

“Unto All People”

ROBERT L. SIMPSON

Thank you, President Oaks. My beloved young people, I just wish you could see what I am seeing and feel what I am feeling. I am grateful to be here, and I pray to my Heavenly Father that my expressions might be significant, that I might bear my testimony with each and every line and also let you know what a wonderful opportunity it was for us to be with this group in eastern Europe.

President Oaks, I did not really realize until this morning how significant our success was. I notice that we have a hotline here—this red telephone is our hotline with the officials over there, and we expect it to ring any minute. (I am joking, of course.)

May I begin by referring to the very first page of the Doctrine and Covenants.

For verily the voice of the Lord is unto all men, and there is none to escape; and there is no eye that shall not see, neither ear that shall not hear, neither heart that shall not be penetrated.

. . . Unto all people, by the mouths of my disciples [that is, you and me], whom I have chosen. . . . [I believe in foreordination; I hope you do too.]

. . . And none shall stay them, for I the Lord have commanded them. [D&C 1:2, 4, 5]

Is it not thrilling to see what has happened in Red China? Is it not thrilling to know that we have been making friends in eastern Europe and all over the world in places where we have not been before?

I am grateful to Brigham Young University, and I am grateful that the Lord has given us the commandment to go unto all the world, and I am grateful for the faith that Nephi had and that you and I share, that the Lord gives no commandment to his children except he prepare a way for us to accomplish that which he has given us to do (see 1 Nephi 3:7). Also in the Doctrine and Covenants, in the ninetieth section, eleventh verse, we read that “Every man shall hear the fullness of the gospel in his own tongue, and in his own language.” Thus saith the Lord. How thrilling it was to hear our young people speak in Romanian, to greet the people in Bulgarian, Russian, Polish, and all the other languages, just as they did in China!

Robert L. Simpson was a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints when t his devotional address was given at Brigham Young University on 25 September 1979.

Just a year ago President Kimball had this to say: “We’ve hardly scratched the surface. We need far more missionaries, and we need more countries that will think of us as being their friends. And this will give us an opportunity to come into their nations and give to their people the finest thing in the world—the gospel of Jesus Christ—which can be their salvation and their great happiness.” (Spencer W. Kimball, “Fundamental Principles to Ponder and Live,” *Ensign*, November 1978, pp. 45-46.) I think that many friends have been made this year, President Kimball. Yes, young people, significant as this past year has been, we have hardly scratched the surface. It is just the beginning. The door is opening; and we are not standing still, I promise you that.

There are thousands here this morning who have filled missions during the last five years. We congratulate you, and we say to you that you have planted fertile seeds that are beginning to bear fruit. May I review, for just a moment, these past five years since President Kimball has been the prophet and the president of the Church? Just a little over five and a half years ago, when President Kimball was sustained, there were a hundred and eight missions. Today there are one hundred and seventy-five missions—that is a sixty percent increase. The missionary force has grown from 17,258 missionaries to 28,549—a seventy percent increase in total missionaries. About five and a half years ago, missionaries were baptizing on the average about ten people during their two-year missions. Now those missionaries are baptizing about fourteen people each during their two-year missions—a forty percent increase in their effectiveness because of better discussions and better preparation in our Missionary Training Center and by our stake presidents and bishops.

Finally, the bottom line: in 1973 there were 77,820 baptisms; and this year, if we stay on target—and I know we will—there will be approximately 200,000 convert baptisms. This

is not an increase of forty percent or seventy percent or sixty percent, as we review these other figures, but an increase of one hundred fifty-six percent. The dividends are unbelievable in the service of the Lord; and when we do our part and put forth our vital effort, the Lord magnifies us, and he brings forth a one-hundred-fifty-six-percent increase when all that we have done is improve our effort by forty, fifty, or sixty percent. Congratulations to all of you who have been a part of this great success, and special congratulations to you wonderful young people who have gone overseas this year, who have won friends for the Lord, and who have radiated the spirit of this Church and this great land of America.

Now, my wonderful young people, earlier this year—just about six months ago—in a meeting of the Regional Representatives, President Kimball asked all of the Church to pray for the missionaries. He asked us to pray for the investigators. He invited us to pray for the nations that doors might be opened. Let me just give you a part of that comment from President Kimball.

We should continue to pray individually and in our homes and in our councils and in our meetings and petition the Lord to assist us to find a way to reach the hearts and minds of leaders of nations—China, Russia, eastern European countries, yes, all countries that are now closed or have restrictions on the teachings of the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ—so that the word might go forward in all the world as has been commanded. Our Father does and will hear our prayers, of this I am certain; but we must “ask in faith, nothing wavering” (James 1:6). Then we must be prepared to enter once the gates are opened. [Speech to Regional Representatives, September 29, 1978]

We would be hard pressed to find a thousand people in the Church who can speak Mandarin Chinese, and we would be hard pressed to find a few dozen who can speak Russian; but we

must be prepared to enter once the doors are opened.

