

AMERICANISM, CHRISTIANITY, AND ANTI-COMMUNISM

Address to the Seattle Pacific College Student Body by
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During this Fourth of July season our hearts turn to the birth of our country and the heritage we share as American citizens.

I, personally, believe we should do more flag-waving, on July 4 and throughout the year, as an outward expression of our appreciation of this heritage. I am sorry we do not see more flags displayed on Independence Day. I am sorry the Fourth of July parade here in Seattle is such a minor event. Yesterday the parade dedicated to the birth of our country attracted a handful of spectators. In a few weeks the Seafair Parade, dedicated to not much of anything, will attract scores of thousands.

Patriotism and Change

Why are we Americans so undemonstrative in expressing our love for our country? Perhaps for one of three reasons:

- (1) Perhaps it is because we are a rather undemonstrative people. We do not wear our hearts on our sleeves. We do not like to display publicly our innermost feelings.
- (2) On the other hand, maybe we really are ungrateful. We have enjoyed so much so long that we take our national blessings for granted.

We so readily forget the blood and sacrifice with which these blessings were bought.

(3) A third reason might be that we have become a bit cynical about the motives of the flag-wavers. It seems that patriotic demonstrations have often been monopolized by the extreme right-wing in politics, by those who profess so much attachment to the Spirit of 1776 that they count on the flintlock musket to solve every ill and denounce as sheer treason every effort to meet pressing new problems in new ways.

Some time ago a speaker on this platform proclaimed that his highest purpose in life was to leave for his son unchanged, the same wonderful country he inherited from his father more than half a century ago.

A beautiful sentiment. But it ignores two fundamental factors. In the first place, all was not well with our country in 1900. There was public and private corruption. There was an unblushing looting of our natural resources. City slums seemed the most conspicuous product of the new technology. An unconscionable gulf between rich and poor threatened to produce a new feudalism.

In the second place, this speaker ignored the fact that changes will come. The old country lane has become a super highway. The little old country store of song and story has become a Safeway supermarket. The little red school house has become a union high school with some such name as Briarcrest Manor. The old swimming hole has become a heated, flood-lighted swimming pool. If there is one thing we learn from history, it is that change is the norm. For better or for worse,

the future will be different from today, just as today is different from yesterday. Changes bring new problems demanding new and different solutions, many of which we cannot anticipate now.

The important thing is that we continue to be true to basic ideals that are Christian as well as American. We must be true to the conviction that God is righteous and that He demands righteousness in men, that right makes might, nor vice versa. That every man and woman has a right to live and move and choose in freedom. But that each individual, on the other hand, cannot live unto himself alone but has a responsibility also for the welfare of his neighbor.

Meeting the Communist Threat

Today, one of the bitter facts of life is the threat of Communism to our American institutions.

I shall not insult your intelligence by reiterating the fact that Communism is evil. We all know this. Communism has written a record in history of human enslavement, of trickery and deceit, of callously bringing about the death of millions of people on the theory that the end justifies the means. As Christians, we naturally oppose a doctrine and a system that are professedly atheistic, denying the God we love and worship.

Communism is so evil that all Americans of goodwill could be expected to throw aside their differences on other issues and unite in a common effort against this threat.

But we find that this is not so - we Americans, even we Christians, find ourselves confused and at cross-purposes in this endeavor that should inspire a united front. Why is this so?

My own belief is that the high cause of anti-Communism has been weakened by three related factors:

- (1) Some anti-Communist effort has been uninformed and inept
- (2) Some anti-Communist effort has been downright immoral
- (3) Some anti-Communist effort has been based on a faulty basic philosophy.

Uninformed Anti-Communism

Much anti-Communist effort has been based on ignorance of what Communism is all about. Here are some examples, taken somewhat at random:

Some time ago I read a letter to the editor of an educational journal attacking Communism. This letter criticized Communism on the basis that under that system all are paid the same wage, regardless of the task. The fact is, there is a wider differential between skilled and unskilled work, between management and labor, in the Soviet Union than there is in the United States. In our country, truck-drivers sometimes make as much money as college presidents and rock-and-roll crooners make more than State governors. In the Soviet Union the contrast between the income of the average worker and the more favored members of society makes a mockery of Marx's dictum to the contrary.

Communism has been attacked on the basis that all Russians live in direst poverty. The fact is, Russia has a rather respectable standard of living for Eastern Europe. This is far below that of the United States, but higher than that of many so-called capitalist countries and much higher than the Russia of pre-Communist days.

Some criticism of Communism is based on the idea that Marxism is so ridiculous that any sixth-grader can refute the arguments of the brainiest Communist. The fact is that Marx was an highly educated, intelligent man, versed in philosophy, economics, sociology, and history. Marxism is, indeed, based on fundamental fallacies, but the average Marxist can make it appear so reasonable and attractive that it takes all the mental acumen we can muster to point out the weaknesses.

It seems to me that a particularly inept method of fighting Communism is to use this critical struggle as an instrument to fight other people with whom we disagree, but who are not Communists.

