

CD-1056 Transcription

Lecture at Itasca Seminar [1]. 1979.

M:

Our second speaker this morning is Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum. The biographical summary which appears in your notebooks is also inadequate in describing or summarizing Rabbi Tanenbaum's impressive, truly impressive record of achievement in interreligious affairs, human relations, and social justice, in this nation and around the globe. Many of you know of him, know about him, and are familiar with his tireless efforts through research and education, public information, to help and in some cases force our nation to face the religious and social issues of our time. His schedule -- he knows this better than I, obviously, but [01:00] I know it from trying to contact him throughout the summer. His schedule is awesome, and the demands on his time are so severe that we are very grateful that you're able to carve out this time to be with us. We're very pleased that you're here, and we look forward to hearing from you. Ladies and gentleman, Marc Tanenbaum. (applause)

Marc Tanenbaum:

I was wondering this morning, as I looked at the organization of the program, and sat with [02:00] two people for whom I have not

only very deep affection but even reverence, Monsignor Jack Egan, with whom I had the privilege of working together in the 1960s in trying to build a coalition of Christians and Jews working with blacks and Hispanics and American Indians in economic development of the ghettos of America, and Professor [Alstrom?], who has been one of my great heroes in terms of models of scholarship in America, he and I carried on an informal dialogue in a book that was published by [Fortuis?] Press not too long ago on American values during the bicentennial year. I was trying to understand what kind of logic informed [03:00] the placement of a rabbi between Jack Egan as the first speaker and Dr. Alstrom as the third speaker.

I guess one of my reasons for asking, in perhaps less conscious ways than I'm prepared to acknowledge why that happened, is that I remember hearing a story during Vatican Counsel II, when I had the privilege of being in Rome during the Counsel. A tale was told by the late blessed Pope John XXIII, who was present at the reception given by the president of France. He at that time had been an apostolic delegate to France. And he and the Chief Rabbi of France, Rabbi Kaplan, Jacob Kaplan, [04:00] had been good friends. And they were standing together in a reception room, and then someone socked the gong and were told to go into the other room where they were going to have dinner together. And

Monsignor [Romkali?], standing next to the Chief Rabbi of France, comes to the door and he says, "After you, Chief Rabbi." And the Chief Rabbi turns to him and says, "No, after you, Your Excellence." And this Alphonse and Gaston routine goes on for, like, 10, 15 minutes, (laughter) and they're creating a traffic jam in the room. And finally, Pope John XXIII then Monsignor Romkali and his characteristic human and earthy way grabbed a hold of the arm of the Chief Rabbi and says, "Chief Rabbi, [05:00] the Old Testament before the New Testament," and he shoves him into the other room. (laughter)

Of course, in my vulnerable condition, as I sat here this morning trying to sort out the vibrations of the Republic Airline as they were landing without any traffic control tower at the international airport here, (laughter) I looked at the program and saw myself flanked on one side by Jack Egan, Monsignor Egan, and then on the other side by Professor Alstrom, and seeing myself in a rather neither chronologically or any other way justified position, I thought of a story I'd heard not too long ago of a little Jewish man who owned a small confectionary store on the East Side of New York. And he, like the immigrants [06:00] that Jack Egan had talked about, had come here from the Ukraine, Russia, Poland, where my parents came from, and by dint of hard work had put together this little

shop, had eked out a living, and by working very hard he and his wife were able to educate their children, to begin sending them through college, and he began to feel the experience of living in America as the golden country, as Jewish immigrants used to call it.

Then one day, suddenly, unexpectedly on the right-hand side of his small confectionary shop there opened up a very large supermarket, A&P. And he began to see that a great many of his customers who normally used to come to him for the kind of things he had [07:00] in his little general store, confectionary shop, began going into this very large supermarket, and it began to bother him, but he continued to manage and plug away at it. Then not too long thereafter there opened up on the left-hand side of his shop an enormous department store, and what was left of his customers began going over to this other department store. Well, now it became very serious business, and he sat down with his wife, and they had very great anxiety about whether they were going to be able to make it, whether they were going to survive. So finally, by some kind of overwhelming intuition, they had some insight on how they were going to try to deal with their problem. He had an enormous sign painted, which he hung up on the front of his small confectionary store between the supermarket on one side and the department store on

the other side. The sign had two words on it: main entrance.

