

60 ~~100~~ 0029

Nixon vs. Kennedy: Presidential Leadership and the Cold War

(A talk by Professor Alfred De Grazia of New York University to the faculty and students of Harpur College, Binghamton, New York, October 22, 1960)

The subject of this meeting has been well-chosen by our sponsors. The presidential campaign, to mean anything, must connect up with the American destiny in this perilous world. We are asked to determine which of our two great political parties is better able to shape a better world. I am supporting the position that the Republican Party, with Democratic aid, can do the job better than the Democratic Party, with Republican help. You see that I am careful to say "with the help of the other party." In our country no one ever can nor ever should hope to have one-party rule. The responsibility for what happens after American elections are over must always rest in part with the losing party, which helps determine the public state of mind during the campaign and then takes a role in the governmental process afterwards. One-party rule is neither possible nor desirable.

Fundamentally we hold a consensus on the true national interest. I believe that most Americans, if they have given some sober thought to world problems, wish our foreign policy to aim at universal law and order, the equal dignity of all men, tolerable living standards throughout the world, and an ever-increasing chance at individual freedom everywhere. Those who disagree with these goals are in both parties and are the faint of heart, the ignorant, and the bigoted. Sometimes one or both parties fall away from these paths. And sometimes, as now, both parties appear, beneath their clamorous debate, to be well-intentioned and offer some

promise of these ends. Then it is a matter for you to decide whether the Republicans or the Democrats would be more effective.

I say that the Republican Party can do better in these next years and, with your permission, offer you my reasons.

1. The experience of the Republican Presidential and Vice Presidential candidates in foreign affairs is far superior to that of the Democratic candidates. Therefore in this, the most important and delicate of areas, support of the Republican Party is called for. The Republican candidate for President has traveled throughout the world, representing the United States, and has conducted himself with the greatest skill and with credit to the nation. You know this record. I won't repeat it. I shall just give a little side-light:

In September I was sitting in a British consular office in Florence, Italy talking with an old friend who had been consul in Bogota during the Vice President's South American tour. He mentioned casually how well foreign official circles had been impressed by Mr. Nixon's conduct in the face of violence directed at him by a communist-inspired mob in Venezuela and during provocative incidents elsewhere. (I meant to drop a note to the Vice President about the compliment, because a man in public life receives more brickbats than roses, but haven't done so.)

The Republican Vice Presidential Candidate Mr. Lodge has done equally well under the glare of publicity over many years. He is about as professional as you can get, in just about the toughest profession in the world. Many a person said, when Mr. Khrushchev was playing cock of the roost at the expense of the United Nations, and the United States, "If only Lodge were there." It is true. He was missed. And if it would not have been considered a partisan move, he might well have been recalled temporarily to deal with the Soviets. The absence of Mr. Lodge from the arena of world politics is only temporary. It should certainly be heartening to think that Mr. Lodge could continue as Vice President the very useful role in international politics that the Constitution permits.

We must have considerable fear on these points both as regards the presidential and the vice presidential candidates of the Democratic Party in this election. They do not have the experience. They do not stack up well.

2. The matter doesn't end there. The Kennedy-Johnson team are so weak in this respect that a second point in favor of the Republican Party must be registered. Mr. Johnson is going to be under a grave handicap in dealing with the outside world. It is not his fault. It is the fault of a crazy system of racism that has kept

our beautiful South backward and its most brilliant sons from exercising their genius in the White House and over the spirit of modern man. Every American must walk the world softly and without offence these days, lest the passions of other races and colors be unleashed upon them. What then can we expect would happen to a Southerner who would attempt to do what Mr. Nixon has done abroad in recent years? We should have to fear a constant heaping of indignities upon the United States -- in snubs, in riots, in abuse -- by those myriad forces abroad who would see a chance to strike at all of America through attacking its weakest part. What will Mr. Johnson do then? He will become perhaps as useless as the Vice Presidents of old, when Teddy Roosevelt, ordering the removal of a tinkling chandelier from the White House, said to put it in the office of the Vice President, where it would keep him awake. We cannot afford a Vice President of that kind in 1960.

The issue of race relations in the campaign does not end here. You will probably agree with me when I say that the worst problem facing America at home and abroad is the problem of group hatreds. It is on this question too that a third point of superiority for the Republican leadership arises. I have had much experience with this question, both in our country and

abroad. They say it is a joke, but it is more a tragedy than a joke that whenever you speak to an audience on social affairs in more than half the world, whatever the subject of discussion, someone will arise, and to the satisfaction of the audience, will truculently ask "But what about the treatment of the Negroes in America?"