A case in point is the tendency to mobilize opposition to some joint enemy such as "Communism and collectivism" or "Communism and creeping socialism" on the assumption that these are pretty much the same thing. One recent publication goes further and proclaims:

Such terms as communism, socialism Fabianism, the welfare state, Nazism, fascism, state interventionism, egalitarianism, the planned economy, the New Deal, the Fair Deal, New Republicanism, and the New Frontier are simply different labels for much the same thing.

Now I don't have any particular desire to defend "creeping socialism", or creeping anything else, but we must face the fact that this type of

approach weakens the anti-Communist cause by dividing the opponents of Communism against themselves.

The theory behind this approach is that (1) Communism is fundamentally a system based on government ownership and control of the economy, and (2) increasing government ownership and control of the economy of the United States will result in Communism. This tactic is faulty, for a number of reasons:

(1) History does not show a single example of a nation going Communist by such means. All Communist nations have gone Red by either revolution or military action.

(2) The term "creeping socialism" is so very vague. We know what Communism is: It is a highly organized conspiracy directed by the Kremlin. But what is "creeping socialism"? That term has been used to describe everything from the graduated income tax to construction of the Grand Coulee Dam. No two Americans agree on how much Government ownership and control we should have in this country. No doubt too much government interference in the economy at the expense of private enterprise is a bad thing, but expressions such as "creeping socialism" are worse than useless because they do not spell out where the line should be drawn between public and private enterprise. Probably there should be less government action in some areas and more in others; this is a perplexing problem that demands sober thought and serious debate, not oversimplified and emotion-packed slogans. A real danger is that if we build up an intense and blind opposition to all government action we

might make our government helpless to assume necessary powers in a cold or hot war against Communism or any other threat to our national well-being.

(3) Finally, this type of approach falls directly into a Communist trap. The Communists carefully cultivate the idea that the struggle between the Western and Communist worlds is essentially one between two rival economic systems - a struggle, incidentally, that they believe they will win. Actually, the struggle is far, far deeper than this; it involves contrasting views as to the very nature of the world and of man and of the reasons for our existence.

Another harmful inaccuracy propagated by anti-Communist movements is the claim that the Communists have always won in their struggle with the West and that the so-called "free world" has always lost. Since the Reds claim that they are riding "the wave of the future" and will inevitably win, this over-pessimism on our part again plays right into the Communists' hands.

Actually, the Communists have suffered some pretty serious setbacks from time to time. (Unfortunately, not often enough.) They lost out in Greece as a result of the Truman Doctrine. Their strength has declined in France; in 1951 there were ninety-nine Communists in the French National Assembly while in the 1958 elections only ten were elected. The Communist tide in Italy seems, at least for the moment, to have passed its crest. In fact, the Communists expected to take all of Western Europe as a result of the distresses of World War II; in this they manifestly

failed, due in part to American aid. The Communists failed to take over South Korea. In many other countries their efforts to take over have been thwarted. They could, of course, still win out in any of these areas. They are an ever-present threat. But at least we don't have any reason to believe the Reds are supermen who can never be beaten. That type of pessimism will discourage the dedication, hard work, sacrifice and inspired effort that can turn the tide.

Another particularly inept way to attempt to fight Communism is to do so in a vacuum. Many busy anti-Communists appear to believe that Communism is an isolated phenomenon that can be faced without regard to other critical movements of our time. There are anti-Communist films and books and articles and speeches that ignore such developments as the revolution in technology and science, the threat of nuclear war, the struggle of former colonial peoples for national independence, and the population explosion. For instance, much discussion of the bloody Korean conflict ignores the plain fact that the United States had two objectives in that struggle, not one, to repulse the Communist threat to South Korea and at the same time prevent expansion of that conflict into World War III.

Anti-Communism and Morality

My second main point is that sometimes the fight against Communism in the United States has not only been inept but downright immoral.

More specifically, some irresponsible men have used the struggle against Communism as an excuse to engage in the very worst kind of

character-assassination. No one, regardless of the nobility of his character or the value of his contribution to his country, has been immune.

The founder of the John Birch Society claimed that ex-President Dwight Eisenhower was actually a member of the Communist Party. In his book, The Politician, he wrote: "Milton Eisenhower (the former President's brother) is actually Dwight Eisenhower's superior and boss within the Communist Party. . . . For (the former President) there is only one possible word to describe his purposes and his action. That word is treason."

The late Secretary of State John Foster Dulles was called "a Communist agent" and Allen Dulles, former head of our Central Intelligence Agency "the most protected and untouchable supporter of Communism, next to Eisenhower himself, in Washington."

All of this might be laughed off as a big joke or the product of a diseased mind, but the tragic thing is that many people, including some who call themselves Christians, actually believe this kind of unmitigated falsehood. The John Birch Society has branches in at least thirty-five states and thousands of members, many of them wealthy and very influential.

