

TALK BEFORE FREEDOM'S FOUNDATION

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THE PILOTS WHO WOUND UP IN HANOI PRISONS IN THE YEARS 1965, 1966 AND 1967 OWE A DEBT OF GRATITUDE TO OUR HOSTESSES TODAY FOR A REASON THEY PROBABLY DON'T KNOW ABOUT - A REASON THAT WILL REQUIRE A LITTLE EXPLANATION.

DURING THE FIRST FIVE YEARS OF THE WAR WE WERE FIGHTING A HOLDING ACTION TO PRESERVE OUR SELF RESPECT IN ORDER THAT SOME DAY WE MIGHT RETURN HOME WITH HONOR. WE WERE GIVING IT ALL WE HAD BUT WE WERE ULTIMATELY GOING TO RUN OUT OF GAS UNLESS BY SOME MIRACLE THE NORTH VIETNAMESE COULD BE MADE TO REALIZE THAT TORTURING PRISONERS OF WAR WAS OFFENSIVE TO THAT AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION WHICH THEY WOODED FROM THE OUTSET, THAT PUBLIC OPINION THEY IDENTIFIED TO US AS THEIR PRIMARY TARGET AND ONLY HOPE OF VICTORY. THIS MIRACLE WAS REALIZED ABOUT JANUARY 1ST 1970

WHEN THE INDIGNATION OF THE AMERICAN MAN ON THE STREET WAS CLEARLY EVIDENT TO THEM IN THE AMERICAN PRESS WHICH THEY READ MORE AVIDLY THAN MOST OF US HERE TODAY. THE STORY THAT CAUGHT ON IN OUR PRESS WAS THAT OF THE PLIGHT OF THE WIVES AT HOME. THE STORY OF THAT PLIGHT GERMINATED AROUND OUR KITCHEN TABLE ON "A" AVENUE IN CORONADO, THE FOCAL POINT OF ACTIVITY OF THE LARGEST COMMUNITY OF THE WIVES OF PRISONERS AND MISSING IN THE UNITED STATES. THE VERY FIRST PUBLIC RECOGNITION OF THEIR CORPORATE IDENTITY OCCURRED IN SEPTEMBER, 1968 WHEN SYBIL RECEIVED A PHONE CALL FROM CHARLOTTE HAMILTON WHO INVITED THE GROUP TO A HARBOR CRUISE AND BUFFET DINNER ON THE BAHIA BELL, ON BEHALF OF THE SAN DIEGO COUNTY WOMEN'S CHAPTER OF THE FREEDOM'S FOUNDATION. JIM COPLEY PROMPTLY BROKE THE WIVES STORY IN THE PRESS, IT SWEEPED THE COUNTRY AND A GROUND SWELL BEGAN THAT SLIGHTLY MORE THAN A YEAR LATER RESULTED IN THE DISMISSAL OF THE INFAMOUS MASTERMIND OF THE EXTORTION

PROGRAM OF THE NORTH VIETNAMESE WHO WE KNEW AS THE CAT. THE MIRACLE OCCURRED IN THE NICK OF TIME; AMERICAN PRISONERS WERE ALREADY DYING. WE DIDN'T GET OUT FOR 3 MORE YEARS BUT THE MISSION HAD BEEN ACCOMPLISHED; THE TORTURE WAS STOPPED.

AND THUS WE SEE AGAIN THAT THE TRICKS OF HISTORY ARE VARIED AND SUBTLE. A THREAT OF HITLER IN EUROPE IN THE LATE 30'S SPAWNED THE POPULAR FRONT IN FRANCE, AND SPRUNG THE COMMUNIST LEADERS FROM JAIL IN INDOCHINA. ACTS OF COMPASSION, LOYALTY AND LOVE IN SAN DIEGO 30 YEARS LATER SENT SOME OF THEM BACK INTO OBLIVION. NEEDLESS TO SAY, IT IS AN HONOR TO ADDRESS THIS PARTICULAR CHAPTER TODAY.

I SEE IN THE PROGRAM THAT MY SUBJECT IS TO BE AMERICA TODAY AS SEEN BY A FORMER POW. I DIDN'T CHOOSE THE SUBJECT, BUT IF YOU'RE GAME I'M GAME; I'LL TRY TO ADDRESS IT. I'LL TRY TO DO SO CANDIDLY, NOT

AS A HARBINGER OF DOOM NOR A SHALLOW PROPHET OF "PROGRESS", BUT AS A POOR MAN'S HISTORIAN WHO BELIEVES THAT THE STORY OF MAN'S STATE OF AFFAIRS IS BEST EXPRESSED IN TERMS OF THE SINUSOIDAL VARIATIONS IN WHAT I WOULD CALL THE "QUALITY OF LIFE" AS CULTURES MAKE ADJUSTMENTS TO THE AGELESS DICHOTOMIES OF THE HUMAN PREDICAMENT, ONE WHO BELIEVES THAT "PROGRESS" IS A MISLEADING CONCEPT, ONE WHO GIVES A SIDESHOW BILLING TO THE WONDROUS GROWTH OF TECHNOLOGY AND LEISURE TIME, ONE WHO PROMISES NOT TO SPIN A WEB OF GOSSAMER HOPES FOR THE IMMINENT PERFECTABILITY OF THE HUMAN RACE.