“It appears,” the prophet says, “that the time is not too distant when the gospel might be preached to those good people in China.” This is what he said six months ago. “There are nine hundred million of them. Are we ready for such an undertaking?” (Speech to Regional Representatives, April 1979.) I hope we are, and I hope we can be. Again, I am grateful for the missionary work that has been done by those in these great overseas groups that we honor this morning.

Now let us take a brief glimpse into eastern Europe, or the Communist bloc of nations, with another band of the Lord’s disciples known as the Brigham Young University Folk Dancers. Oh, how grateful Sister Simpson and I will ever be for the privilege of being with this group! I was just telling this group the other night that every once in a while something significant happens in our life, and we put under 1965 a couple of headline notes and under 1970 another couple of headline notes. Do you know what our headline note is going to be for 1979? We met Mary Bee Jensen—wow! Have you ever met Mary Bee Jensen? Your life would never be the same. She was tremendous, and these young dancers responded in kind to her leadership. May I quote for you a few of the comments they received? From Doyna Buchachadoo (you have to be careful about these names): “The finest group that Friendship Ambassadors has ever sent out.”

Another comment from Bushung Spiruscue: “The American Folk Dancers are the same caliber as our finest Rumanian ensemble, known as Rumanian Rhapsody. On your next trip, we would like to book you in the largest theatres of Romania for four weeks.”

Another comment from the American Embassy in Bucharest: “We will always welcome you in Bucharest, for you are the American image that we want the people of Rumania to see.”

From Alexandru Dema: “We are very proud to have you here in Rumania and proud to be your friends. America must be very proud of you also.”

Come with me to the Black Sea in Bulgaria. As you heard just a few moments ago, these young people had standing ovations everywhere, and they won the first prize in the Mime Neptune Festival and, of course, on the final night the gold medal for first place for the entire festival. But life is not all roses every day as you go into these countries. Let me tell you about tragedy striking on the shores of the Black Sea.

Brother Clayne Jensen, the husband of Mary Bee Jensen, was taking photographs of sixty or seventy young people from every nation of the western and eastern Europe—arms around one another, having enjoyed the comradery of the festival, they were posing on the shores of the Black Sea with their swimming suits on. Of course everyone wanted a photo record of this great moment—so down came one camera and came another camera, and soon Brother Jensen was standing with one camera in his hand and another twenty-five cameras at his feet. Just as he was ready to snap the shutter, here came a big wave. Sand, sand, salt water, twenty-five cameras, all were churned up together—the wave got every one of them except for the fifteen-dollar camera he had in his hand.

Let me take you to Russia. Listen to this from the director of all cultural and music programming in Soviet television: “It is an honor to have such a professional group perform for national television. You may be an amateur group, but your show is highly professional and would be accepted on any stage, no matter where. We are sorry you are not booked better in the Soviet Union.” (They did not realize what a fine group was coming.) Then she concluded with this comment that I think is very significant: “I wish that my sons could be Mormons and could be more like your boys.”

How tremendous! We had seventeen young men on this tour; sixteen of those seventeen were returned missionaries, and they conducted themselves accordingly. The seventeenth young man, Ron Egans, will be watching the mailbox very carefully during the next couple of weeks because he is expecting an important letter.

From Michael Kosinsky, Minister of Culture in Warsaw: "Superb, excellent; I have no words to describe the excellence and the joy I see in your people." And, of course, it has already been explained how the Polish government through Mr. Kosinsky has extended a very generous invitation for us to come back. They wanted us to stay right after the tour for the first two weeks of September, to continue our tour and come home a little late (but I am glad that fell through because I would have missed the Texas A and M football game on television). Instead we are going back in 1981 on a tour with all expenses paid, because they love us.

Young people, let me tell you about our first guide. She approached us a little warily, not knowing exactly what we were going to be like; but during that first evening she warmed up to us. As our bus pulled by the hotel, we had a group prayer with the bus door closed before we dispersed to our rooms. Brother Ray Beckham, one of your great professors here, offered a prayer for the group; and this guide said, "That's the most beautiful prayer I've ever heard in my life." She had never heard a Mormon prayer before. I am sure that this young lady will never be the same. Dave Douger was kind enough to give her his four-in-one because she wanted to read the Mormon scriptures, so now she has them for her very own. Now Dave will have to earn the money to buy a new set, but he is glad to do that.

Another guide, a professed atheist, on about the third day really warmed up to the group. Sitting up near the front of the bus, she became a little intimate in her conversation; and she confided in us that not quite a year

ago her husband had committed suicide. She told us how depressed she had become, how immersed in total despair. She even contemplated taking her own life, but she did not, perhaps for the sake of her little child.

Then Sister Simpson, who was sitting by her, said, "Well, what do you think of death?"

