

Address Delivered at the Dedication of Memorial Cemetery

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One hundred and three years ago, an American President left Washington and traveled to a little town in the rolling hills of Pennsylvania to dedicate a portion of a great battlefield as a memorial cemetery. There he delivered one of the shortest and most moving of his speeches, the famous Gettysburg Address.

I obviously am no match for Lincoln, either in physical stature, nor in eloquence. I will, however, try to imitate his brevity.

Tonight, on the eve of the dedication of the Hungarian Memorial Cemetery in Cleveland, we are assembled here to remember those Hungarians who have made the ultimate sacrifice for their nation, and to provide for a fitting burial place for those who want to be laid to eternal rest in the soil of a free country, next to their former comrades and their loved ones.

It is fitting and proper that we do this for two reasons.

First, this cemetery is to be a memorial for those hundreds of thousands of our countrymen who have died and whose burial place does not even have a simple marker. I am referring to those men who rest in the soil of Eastern Europe, mainly Russia, often

in the fields or trenches where they perished over forty years ago, not even a wooden cross to mark their graves. This memorial should also stand for those thousands who died of disease, starvation, or sheer physical exhaustion in the notorious prisoner of war camps of the Soviet Union, their crime being no greater than that they did their duty in a war that was not of their making. We remember the countless men, and sometimes women, who ended their lives under the most subhuman conditions in the concentration camps of the Gulag Archipeligo, or the dreaded prisons of Communist Hungary, simply because their ideas were considered to be dangerous by a totalitarian state, and they were marked for extermination.

This memorial should stand for those truly innocent civilian victims of war, women, children, old people who died in the ruins and cellars of countless cities as the result of bombings, shellings, or sieges. These casualties were never involved in any political movement, but died because they were born at the wrong time, in the wrong place and became caught in the crossfire of historical events.

It is particularly fitting that we remember the Hungarian victims of World War II with a memorial simply because forty-one years after the end of that war it is still impossible to erect a monument to them in present day Hungary, yet at the same time there are markers in every city, town, and village commemorating the Russian soldiers who died in the so called "Liberation" of the country.

Neither should we forget those who had to flee their homeland and ended their lives in the squalor of barracks of Displaced Persons camps throughout Europe, nor can we ever forget the heroic young people who are still buried in unmarked graves following their execution for their participation in the glorious Hungarian Revolution of 1956.

Yes, it is fitting and proper to remember and honor all those who have died, men, women, and children, whose memory deserves perpetuation.

The second reason why a Hungarian cemetery is needed in Cleveland, is basically self-evident. The ranks of those who were forced to leave their homeland in the 1940s and 1950s is decreasing each day and the number of grave sites in this city is becoming ever larger. Bound by a common heritage, by a glorious yet tragic history, it is understandable why they would seek to be laid to eternal rest among those with whom they share a love and a yearning for the distant homeland. Here they can rest in free and consecrated soil, to await the day when we all, symbolically at least, "go home."

And finally, paraphrasing Lincoln's immortal words, it is important for us, the living, to dedicate ourselves, so that those dead whose memory we honor tonight, shall not have died in vain, and that the Hungarian nation shall yet have a new birth of freedom.

May we all live to see that day!