WE ARE TOLD THAT MAN DOES NOT LIVE BY BREAD ALONE AND I THINK THAT MANY HERE, AND SURELY MOST OF US FROM HANOI HAVE COME TO BELIEVE THAT LOVE, PRIDE, GENEROSITY AND PATRIOTISM ARE FEELINGS OF QUALITY THAT GIVE LIFE MEANING, AND THAT MATERIAL COMFORTS, AS PLEASANT AND EXCITING AS THEY SEEM AT THE TIME,

ARE MERE TRANSITORY TITILLATIONS THAT YOU WILL NEVER CARRY TO YOUR GRAVE. IN OTHER WORDS, AS I VIEW HISTORY FROM THE STANDPOINT OF HOW MEN LIVE INSIDE, THE BATTLEGROUND IS NOT SO MUCH MAN VS NATURE AS HUMAN VALUE SYSTEMS VS HUMAN VALUE SYSTEMS. A CULTURE'S VALUE SYSTEM SPRINGS FROM THE TACIT ASSUMPTIONS IT MAKES REGARDING THE PROPER BALANCE OF SUCH OPPOSING ABSTRACTIONS AS:

FREEDOM	VS	EQUALITY
MORAL ABSOLUTES	VS	MORAL RELATIVES
REASON	VS	FAITH
FREEDOM	VS	ORDER

THIS IS A TOUGH BATTLEGROUND BECAUSE BOTH EXPERIENCE AND SCHOLARSHIP TELL US THAT POLARIZATION IN THE EXTREME ON ANY OF THESE DICHOTOMIES IS NONSENSICAL, THAT STABILITY LIES IN AN INTELLIGENT BALANCE BEING STRUCK BY THE TENSIONS IN SOCIETY, AND THAT THE WISE MAN SHOULD BE SKEPTICAL OF ANY CULT WHOSE DOGMA IS BASED ON A WIDE EXCURSION TO EITHER SIDE OF THE LEDGER. UNLIKE SCIENCE, THE PROBLEM DOES NOT ULTIMATELY

REDUCE ITSELF TO PLUSSES AND MINUSES; AND THE MAN WHO CLAIMS FORESQUARE SUPPORT OF BOTH ENDS OF THE SPECTRUM IS A FOOL WHO DELUDES HIMSELF INTO THINKING HE CAN HAVE HIS CAKE AND EAT IT TOO. AS WILL AND AURIEL DURANT HAVE CONCLUDED AFTER A LIFETIME OF STUDY OF 3500 YEARS OF HISTORY: "FREEDOM AND EQUALITY ARE SWORN AND EVERLASTING ENEMIES AND WHEN ONE PREVAILS THE OTHER DIES."

IF I HAVE EXPLAINED MY THOUGHT DISCIPLINE WITH ADEQUATE CLARITY I THINK YOU WILL UNDERSTAND WHY I ADDRESS MY ASSIGNMENT FOR TODAY BY ANSWERING THE QUESTION: HOW HAS THE BALANCE OF AMERICAN VALUE SYSTEM DICHOTOMIES CHANGED DURING MY 8 YEAR ABSENCE?

THE ANSWER IS OBVIOUSLY

(1) TOWARD MORAL RELATIVES AND AWAY FROM MORAL ABSOLUTES

(2) TOWARD INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM AND AWAY FROM CORPORATE ORDER

IS THIS GOOD OR BAD? AS I SEE IT, THERE IS SOME BAD NEWS, AND SOME GOOD NEWS. I WON'T

BORE YOU WITH NOTIONS ABOUT HAIR STYLES AND STREAKERS.
I READ THE BAD NEWS INTO THE CANT AND VOCABULARY
OF THE TIMES AND I'M NOT JUST TALKING ABOUT FOUR
LETTER WORDS. I HEAR A LOT ABOUT RIGHTS AND VERY
LITTLE ABOUT RESPONSIBILITY; I HEAR A LOT ABOUT
FREEDOM AND VERY LITTLE ABOUT ORDER; ELITE AND
AUTHORITY SEEM TO BE PERCEIVED AS TOTALLY BAD WORDS,
LIBERATION AND EQUALITY AS TOTALLY GOOD. WE ARE
TOLD THAT WARS ACCELERATE SOCIAL CHANGE AND A LOT
OF THE EXCURSIONS MIGHT BE WRITTEN OFF TO THAT, BUT
AS AN ASIDE I NOTE THAT THE DURANT'S REPORT THAT IN
THE LAST 3500 YEARS OF RECORDED HISTORY ONLY 268
HAVE SEEN NO WAR. POSSIBLY MOST DISQUIETING TO A
RIP VAN WINKLE LIKE ME IS THE DOGMATIC AND CONFIDENT
CONVICTION WITH WHICH CLAIMS TO UNBRIDLED FREEDOM
AND RIGHTS ARE PLEAD IN NEWS AND FICTION, AS THOUGH
THERE'S NO OTHER SIDE TO THE COIN, AS THOUGH WE'RE
IN SOME NEW AGE IN WHICH WE CAN IGNORE THE LESSONS
OF THE PAST. I CONJURE UP IN MY MIND MILLIONS OF

