

Address at Annual Dinner of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, April 21, 1956
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This week marks the anniversary of one of the most important events in Freedom's progress. One hundred eighty-one years ago on April 19th, our forefathers started a revolution that still goes on. The shots at Concord, as Emerson wrote, were heard "round the world."

The echoes of Concord still stir men's minds.

The Bandung meeting, last year, of Asian and African leaders bears witness to Emerson's vision. There, almost two centuries after Concord, and half way around the earth, President Sukarno of Indonesia opened the conference with an eloquent tribute to Paul Revere and to the spirit of the American Revolution.

Now why do the musket shots of a few embattled farmers at the Concord bridge still ring out in far-off lands?

The reason is clear.

Concord was far more than a local uprising to redress immediate grievance. The enduring meaning of Concord lies in the ideas that inspired the historic stand there. Concord is the symbol of certain basic convictions about the relationship of man to the state.

These convictions were founded in a firm belief in the spiritual worth of the individual. He must be free to think, to speak, and to worship according to his conscience. He must enjoy equality before the law. He must have a fair chance to develop and use his talents. The purpose of government is to serve its citizens in freedom.

Our forefathers did not claim to have discovered novel principles. They looked on their findings as universal values, the common property of all mankind. These deep convictions have always guided us as a nation. They have taken deep root elsewhere in the Western world. In the 19th century they inspired a great surge of freedom throughout Western Europe and in our own hemisphere.

These ideas of freedom are still the truly revolutionary political principles abroad in the world. They appeal to the timeless aspirations of mankind. In some regions they flourish; in some they are officially outlawed. But everywhere, to some degree, they stir and inspire humanity.

The affairs of men do not stand still. The ideas of freedom will grow in vigor and influence—or they will gradually wither and die. If the area of freedom shrinks, the results for us will be tragic. Only if freedom continues to flourish will man realize the prosperity, the happiness, the enduring peace that he seeks.