

COMMENCEMENT OF WHAT?

BY JAMES B. RESTON

MAKING A SPEECH in a stadium is a little like making love in Grand Central Station. It can be done, but it's a little awkward. However, Kenneth Galbraith of Harvard has a formula that may be useful to you in the next fifteen minutes. He has observed that speakers are usually so entranced with what they are saying that it seems a pity to compete with them by listening.

I like this place. I am a reformed sports writer from the University of Illinois. I used to come here in those prehistoric days of Bob Zuppke and Fielding Yost when the Illini could beat Michigan occasionally at football. That, of course, was before we hired the wrong Elliott.

Graduation is a special moment in life. It is the instant of maximum freedom—at least for those few holdouts in the Class of 1965 who are not yet married. Before graduation, there is the discipline of parents and teachers and the agony of youth: of not knowing where you're going or who's going with you. After graduation, there is the discipline of life itself: of love and marriage and children and work and bosses. But right now there is a period when you can choose, when the map lies before you and you face Robert Frost's intriguing question of the road taken and the road not taken, which, as he says, makes all the difference.

All anyone can do at such a time is express his deepest convictions about the spirit of the age. We are in the midst of a great transformation of the world. The old empires are gone and the motherlands,

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proud and frustrated, are trying to adjust politically and psychologically to a lesser role. Decisive power has now passed out of Europe to the United States and the Soviet Union, which significantly are not only the strongest but the least experienced of the nations in the conduct of foreign affairs. The new nations are discovering, as you will soon discover, that independence and freedom are not the end of life's problems but merely the beginning. There is now a new class war developing in the world, between the rich nations and the poor nations. Europe is prosperous but is confusing prosperity with power. What Napoleon prophesied has come to pass: the sleeping giant of China has awakened, and is indeed trying to shake the world.

At home, we are in the midst of a great social revolution. In your lifetime the population of the United States has increased by 57,000,000 people, which is more than the population of Britain, or France. We are seeing, too, a convulsion of the races, and the automation of our industry, and a migration of our people off the land and into the cities that makes the old migrations of the nineteenth century seem like a week-end outing.

The result of all this is that all the relationships of life are changing: continent to continent; nation to nation; village to city; worker to employer; teacher to student; parent to child—and I'm told, though I hope it's not true, even lover to lover.

IF ALL THIS IS TRUE, it is clear, I think, that you are going to have to do hard things with your minds in the next twenty years. Prophecy is a hazardous, a risky business, and pious admonition from porky middle-aged characters is probably not your favorite diet—but we should at least be able