Her face grew somber and she said, "Darkness. Blackness. It's nothing; it's the end. I'm afraid of it."

Sitting across the aisle was Dennis Seeley, returned from the Taiwan mission; and he said, "Did you know that your husband still lives?"

For the next twenty minutes, Dennis Seeley explained to her the plan of salvation. He would have stopped at any moment had she expressed resentment or any disinterest; but instead we saw a young lady with her mouth open, with tears on her cheeks; and we heard this young lady say, "I have never heard anything like this before. You don't know what you've done for me." She will never be the same again, and it happened in the front of a bus as we rode through this Communist bloc of nations.

Let me tell you about one more guide; she was also an atheist. We were in a fast and testimony meeting, and we wondered why she was really there; but I suppose it was her job to keep track of us. A wonderful brother from that particular nation, who had been invited to be with us, wanted to stand and bear his testimony; but he spoke an unusual language, so he invited the guide to interpret for him. We all wondered about this arrangement, but she consented to do so. Everything went fine as she began translating, but after about two minutes her words came with more difficulty. She was obviously a little overwrought and rather upset, and soon she stopped altogether. Then a peace and composure seemed to come over her, and she started translating again and telling about the Savior and the Prophet Joseph Smith. She bore a testimony about the restoration that came from the member's mind but

from her lips. Soon tears began to course down her cheeks. This young lady will never be the same again, for she has borne testimony, and she knew that what she was saying was the truth. The Spirit so manifested to her. This was in a crowded little hotel room, with hardly room for one more person to squeeze in.

My time is nearly up, but I must tell you about a young man whom we met—we were given his name before going over there but we did not know if we were going to be able to make contact with him. But on our first night in his area he made contact with us, and we made arrangements the following evening to go to his home. He met us on a corner and led us there. His wife could speak a little English; and Brother Jarvis, our tour director, could speak Russian and this man knew some Russian. We got along quite well.

On the basis of a little Church history book written in about 1965, this man had drawn close to the Church. He had found it in one of the English sections of the library there. And oh, how he loved the Church! He had gathered around him ten people who felt the same way, and they were meeting every week. None had been baptized; it was against the laws of the land to baptize in that country. But oh, how he wanted to be baptized! His information from this little history book was meager and out-dated; he once asked, "Would you please take my love back to President McKay?" The material was so obsolete that he thought President McKay was still the President of the Church.

We would return to his area after five weeks of touring, so we left him with a copy of the Book of Mormon and a copy of *A Marvelous Work and a Wonder*, and his wife was going to translate them. When we came back, that little group of so-called Mormons was not ten strong but had grown to twenty-five in number. And a young man who had been helping us on our bus became so interested by our young people that he insisted on leaving this young man his name so that he could affiliate with this group

of so-called Mormons and join in praying for the day when they might be baptized into this Church. Young people, do not ever take your Church membership for granted. It is vital; it is important.

I could go on, but I must stop for lack of time. But just in a word, at Red Square we met a wonderful man who also loves the Church but has never been baptized. He wanted to meet us on Red Square just before we left on the last day. And there, out of his little briefcase he took a copy of the three-in-one, and turning to the Doctrine and Covenants read at the top of his voice on Red Square what the Lord said to his children about being patient and waiting on the Lord's kindness, and eventually all would come. There were guards around, and we were a little nervous. But then he made one last request: would we please sing "Come, Come, Ye Saints" for him? So we sang "Come, Come, Ye Saints" at the tops of our voices, and we felt so good about that we also sang "God Be with You Till We Meet Again." Then this man put his scriptures back into his bag and said good-bye. Hopefully there will be a time when he will be able to receive the fullness of the gospel.

My wonderful young people, an all-knowing and wise Heavenly Father has created man in his own image. He has also planted with him an instinct to worship and to be God-fearing—a strong desire to revere one who has achieved perfection. Today, as in all generations past, there are those of Heavenly Father's children who have momentarily lost contact with their Supreme Being, because of conspiring, selfish, and egotistical men and their nefarious schemes which are designed to negate the basic eternal principle of free agency. Such arrangements and deceptions are contrary to the fundamental nature of man and shall one day collapse, for they lack a foundation that is firm and true and eternal. There are millions who have been temporarily deceived into believing that hero worship can take the place

of faith and belief in the living God of the universe.

I bear testimony that Satan's plan is a delusion. It never has worked, and it never will work; and Communism with its hero worship and atheism will eventually fade in the bright light of priesthood authority and eternal truth. Such is our challenge, such is our obligation; such is the obligation of four million Latter-day Saints. We are a part of that process. Our

mission is clear; the commandment has been given; our prophet has shown us the way. May God bless us to follow up on these great inroads that have been made on these trips to China and eastern Europe and elsewhere by these and all the other wonderful young people who have let their influence be felt in so many directions, I pray humbly in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.