I firmly believe that the vast and frustrating successes of communism in this world have not come about through the economic or the military successes of communist countries. On the contrary, if it were a matter of economic, administrative, and military competition, communism would be a weak and isolated backwater of the Western world. But churning and grinding beneath the crude and poor theories of economics and human nature that pass for the communist philosophy are the resentful furies of people who have been scorned and subjugated in times past and who cannot now find in themselves either forgiveness or truth.

Now several of us suggested at one time before the Republican Presidential nominating convention that the Party should seek to draft Dr. Ralph Bunche for Vice President -- first because he is perfectly qualified to present a new American front to the world, then because he would shake up the domestic political

scene so that some of our Rip Van Winkles would awaken and come alive to the necessities of the age. It was no surprise then that Mr. Lodge should, from his strategic position at the United Nations, also perceive that Mr. Bunche might be called upon for a larger place in the councils of the nation, and furthermore that at least one cabinet member should be Negro. Mr. Lodge has gallantly persisted in his suggestion, despite the inevitable criticism from racists on the one hand and timid souls on the other. The Democrats, for all that they command the vast majority of Negro votes, have not shown their profile of courage. Perhaps Mr. Lodge's proposal was blunt and political. But he made it and the Democrats can't knock it down. They can only call it a special racial appeal. They ought to know; they are past masters at it. All they can do is deplore it as an artifice. But what about a vastly artificial structure that condemns a whole race of people to segregation and discrimination? What kind of a hypocrite is it that says that you can't take artificial steps to remove an artificial evil? Just as we must sacrifice old prejudices and customs to achieve our highest ideals at home and abroad, so must we make sacrifices in the economic sphere to achieve certain international goals. And here is a fourth area where the Republican Party is

likely to do better than the Democrats. We cannot maintain and increase the military establishment, as both candidates say we must do, and at the same time expand greatly our economic commitment overseas in loans and aid, without more production, higher tax rates, cutting other government programs, or a combination of all three. Now what Party do you think can more consistently and smoothly apply pressures for a greater commitment in foreign affairs. To my way of thinking the Republican Party can. It is not just campaign talk that the Democrats are the party of spending and the Republican Party the party of economic stability. It goes right down to the character of the party regulars. My study of the opinions of staunch members of both parties in the Western States in 1952 showed a definite pattern for the Democrats to "buy" any new program and spend now and think later, and for the Republicans to restrain the government and hold down inflation. If you read the book of Chester Bowles, Madison Avenue's gift to Kennedy's inner council, as I had the misfortune to do, you will find nothing but a seed catalogue of spending proposals.

If the Republicans win, the heightened national moral and economic discipline that all genuine leaders say we must have will come more gradually and in a more orderly way. If the Demo-

crats are in charge of this needed disciplining, they will typically spend first and then when the inflationary brakes are just about burned out, will impose the most hateful types of rent control and price controls, bringing the government once more down upon the necks of the citizenry. The men of the Democratic Party leadership have on the whole very little regard for the values of economic liberty, either in itself or as a necessary means for the attainment of full civil liberties.

5. As a logical extension of its position at home, the Republican Party is more likely to favor self-help and private initiative wherever it is granting foreign aid abroad. The futility of many of our programs is manifest to anyone, who has worked as I have, in the area of economic development in the private sector. The great need in under-development countries, if democracy, liberty, and sound economic advancement are to be achieved, is the growth of a new middle class and the best way to grow it is by non-governmental aid. Our officials are all too often committed to one view that socialism is the only way out for the world. This is wrong and the Republican Party has not properly reformed the viewpoint instituted into government by the Democrats. These programs still attempt to get

undeveloped countries on their feet by pouring the alcohol of large government credits down their throats. Mr. Kennedy has little knowledge of these things, else he would not, for instance, have mistakenly berated the American-owned Cuban Telephone Company for having given a gold telephone to Batista. Swallowing a story like that and relating it publicly shows that he is inclined to believe some of the lies that are commonly told about the conduct of American business abroad. I was in Cuba just after the Revolution and offered the government a chance to collaborate on a social research and planning center. I discovered that the new rulers were solely intent upon the achievement of absolute power. They were then and are even more now men driven by a fury against the United States. Yet the American government's attitude was friendly and, I believe, altogether too patient from the beginning. Every attempt at appeasement was made but Cuba's leaders today are unappeasable and desperate.

