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### Cathedral Club in Brooklyn

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001

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#### Recommended Citation

Mansfield, Mike 1903-2001, "Cathedral Club in Brooklyn" (1958). *Mike Mansfield Speeches, Statements and Interviews*. 269.

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Middle East

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There was a time when a speaker had only to mention the name

"Brooklyn" and his audience would smile. If he wanted them to laugh, he had only to add to the word "Brooklyn" the word "Dodgers".

I must confess that reactions to these words have always perplexed me. I am told that this borough has more churches per acre than any other area of the world. That would suggest to me that the mention of Brooklyn should inspire a soberness of mind rather than humor. As for the "Dodgers" they have not been a laughing matter to the rest of the League for many years. With what might have been the case before, I must plead a measure of ignorance. I left this general area, where I was born, too young to appreciate the old Dodgers. I was only three and so far as I am aware never crossed the river from Manhattan in these early years. I have since lived in Montana, and in Montana, baseball is not only played without short fences, it is played without any fences at all. In any event, I have noticed in recent years that there has been a marked change in attitudes elsewhere towards the word "Dodgers". Instead of laughter it now does, in truth, produce serious concern. There are furrowed brows and consternation over

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what Brooklyn will do next year. I have noticed that such is the case, particularly in Milwaukee.

It may seem to be a long way from this pleasant dinner and talk about baseball to the Middle East, this very serious matter which I am about to discuss with you. Yet, there is an analogy. Not too many years ago, this term Middle East would also have evoked laughter. At most, it would have been passed off as of concern only to diplomats, the British and French, the oil companies, the sultans and Abbott and Costello.

That is no longer the case. The outbreak of armed conflict in Suez a few months ago has brought home with sudden impact the tragic seriousness of this region. If that were not enough, the President's message on the Middle East has emphasized the importance of this region to every man, woman and child in the United States.

That message was many things which I shall try to explain in due course. Above all else, however, it was an alert, a warning. The President has asked, in effect, that the Congress join him in serving

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notice on the communists that in certain circumstances this country will use armed forces to prevent Soviet domination of the Middle East. He has asked further that Congress give his Administration a free hand to spend hundreds of millions of dollars in that region, presumably for the same purpose.

I have been a Member of Congress for too long to venture to predict what Congress will eventually do in this matter. However, I will say this. Many members have grave doubts about the manner in which the Administration has handled this matter. There is strong feeling that this proposal comes as a kind of delayed reaction to a situation which has been building up to a crisis for years. A firm and clearcut American position on both the Israeli-Arab question and the Suez question months ago would certainly have involved risks. It would not, however, have involved risks of the magnitude which now confronts us in the President's proposal.

In any event, Congress is giving the President's proposal the most serious and careful consideration. This is not a party matter.

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Republicans and Democrats alike are deeply concerned as to where we are headed in the Middle East. I am confident that when Congress acts on the Middle East, it will act out of regard, not for party or sectional interest, but out of regard for the total national interest.

Let no one be mistaken about the importance of this area to us, both in a direct and indirect sense. It is more than a question of petroleum although that is a vital matter, particularly to nations in Western Europe. It is more than a question of keeping Russia out of the area.

What is at stake in the Middle East is one of the most decisive geographical areas of the world. This region is the birthplace of Christianity, Judaism and Mohammedanism. It is the land link between Europe, Asia and Africa. Conquerors have crossed its desert wastes many times and in many directions. It is imperative for the safety of this country that the conquerors do not begin to march again the Middle East. Our stake in the situation is larger than petroleum. It lies in prevention of the domination by a single totalitarian tyranny

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of an area from which large parts of three continents can be dominated.

It lies in preventing a totalitarian tyranny from mobilizing the resources, human and other, of the region for use eventually against ourselves and other free nations. It lies in keeping open channels of trade and a flow of petroleum on which many free nations depend. It lies in keeping the potential despoilers away from the birthplace of Christ and the landmarks of the Old Testament.

While it is imperative to halt the march of would be conquerors in the Middle East, circumstances are in many ways ripe for the beginning. British and French power, which for a long time imposed a stability of a kind over the area, has now been withdrawn virtually in their entirety. The region is in the grip of an indescribable poverty. With little hope for material advance, its people can be and have been driven by unscrupulous demagogues into a blind fury of hatred. We and other Western nations have been the object of that hatred on many occasions. The people of Israel are constantly surrounded by it. Even among the Arab countries themselves there are cross-currents of suspicion and political rivalry, only dimly understood by those outside the region,

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which may at any time explode into violence.

It is in the interests of would-be conquerors to keep the pot boiling in the Middle East, to stir the troubled waters. That is precisely the role which the Soviet Union has played in the region. It has incited hatred of the West. It has encouraged antagonism between Arab and Israeli.

The danger does not appear to be one of a Soviet march on the area at the present time. According to the most reliable information obtainable Russia has not moved forces of its own into position for overt aggression. It has long practiced the art of using others for its fighting. Its methods have been those of diplomacy, propaganda, economic inducements and arms traffic.

If the interests of the potential conquerors lie in promoting chaos in Middle East, ours lie in encouraging peace and the development of stable, responsible governments in the region. In that direction lies the best hope of preventing the area from becoming a stepping-stone to world conquest. In that direction lies the best hope of a continuous flow of petroleum moving to Western Europe, petroleum which that region

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must have if it is not to become a permanent dependency of the United States.

There will be no peace or stability in the Middle East, however, until there is a lasting settlement between the Arab States and Israel. There will be no peace or stability until the nations of the world are assured the right of passage through the Suez Canal, and that that right shall not be subject to the political whim of any nation.

We must not lose sight of the danger of Soviet penetration of the Middle East. At the same time, we must not become so obsessed with this danger that these other key problems of the region - The Arab-Israeli dispute and the universal right of passage through the Suez Canal are ignored. These problems will remain regardless of what the Russians do or do not do.

The President's proposal does not face them. Until they are faced, however, they will remain ever-present threats to peace and stability in the Middle East and, therefore, to the interests of this nation.