

Rep. Barry Goldwater
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Text of a Speech by Senator Barry Goldwater (R-Ariz)
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In our struggle against Communist domination what do we Americans really champion?

What do we really believe?

What do we really stand for?

Is the rest of the world getting a true picture of our national character?

I don't think there is a single person here today who doubts that there is a serious misunderstanding throughout the world regarding the fundamental aims -- the fundamental philosophy -- of the American people.

Is it enough to tell the world that we can build a better lawn mower? Now a good, cheap lawn mower has its place. We can all agree on that.

It is enough to tell the world we can build a more efficient tractor? All of us know that more efficient tractors are important. We can all agree on that.

But is a cheaper lawn mower, or a more efficient tractor the symbol that expresses the essence of America?

Distinguished foreign observers, like Dr. Charles Malik of Lebanon, have said that all too often our American publicity men have represented this nation in the wrong light. They have too-often pictured us as a nation primarily interested in only material gain.

On the contrary the story of America and her accomplishments is

the story of men with deep spiritual motivations -- men who sought freedom to pursue their own ideals and their own aims as the children of God. Some historians, blinded by materialistic considerations, have written about my own State of Arizona and the whole West as though this vast area was opened only as a result of men driven by a desire for gain. Fascinated by stories of the gold rush, land hunger, and buffalo hunting, they ignore the real story -- the story of pioneers with the spiritual fibre to overcome impossible material obstacles to carve a civilization out of the wilderness. I think of the Mormons whose spiritual strength brought a whole desert into bloom.

The same sort of materialist vision which distorts the true meaning of the opening of the West, is presenting a picture of America to the world which interprets the ideals of America in purely economic terms.

We have seen a world-wide publicity campaign which offers a mail-order catalogue as the quintessence of the American Dream -- A sort of materialist substitute for the Bible.

Somehow the idea has gotten abroad that the way to share the American ideal is to become bigger, fatter and more luxurious. People are beginning to believe that to be American is simply to have more food and more complicated gadgets.

It is no wonder that, presented with these claims, many people in the Moslem world or the Buddhist lands or even Europe ask themselves, "What, after all, is the difference between the communists and the Americans? They both tell us that life is for material prosperity and for military superiority; and they use almost identical phrases."

I suggest we Americans have been our own worst apologists.

Are we really nothing better than materialists? Do we genuinely believe that the test of a nation's virtue and greatness is its Gross National Product or its modern military gadgets? Are wall-to-wall carpets and space capsules the be-all and end-all of American civilization? Do we, in short, truly believe in anything beyond the material aims of the communists?

If not, why do we oppose the communists? If material progress is our only aim, why not join them?

It is true that we still are richer and stronger than the Soviets -- though their standard of living has increased somewhat, and their military power has increased greatly. Well suppose then, ten years from now, the communists achieve a standard of living higher than ours, and an army and an air force and a navy better than ours. (I do not expect them to; but suppose this for the sake of argument.)

Should we, in such circumstances, admit their superiority and yield to them? If prosperity and material power are the prime summits of human striving, it follows that we might just as well throw in our lot with the communists. In fact, there are so-called "liberals" in America today who have come to this conclusion. They say they would rather be Red than dead.

But I cannot agree that material prosperity and armed might are the indices of personal and national greatness. I do not believe that any mere "standard of living", in itself, is worth dying for. I deny that goodness and truth are determined by the magnitude and number of hydrogen

bombs. I suggest that we Americans, and our Christian and Western civilization, stand for truths nobler and more enduring than these material satisfactions.

I suggest that if you must choose, it is better to be poor and free than to be snug and a slave.

I suggest that if you must choose, it is better to live in peril, but with justice, than to live on a summit of material power, but unjustly.

I suggest that if you must choose, it is better to stand up as a suffering man than to lie down as a satisfied animal.

Now to compete in bragging with the Communists is lost endeavor; at that game the most practiced liar always wins. And to adopt Communist standards for such a bragging-match is folly. To cite tables of figures about our low prices and our high wages converts no Communists, and impresses few neutrals, and does not convince even ourselves: indeed, this may rouse envy throughout the world, without creating friendship. To demonstrate that our Globemasters can fly in enough Gurkhas and guns to discourage the Katanga gendarmes and smash the Katanga hospitals is no proof, either to Africans or ourselves, that we have any cause worth fighting for. And I believe it is time for us to tell our allies, and our adversaries, and ourselves, just what we Americans really are ready to sacrifice for--and, if need be, to die for.