The President of the company concerned protested to Senator Kennedy about the falsehood and asked both candidates to pay some attention to the way the highly productive American businessman is being driven out of one country after another, plied with regulations and ignored by his own government. I say both

parties are at fault, but the Republicans have at least tried and the Democrats have ignored the problem. I cannot see that there is any alternative but to prefer the Republicans on this point.

6. Furthermore, and this is another point in favor of the Republicans in foreign affairs, the Republican leadership is more reliable in the constant struggle to keep down the tariff barriers. If we raise tariffs we tend to hurt our allies abroad, drive them to seek Chinese and Russian markets, alienate them, and make them bar our own goods. Enough said, except that certain Southern elements which play an important part in the Democratic Party have lately swung around to the protectionism that Northern business has abandoned. Moreover, many of the labor unions supporting the Democratic Party tend to be rather short-sighted in their economic views, internationally as well as nationally. They hate the "trickle down" type of economics whereby the system delivers goods in an effective, but roundabout, way. They want "immediate delivery" of their demands even when there is no urgent need. This psychology perhaps originated from long-ago experience with bread lines. The feather-bedding practices of labor unions are widespread. By forcing

a slower pace of work and blocking efficiency suggestions, they detract from the ability of the United States businessman to compete abroad. Our businessmen need all the help we can give them when they move into the world markets, for the conditions there are very tough, and yet our political and economic success depends strongly upon their achievements.

7. It seems to me that we must approach the problems of world affairs in a most serious and disciplined way. It seems too that the Republican Party can be expected to be more orderly and responsible than the Democratic. The Democrats tend to be more volatile. The Quemoy-Matsu issue indicates this. I am sure Mr. Kennedy regrets having brought the issue into the campaign for it was foredoomed to boomerang as soon as the responsible elements of the country became alarmed over it. The Democrats have been trying to conduct a popular plebiscite on the most inappropriate and dangerous issue imaginable. Here is the stark and naked "brinkmanship" that they have been accusing the previous administration of. In the Cuban case, too, Mr. Kennedy's proposal that the United States should shelter and foster rebellion in Cuba must also be considered irresponsible "brinkmanship." I doubt that

I am alone in feeling concern that to his brash thoughts about how to conduct foreign policy will be added those of Harry Truman, Chester Bowles, Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, and David Susskind.

I am sorry that the Democratic Party has come up with so little in the way of concrete alternatives to the policies of the Republican administrations of Eisenhower and Nixon. With millions of dollars and many years in the wilderness, I should expect them to have done better. As matters stand now, I cannot see any reason whatsoever for encouraging one who has voted Democratic in the past to continue his party loyalty. The New Deal is now 28 years old. Its appeals and slogans no longer apply to the world of 1960. The intellectuals of the country today are more numerous than the farmers. They are on the world firing line to boot. It is to them that the world looks and from them that new policies must come for the world. They owe themselves and the world an agonizing reappraisal of their views. They may well keep in mind the saying of Thomas Jefferson that each generation should recreate its world, for that statement, if fairly true in the early nineteenth century, is so much more true in today's world of fast change. It would be tragic for the nation, if the intellectuals -- teachers, lawyers, doctors, researchers, officials, and students -- should congeal into a psychological Solid South, immune to the influences of time, events, and ideas.

That is why I earnestly recommend to you here tonight, who have shared the experiences of the past intellectual generation with me or who, though young, are about

to be initiated to that experience, that you consider the future before you consider the past and that you weigh the candidates in calm dispassion. If you disagree with the goals and reasons I express, I beg you to restrain, in your partisanship, those tendencies that I have assigned to the Democrats.

If you conclude, as I do, that our highest interests are best served, at this turn of world events, by the agency of the Republican Party, you have an immediate occasion to work and vote to that end. Point out the true nature of the world crisis to your neighbors. Demand of yourself and others the will to sacrifice for the sake of humanity. The Soviet system has never seemed so human, so disarming, so appealing, but the Soviet threat to the world has never been worse. If we choose to eat, drink, and be merry, the world will be lost. If we tip every decision on the balance towards intelligence, restraint and true charity, we shall, Democrats and Republicans alike, write a uniquely grand page of history.