also those of other nations who have marched by our side in past years and past wars.

Perhaps no other national holiday reaches deeper into the hearts of Americans. The Riverside Drive parade is the principal display in New York, but every borough, almost every neighborhood, has its own modest observance. A wreath is placed at the base of a monument, a bugler sounds taps, a squad of riflemen fires a volley—the ceremony is repeated across the country, and its very simplicity underlines its sincerity.

And yet the Memorial Day parades, the wreath layings and the rifle volleys, all these are symbolic of rededication as well as commemoration. This year, with veterans of Hungnam marching with those of Chateau-Thierry and Bastogne, one may take pride all over again in the unity which links one generation of Americans to another in devotion to the principles that have been at stake in this nation's wars. They march in memory of dead comrades, but they march also in tribute to living ideals, which, all Americans profoundly believe, will survive long after the last volley has rung out.

Congress Must Be Firm

The Senate, after sturdily resisting attempts to cut the mutual security authorization bill below the danger point, weakened somewhat at the end, and voted a reduction of $200,000,000 in the measure approved by its Foreign Relations and Armed Services Committees. The latter had already lopped a billion from the Administration program, an amount which General Eisenhower believed risky but not fatal. It is unfortunate indeed that the Senators did not sustain their committees, but at any rate, they voted for the smallest additional cut presented to them and produced a bill which is far superior to the House measure.

Warnings have come to Congress from every side of the necessity for maintaining arms and mutual aid programs at peak effectiveness. General Eisenhower, from a balanced appreciation of needs and resources, has pointed out that America must exert consistent leadership. Mr. Bernard Baruch's strictures on the administration of controls were based on a deep sense of urgency, of the peril confronting the free world. Mr. Churchill had some gloomy words to say about the prospects in Korea. And the clearest omens of all have come from the Communists themselves—in Korea, in Germany, in the mobs that rioted in Paris, protesting General Ridgway's arrival. Red efforts to break down the growing structure of Western defense have passed from the stage of mere verbal propaganda to acts. The West must demonstrate that, just as it could not be deflected from its just purposes by lies and threats, it will not be intimidated by violence.

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In displaying and encouraging a decisive stand against Russian aggression in any form, the position of the United States Congress is of the utmost importance. The sweeping majority which voted for the mutual security program in the Senate is far more significant in this respect than the reductions in the scale of the undertaking, regrettable though they may have been. It now remains to convince the House, in conference, that its own slashes in the authorization bill were made hastily and inadvisedly. The best immediate answer to the multiplying menaces from beyond the Iron Curtain is an example of steadfast statesmanship by the American Congress.

The New Commonwealth

The fate of the proposed Puerto Rican constitution, which is now under consideration by Congress, seems to depend on a vexatious and possibly trivial question of interpretation. In the act that authorized the calling of a constitutional convention by Puerto Rico, it was stated that the constitution should provide a republican form of government and should include a bill of rights, and the act further authorized the President of the United States to transmit the constitution to Congress "if he finds that such constitution conforms with the applicable provisions of this act and of the Constitution of the United States."

The new constitution clearly provides for a republican form of government and indubitably contains a bill of rights. What has plagued the legislators has been uncertainty about the significance of the word "conforms," for if it implies a literal resemblance or correspondence of parts, the Puerto Rican constitution does not "conform" with the Constitution of the United States. Section 20 of the Puerto Rican bill of rights, for example, contains provisions on human rights that cannot be found in the American Bill of Rights. The House of Representatives, which voted on the proposed constitution on Wednesday, made its approval conditional on the deletion of this section. But the important consideration, surely, is that nothing in the Puerto Rican constitution contravenes any provisions of the American Constitution, and furthermore that every right specified in the American Constitution has been safeguarded in the Puerto Rican. This should be conformity enough.

The fairest criticism of the new constitution is that it attempts too much. It recognizes certain rights—such as the right to obtain work and the right to medical care—which, if strictly interpreted, could lead to a high degree of state control. However, the constitution states clearly that these rights are not capable of fulfillment under present conditions, and this seems to leave them in the form of distant objectives.