This nation does not live for the sake of butter, nor for the sake of guns. The United States of America, on the contrary, has for its moral object the high dignity of man; and for its political aim, ordered freedom--liberty under God and under the law--with justice for all. I

think it is impossible to maintain freedom and order and justice without religious and moral sanctions. And surely it is not possible for man to enjoy true dignity without a model that is more than human and a hope that is more than earthly. Man is made for eternity; he does not perish like the flies of a summer; therefore he enjoys dignity. Every human being is a person, made in the image of God; therefore every man enjoys certain natural rights.

Are we ashamed nowadays to confess this?

Ought we to conceal our moral and cultural heritage, Jewish and Christian and classical, as something old-fangled and impractical and irrational? To judge by the propaganda of certain gentlemen in our information-services, one would so assume. Muttering vaguely about the wall of separation between church and state--which idea they carry far beyond any possible constitutional interpretation--these publicists discard as so much rubbish the moral and theoretical foundation of the American cause. And having nothing else left, such propaganda experts offer to the world a mess of pottage compounded of production statistics and firepower. And so do the Soviet propagandists.

In what way do we differ fundamentally from the Communists? Cardinal Manning said once that all differences of opinion are theological at bottom. True when he said it, this statement has grown even truer in our century. The great gulf fixed between the American Republic and the Soviet Union is a theological Grand Canyon. The Communist says that man is a thing, who exists to have his belly filled; and who may be manipulated and altered and, if need be, liquidated for

the sake of efficiency. Such a creature does not need freedom: he wants only creature-comforts. "Freedom?" Lenin mocked. "Freedom? What for? What for?"

But to the American who has faith in his national traditions and the wisdom of our ancestors, who believes that our civilization is not morally and intellectually bankrupt, man is a being quite different. Man was made to know God, and enjoy Him forever. Man is not a thing, but an immortal essence. And freedom, ordered liberty, is man's birthright; for without true freedom, man could not choose between good and evil; he could not become fully human; he would remain, at best, childish. There exists a natural order for man, with natural rights. Worldly powers and dominations are not morally entitled to treat man as a pawn in a social chess-game: the masters of the state have no right to deal with human beings as if they were animals--no right to manipulate and alter and liquidate human persons.

Here, I suggest, is the stone wall of demarcation between the Communists and Americans; we have hearts and consciences. If, by new inventions or slave labor or territorial conquests, the Soviets should grow richer and stronger than ourselves, and if we then should be asked, "Why not unite with them? Theirs are the kingdoms of the earth".

If we are men, still we will stand firm. If it comes to the test, we ought to die rather than to submit to a collectivistic ant-hill, no matter how glistening, or filled with up-to-date comforts.

For the object of the Communists is to reduce human nature to the material elements alone. And the object of thinking Americans

and their allies is to preserve and strengthen the spiritual elements of human nature. The material conception of man and the spiritual conception of man cannot be reconciled. For this reason I have said that only through victory will we secure ourselves. More than a century ago, Abraham Lincoln declared that this nation cannot endure half free and half slave. Today that solemn fact is true of the world.

Between Communists and men who believe in a transcendent order there can be no enduring compromise; for Communists will not tolerate religious belief, unless they find it so weakened and tamed that it seems harmless; and men who discern natural rights will never be able to live under Communism. This eternal hostility was expressed far better than I can put it by a brilliant and God-fearing American for whom I have great personal admiration, a man who lies buried here in the chapel at Notre Dame: Orestes Brownson. Only a few months after the Communist Manifesto was published, Brownson--who had been a radical in his youth--denounced as heresy the philosophy of Marx and the sociologist ideology in general.

Brownson saw at the outset that Marxism was a political substitute for religion, caricaturing Christian doctrine. And Brownson knew that the terrible power of this ideology could be resisted only by true religious understanding--and by willingness to sacrifice for the enduring things. With a gift almost prophetic, Orestes Brownson declared that the struggle of the future would be between Socialism and Christianity. In 1962, the fate of humankind is in the balance, and this contest seems to draw toward judgment.

The competition between the Communists and what we call the "Free World" is clearly not being decided by living-standards or even by the big battalions. The issue will be determined by power of conviction: the conviction of men who fear and love God, or the conviction of materialists who detest anything higher than themselves. And if our faith and our culture are to prevail, we must take our stand forthrightly on certain moral truths and ancient ways.

First, we must stand for the real brotherhood of man, which is possible only under the fatherhood of God.

Second, we must stand for personal freedom, which in essence is the right and duty of moral choice.

Third, we must stand for the Judaeo Christian and classical principle of Justice: to each man the things that are his own by nature.

Fourth, we must stand for charity: the toleration, the mercy, and the giving which are the products of love.

Fifth, we must stand for the wisdom of our ancestors, sound authority and experience, what Edmund Burke called "the bank and capital of the ages."