Turning to the Democratic side, I have here a statement distributed during the 1960 presidential campaign by a man who called himself a Christian evangelist. It is headed, "The pink, punk, pro-Red record of Senator Jack Kennedy."

In this so-called "inside election report," Kennedy is accused of deliberately promoting the Communist cause in the United States. When we examine the statement, we find that the writer objected to certain Kennedy votes in the Senate. (In each of these votes Kennedy voted with the majority, so the implication must be that a majority of the members of the United States Senate are pro-Communist.)

The most important of these votes were cast in favor of economic and military aid to Tito's Yugoslavia. You will recall that some years ago, Tito, who is a Communist, broke with the Kremlin and Yugoslavia since then has been outside the Communist bloc. What this critic failed to mention in this misleading "inside report" was that the purpose of sending American aid to Yugoslavia was to endeavor to separate Tito further from the Communist bloc and encourage him to throw in his lot with the West against the Kremlin. Also, since Tito is getting along in years and will soon have to relinquish his leadership, it was considered a good move to encourage pro-American sentiment in the hope that post-Tito Yugoslavia will be more friendly to the United States. Incidentally, thus far this effort has not been too successful, but surely the attempt was well-meaning and thoroughly patriotic. Yet this vote inspired the title "The pink, punk, pro-Red record of Senator Kennedy."

We will all realize how this type of tactic weakens the anti-Communist cause. What could please the Kremlin more than to see the American people distrust one another, especially their elected leaders? How can we promote an effective anti-Communist effort in this country if

a wall of suspicion separates Americans from one another? There is a Communist conspiracy in this country and it must be fought with vigor and intelligence. But more than three thousand years ago God Himself laid down the commandment: "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor." We cannot break the Ninth Commandment without incurring the wrath of Almighty God.

The Basic Philosophy

My last point involves the question "Why, basically, are we opposed to Communism?"

In answer to that question, we recognize the fundamental fact that Christians always, always, must put Christ and His kingdom first. Every doctrine, every opinion, every system is weighed on the scales of God's Word. God is our God; everything He approves, we approve; everything He rejects, we reject. God's will, God's standard - that is the central thing.

Thus we oppose Communism basically because it is diametrically opposed to our Christian faith. Its principles and practices definitely do not meet the test of God's approval.

Now the point is this: There is a tendency to put the cart before the horse and say "Christianity is good because it is a bulwark against Communism." We find many casting a friendly glance at Christianity on this basis.

Doubtless Christianity does play this role, but basically this position is all wrong. This makes a god of anti-Communism. Anti-Communism is made the Highest Good by which everything is judged. To a Christian, this is idolatry.

The practical danger of this point of view is that it tends to excuse or approve every action merely because it is anti-Communist.

The case of Cuba is a good example. There Castro and his pro-Communist regime were preceded by that of Fulgencio Batista, a bloody butcher who maintained himself in power by the worst kinds of atrocities against his countrymen. Yet we find some people actually defending Batista. Why? Because he was anti-Communist!

Likewise, some have defended the Secret Army Organization in Algeria on the basis that it was anti-Communist. Its anti-Communism apparently excused its campaign of mass murder, including the machine-gunning of hospital patients in their beds.

We find well-meaning but unthinking people defending the most flagrant injustices merely because the regimes involved are anti-Communist. All this involves the theory that the end justifies the means - doing evil that good may come of it. St. Paul says that those who hold to such a doctrine are going to hell. (Romans 3:8)

The true Christian, on the contrary, must forever stand foursquare for the justice and the love of God, and struggle against evil in whatever attire it garbs itself - Communist, anti-Communist, or neutralist.

Just one more word. No doubt Communism is a tremendously, fearfully,

powerful form of evil, and we must fight it tooth and nail. But the plain fact is, anti-Communism is not enough. We are against Communism, but what are we for?

As Christians we reply, "Christ is the answer to the world's need!" And that is absolutely right. But it is an abstraction.

We must remember that we must present Christ not only in word but in deed. In presenting Christianity as the great and all-encompassing answer, we must carry out the practical implications of our faith in every area of human activity.

Are people living in spiritual darkness? We bring the good news of the Cross and the Resurrection.

Are people in any part of the world suffering from hunger, ignorance, and disease? Christ gave us His great example in feeding the hungry, educating the ignorant, and healing the sick.

Are minority races discriminated against, treated as second-class citizens? The Bible teaches us that God is no respecter of persons. Thus we, His followers, may not possibly be.

Actually, much of the success of Communism can be laid at our own doorstep. For two hundred years now, the Western and Christian world has enjoyed great economic as well as spiritual advantages over the rest of the world. Yet it has often done comparatively little to share these advantages with the spiritually and physically hungry peoples. In our day, the Communists have moved in, with a great display of concern for people's physical well-being and with a pseudo-religion to fill the

spiritual need.

The burden of my message is simply this: Communism is a fearful threat. We must meet this challenge with knowledge and intelligence. But our main mission is not a negative but a positive one - proclaiming the kingdom of God. Christ teaches us to pray, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

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