

A Vision for America

by Hilmar von Campe

It was inspiring to listen to George W. Bush's acceptance speech at the Republican Convention in Philadelphia. For the first time in many years I could visualize an American government dedicated to the true greatness of this nation and her mission in the world -- a government that didn't just talk about it but meant it. It wasn't just the Republicans in the convention hall whose spirits were lifted, and it wasn't just Americans who acquired fresh courage to work for a better country. The hopes of millions of people around the world who are hungry for American moral leadership were also stirred.

What came across was a man of conviction and integrity -- a man who knows what "is" is. And that is the kind of person one longs to see in the White House. "We count on George W. Bush," I was told by a European leader, desperate because of the moral disintegration of his country.

Naturally everybody has his own personal wish list of what he expects from the nominee should he be elected. Lowering taxes and curtailing the rampant bureaucracy will probably feature on a majority of lists. The cancellation of most of Bill Clinton's executive orders is prominent on mine. But most important for the direction of his administration, if he is elected, were Bush's clear statements that he will protect the right to life of human beings, born or unborn -- that he will sign a law making partial- birth abortion illegal, and that he will install an anti- ballistic-missile defense system to protect America. It cannot be said often enough that a nation that does not respect human life and is not willing to defend itself will perish.

George W. Bush spoke of big goals for America. That intrigued me the most. Normally politicians promise material benefits, to be realized with other people's money. They offer no challenge to young people or to the nation. American and Western election campaigns have sunk to a low, materialistic level; they have become contests over who can promise the most-attractive benefits, which is really a process of bribery: you give me your vote, and I give you what you want. I didn't find that spirit in Bush's speech. Instead he spoke of restoring the dignity and honor of the office of President and of big goals for Americans and America. I believe that he seized the issue that is decisive for the nation's future. Only with big goals

can America rise out of the moral mess she is in and be a moral leader of the world.

What should those goals be? In the case of America, it's not too difficult to answer. America is the only nation in the world created on the basis of a principle. The purpose of the American nation was given by the Founding Fathers at its creation: a nation under God, freedom for the individual, freedom as the foundation of society, and freedom as the nation's mission in the world. That has to become reality; the battle for freedom has to become a personal and national commitment. It doesn't mean imposing slipshod arrangements on other nations through force of arms, economic pressures, or promises; or by appeasing Communists, terrorists, and gangsters and calling it the "peace process." Freedom has to be defined not as a license to do as I please but as freedom to serve my fellow man and live accordingly.

Young people especially need to be taught systematically about their Constitution and the lives and sacrifices of the men who signed the Declaration of Independence. About men such as Thomas Nelson, Jr., of Virginia, who directed American guns at his own house, which the British General Cornwallis was using as his headquarters. Nelson's house was destroyed, and he died bankrupt. Or men such as Francis Lewis of New York and John Hart of New Jersey, who lost their fortunes and families. Or the men who were captured by the British and tortured before they died.

All those men meant what they said when they pledged their lives and fortunes and sacred honor to the cause of American freedom, relying on the protection of divine Providence. Many of them died because of it. Their patriotism and qualities of character have to be restored among today's Americans, especially among those in public office. George W. Bush and Dick Cheney can do it. No education that fails to make that restoration of character a centerpiece of all teaching should be funded with public money. Even in a Christian private school, my children were not adequately taught the fundamentals of America's birth as a nation, not by a long shot. Could it be that those who produce the schoolbooks today -- like the Nazis in their day -- rewrite our history because they don't like the philosophy behind it?

The Constitution was designed to protect the freedom of the citizens against abuse by government. It is the most inspired political document I have seen, and it should be a pattern for all nations. It is based on truth and the reality of human nature. If it were applied on all levels of the political process the American people and their

government would be able to speak with a most forceful moral voice in international affairs. The biggest goal I can see for America, responding to George W. Bush's call, is to remake the world on the basis of truth.

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