TV VIEWERS AND READERS MEEKLY NODDING ASSENT AND MUTTERING "BY GEORGE YOU'RE RIGHT; THAT'S WHAT THE BOOK SAYS."

WELL THAT'S NOT WHAT IT SAYS IN THE BOOKS I'VE READ, FROM MIDDLE-OF-THE-ROAD MODERNS TO THE ANCIENTS:

STEWART ALSOP: "A GREAT POWER NEEDS AN ELITE - A CLASS OF SELF CONFIDENT MORE OR LESS DISINTERESTED PEOPLE WHO ARE ACCUSTOMED TO RUNNING THINGS."

SOLZHENITZYN: "ORDER HAS LIMITS BEYOND WHICH IT DEGENERATES INTO TYRANNY, BUT FREEDOM IS MORAL ONLY IF IT KEEPS WITHIN CERTAIN BOUNDS, BEYOND WHICH IT DEGENERATES INTO COMPLACENCY AND LICENTIOUSNESS."

PLATO, (IN DESCRIBING ATHENS AT A TIME WHEN DEMOCRACY RAN RIOT, LEADERS VYING TO PANDER TO THE PASSIONS OF SOCIETY): "THE TEACHER FEARS AND FLATTERS HIS *Rep. 563a*
SCHOLARS, AND THE SCHOLARS DESPISE THEIR MASTERS *Some?*
AND TUTORS...THE OLD DO NOT LIKE TO BE THOUGHT OF AS MOROSE AND AUTHORITATIVE, AND THEREFORE THEY

IMITATE THE YOUNG...THE CITIZENS CHAFE IMPATIENTLY AT THE LEAST TOUCH OF AUTHORITY, AND AT LENGTH THEY CEASE TO CARE EVEN FOR LAWS, WRITTEN OR UNWRITTEN... AND THIS IS THE FAIR AND GLORIOUS BEGINNING OUT OF WHICH SPRINGS DICTATORSHIP...THE EXCESSIVE INCREASE OF ANYTHING CAUSES A REACTION IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION.. DICTATORSHIP NATURALLY ARISES OUT OF DEMOCRACY, AND THE MOST AGGRAVATED FORM OF TYRANNY AND SLAVERY OUT OF THE MOST EXTREME FORM OF LIBERTY."

WELL, THAT'S PRETTY STRONG STUFF. I DO NOT THINK IT IS REPRESENTATIVE OF AMERICA TODAY OR THAT WE ARE ABOUT TO FALL UNDER MACEDONIAN DICTATORSHIP AS ATHENS DID ABOUT 20 YEARS AFTER IT WAS WRITTEN. THESE REFERENCES JUST HAPPEN TO BE BASED ON HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE AND POINT OUT THAT IN THE PAST, TYRANNY AND SOCIAL DISINTEGRATION HAVE ERUPTED AT BOTH ENDS OF THE FREEDOM AND ORDER SPECTRUM. BEWARE OF OFT REPEATED BUZZ WORDS. PAST CIVILIZATIONS HAVE GONE DOWN THE TUBES IN BOTH DIRECTIONS, UNLESS SELF

STABILIZING RIGHTING MOMENTS WERE GENERATED WITHIN THE SOCIETY.

THAT'S WHERE THE GOOD NEWS COMES IN. AS I PERCEIVE EXCURSIONS TOWARD NATIONAL SELF INDULGENCE SO ALSO DO I PERCEIVE RIGHTING MOMENTS OF DEPTH AND VIABILITY. WE ARE HERE TODAY TO HONOR MEN AND WOMEN WHO KNOW THAT BOTH FREEDOM AND ORDER HAVE LIMITS, AND WHO KNOW THAT AS THE SANITY OF AN INDIVIDUAL LIES IN THE CONTINUITY OF HIS MEMORIES SO ALSO DOES THE SANITY OF A COUNTRY LIE IN THE CONTINUITY OF ITS TRADITIONS. BECAUSE I KNOW THAT THEY REPRESENT ONLY THE TOP OF THE ICEBERG, SPOKESMEN FOR MILLIONS WHO FEEL THE SAME WAY, I AM AS PROUD AND CONFIDENT OF AMERICA TODAY AS I WAS WHEN I LEFT SAN DIEGO NINE YEARS AGO.