Sixth, we must stand for variety; for diversity, which includes the right of men and nations to differ, and, as Chesterton put it, of "every potty little man to be his own potty little self."

And finally, we must stand for honor and the dignity of man.

This brief catalog of mine does not exhaust the roster of our duties and our first principles; but it may suggest that there are irreconcilable differences between the Communists and ourselves. It is

for this reason that we can speak only of victory, never of any fundamental compromise.

As you may have expected, I am commending to you a conservative position in this crisis of our fate--what I believe to be a healthy and imaginative conservatism. I am commending to you the courageous and responsible conservative principles for which Orestes Brownson spoke. I am asking you to think of liberty as Brownson described it, in his long essay on the origin and constitution of government:

"By freedom, regarded as the end of government," Brownson wrote, "we understand the ability of every man to discharge, without other let or hindrance than his own moral delinquency, his special functions as a human being. All men have the equal right to be men, and each man has the equal right to be the man his Maker designed him to be."

This is not the conservatism of suspicion, or of selfishness, or of smugness. Rather, it is the noble conservatism of Edmund Burke and of George Washington. It is founded upon belief in a God who has given us our nature, our rights, and our duties; upon belief in a freedom which is moral in origin, and which is intended for our full development as human persons, each man and woman after his bent. And this is a world apart from the dreary slave-equality of Marx and of Lenin.

The real line of division in the modern world is not between liberals on the one hand and totalitarians on the other. Instead, it is between all those on the one hand who believe in a transcendent order of things and an enduring human nature; and on the other hand all those who

would treat man as a mere creature of appetite, self-created or chance-created, to be dealt with as advanced social planners wish. It is between people who know themselves to be part of the great continuity and essence, and, on the other hand, people who live in the nightmare realm of an existence with no meaning but material appetites and power over bodies and minds.

What do we stand for? If we are true to our civilized heritage and to ourselves, we stand for order and freedom and justice, founded upon religious understanding. Our prosperous economy, our technological achievements, our leisure and pleasures, our military defenses--all these are by-products, at bottom, of religious belief and of knowing the dignity of man. If we fail to stand by these deep enduring principles, then the Communists will bury us--and we will deserve to be buried.

No, the first principles of our moral and social order cannot be reconciled or blended with those of Communism. Communists deny the divine origin of man; for the Communist, there is no more logical reason why a man should be dignified than there is why a pig should be dignified.

If we are strong in our faith and correspondingly strong in our preparations, the Communists will not bury us. For the Communist respects just one thing: material power. And power of spirit is a greater force than the power of weapons. And the Communists will not press for a final showdown with men whose spiritual power renders them invulnerable. For Communists, this life on earth is everything: death in a great war would mean the end of existence for them, for all time. In that sense, the Communists are at a disadvantage by the side of the religious man,

who believes that death is no evil in itself: everything depends on how you die, for none of us live forever.

And if we are strong and resolute, demanding freedom from the Communists rather than yielding ground timidly before their bullying, we can triumph without any terrible devastation--without a final holocaust. For the nature of things is on our side. I mean that the Communists are operating upon false principles: upon illusions concerning the nature of man and the nature of the good society. Sooner or later, anyone who lives by false premises betrays himself. Men and women are not the mere animals and puppets that Communists would have them be. Human nature reasserts itself, given a little time, under even the most merciless tyranny. Behind the Iron Curtain, discontent will increase. If we Americans stand prepared and resolute, we can help the oppressed back toward a decent civil social order.

Within the core of the Communist structure--within Russia and China--the more energetic and talented and generous natures cannot be suppressed forever; and if we have prevented the commissars from establishing a world domination, those better natures in the rising generation ultimately will work their way to order and freedom and justice--given some help and encouragement--even in Moscow and Peiping. So the present question is not whether we want a devastating war, but rather whether we Americans have the intelligence and the fortitude to stand by ideas and institutions that were not born yesterday. Communism, a political religion, denies the providential order of existence; and so providence, sooner or later, will make an end of Communism, if you and I do our part.

Perhaps you are thinking, "What can I do?" There are many tasks that can be yours--and many sacrifices you must make, of time and money and comfort, if we are to win our ultimate victory over the powers that would dehumanize man. But the first thing to do--and this is the especial province of university students--is to grasp clearly and firmly the grand principles of the moral order and the social order.

Our conservative task of saving mankind from a collective degradation will not make you rich; probably it will not make you powerful; and possibly it may mean that you will live harder and less long than if you were content to be a slave or a coward. But this task has one high reward: the consciousness of being fully human, in the cause of truth and justice and of man as God meant him to be.

You have the talent and the training for the duty that is yours. I am confident you will not fail to stand up for the things which make life worth living.