

Questions

1. How does the statement differ from the government's policy regarding international communism in 1960?
2. How do the young conservatives understand freedom?

171. Barry Goldwater on "Extremism in the Defense of Liberty" (1964)

Source: *Barry Goldwater: "Extremism in the Defense of Liberty," Official Report of the Proceedings of the 28th Republican National Convention, 1964, pp. 413-19. Reprinted by permission of the Republican National Committee.*

The presidential campaign of 1964 was a milestone in the rebirth of American conservatism. Four years earlier, the Republican candidate, Senator Barry Goldwater of Arizona, had written *The Conscience of a Conservative*, which demanded a more aggressive conduct of the Cold War and warned against "internal" dangers to freedom, especially the New Deal welfare state. In the Senate, Goldwater voted against the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Attacked as an extremist by Democrats and many moderate Republicans, Goldwater used his acceptance speech at the Republican national convention to outline his conservative vision and warn against the increased power of the national government. Toward the end, he made the explosive statement, "extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice."

Goldwater went down to a disastrous defeat. But his campaign aroused enthusiasm in the rapidly expanding suburbs of southern California and the Southwest. The funds that poured into the Goldwater campaign from the Sun Belt's oilmen and aerospace entrepreneurs established a new financial base for conservatism.

I ACCEPT YOUR nomination with a deep sense of humility. [Applause] I accept, too, the responsibility that goes with it, and I seek your

continued help and your continued guidance. My fellow Republicans, our cause is too great for a man to feel worthy of it. Our task would be too great for any man, did he not have with him the hearts and the hands of this great Republican Party, and I promise you tonight that every fiber of my being is consecrated to our cause; that nothing shall be lacking from the struggle that can be brought to it by enthusiasm, by devotion and plain hard work. [Cheers and Applause] In this world no person, no party, can guarantee anything, but what we can do, and we shall do, is to deserve victory, and victory will be ours. [Applause]

The good Lord raised this mighty Republic to be a home for the brave, and to flourish as the land of the free—not to stagnate in the swampland of collectivism, not to cringe before the bullying of communism. [Loud Applause and Cheers]

Now, my fellow Americans, the tide has been running against freedom. Our people have followed false prophets. We must and we shall return to proven ways—not because they are old, but because they are true. [Applause] We must, and we shall, set the tides running again in the cause of freedom. [Applause] And this Party, with its every action, every word, every breath and every heartbeat has but a single resolve, and that is freedom—freedom made orderly for this Nation by our constitutional government; freedom under a government limited by the laws of nature and of nature's God; freedom—balanced so that order, lacking liberty, will not become a slave of the prison cell; balanced so that liberty, lacking order, will not become the license of the mob and the jungle. [Applause]

Now, we Americans understand freedom. We have earned it, lived for it, and died for it. This nation and its people are freedom's model in a searching world. We can be freedom's missionaries in a doubting world. But, ladies and gentlemen, first we must renew freedom's vision in our own hearts and in our own homes. [Applause]

During four futile years, the administration which we shall replace has distorted and lost that vision. [Applause] It has talked and talked and talked and talked the words of Freedom.

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Tonight there is violence in our streets, corruption in our highest offices, aimlessness among our youth, anxiety among our elders and there is a virtual despair among the many who look beyond material success for the inner meaning of their lives. Where examples of morality should be set, the opposite is seen. Small men, seeking great wealth or power, have too often and too long turned even the highest levels of public service into mere personal opportunity. [Applause]

Now, certainly, simple honesty is not too much to demand of men in government. We find it in most. Republicans demand it from everyone. [Applause] They demand it from everyone, no matter how exalted or protected his position might be. [Applause] The growing menace in our country tonight, to personal safety, to life, to limb and property, in homes, in churches, on the playgrounds, and places of business, particularly in our great cities, is the mounting concern, or should be, of every thoughtful citizen in the United States. [Applause]

Security from domestic violence, no less than from foreign aggression, is the most elementary and fundamental purpose of any government, and a government that cannot fulfill that purpose is one that cannot long command the loyalty of its citizens. [Loud Applause] History shows us—demonstrates that nothing—nothing prepares the way for tyranny more than the failure of public offices to keep the streets safe from bullies and marauders. [Applause]

Those who seek absolute power, even though they seek it to do what they regard as good, are simply demanding the right to enforce their own version of heaven on earth. [Applause] And let me remind you, they are the very ones who always create the most hellish tyrannies. [Applause] Absolute power does corrupt, and those who seek it must be suspect and must be opposed. Their mistaken course stems from false notions of equality, ladies and gentlemen. Equality, rightly understood, as our founding fathers understood it, leads to liberty and to the emancipation of creative differences. Wrongly understood, as it has been so tragically in our time, it

leads first to conformity and then to despotism. [Loud Applause and Cheers]

We Republicans see in our constitutional form of government the great framework which assures the orderly but dynamic fulfillment of the whole man, and we see the whole man as the great reason for instituting orderly government in the first place.

We see, in private property and in economy based upon and fostering private property, the one way to make government a durable ally of the whole man, rather than his determined enemy. [Applause] We see, in the sanctity of private property, the only durable foundation for constitutional government in a free society. [Applause] And beyond that, we see, in cherished diversity of ways, diversity of thoughts, of motives and accomplishments. We do not seek to lead anyone's life for him—we seek only to secure his rights and to guarantee him opportunity to strive, with government performing only those needed and constitutionally-sanctioned tasks which cannot otherwise be performed. [Prolonged Applause]

We Republicans seek a government that attends to its inherent responsibilities of maintaining a stable monetary and fiscal climate, encouraging a free and a competitive economy and enforcing law and order.

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The task of preserving and enlarging freedom at home and of safeguarding it from the forces of tyranny abroad is great enough to challenge all our resources and to refire all our strength. [Cheers and Applause] Anyone who joins us in all sincerity, we welcome. [Applause] Those who do not care for our cause, we don't expect to enter our ranks in any case. [Applause] And let our Republicanism, so focused and so dedicated, not be made fuzzy and futile by unthinking and stupid labels.

I would remind you that extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice. [Loud Applause and Cheers] And let me remind you also that moderation in the pursuit of justice is no virtue. [Applause and Cheers]