(laughter) [08:00] So I just want to remind my Catholic and Protestant friends where it all began. (laughter and applause)

And having disgorged myself of that piece of Jewish triumphalism, (laughter) I want to get to the subject at hand. Theme to which I should like to address myself in the context of the general subject matter of leadership, I guess can be more sharply phrased, for me at least, in trying to ask the question [09:00] what difference does it really make, not only to be a Jewish -- and, I think, Christian -- leader in the kind of world in which we live today, but what difference does it really make to be a committed, believing Christian or Jew in the world of 1979, 1980, and the role of leadership in that kind of world. And I think the [10:00] most effective way that I should like to try to suggest some response to those questions is to share with you in the most authentic Biblical tradition, both of Hebrew scriptures, the Torah, and the Gospel, the method of trying to communicate some insight through the genre of a parable. And I want to tell you about two modern parables which I believe pose this question in a rather focused way, and may suggest some insight into [11:00] why we're here together at all this morning.

The first parable began for me in February of this past year. I was called one day by a man by the name of Dr. Leo Cherne, who's an economist, a lawyer, and president of a group called the International Rescue Committee. Leo Cherne said, "We're putting together a delegation of some 14 Americans to go to Southeast Asia to look into the plight of the Vietnamese boat people, the Cambodian refugees, the Hmong tribesmen from Laos, and would like you to join us." [12:00] And we began talking about the delegation, who was going to be on it: James Michener, the novelist; Bayard Rustin, the civil rights advocate; two American ambassadors -- William Casey, who's a former president of the Export/Import Bank, Ambassador Cecil Lyon, American Ambassador to Chile and Sri Lanka; a Roman Catholic priest from the Diocese of New York who represented Cardinal Cooke, the United States Catholic Conference; and a Protestant scholar representing the National Council of Churches. And I have to tell you in all candor, as Leo Cherne began describing the nature of the itinerary -- in a matter of 14 days we were to go to Hong Kong, the Philippines, Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia. I, frankly, began to avoid trying to give him a decision. [13:00] I was, like all of you, very busy: conferences, meetings, obligations, running an agency with programs all over the world. And then he began to describe what was happening in February of 1978 to thousands of human beings who were coming out of

Vietnam. At that time there were 1,500 Vietnamese boat people setting across the South China Sea. And as he began to talk about what was going on, I said, "Leo, let's go."

It is in the harbor of Jakarta, first parable. [14:00] Under a broiling sun, in that Indonesian archipelago, I walked across the rotting wharf. There was a small boat, small skiff filled with 15 people: a father; two brothers; their wives; eight children, beneath the age of 15, 14 years old. I jumped off the wharf, got onto that boat -- a boat, incidentally, which no one of you would've taken out on this lake, so battered and exhausted was it under the torrents of the pre-monsoon season of the South China Sea. I jumped onto the boat. I introduced myself to the man who apparently was the head of the household, [15:00] whose name was [Nien Tang?]. He was a Roman Catholic. He'd been a teacher in a mission school in Saigon. I told him who I was, why I was there, and I asked him to tell me a story. Nien Tang described how the government of Hanoi, when they came to him in his school and said, "You are no longer going to be a teacher; the government wants you to become a farmer on a collectivized farm, and rural education, creating a new man with new society," he had no choice in the matter. He was told that is to be his future, and his wife's, his children's. He was raised from a tradition of personal dignity and freedom, [16:00] and he

determined that whatever the cost, they were going to leave that country. And so they took whatever resources they had, begged, borrowed, stole, got through the forest at night. Four o'clock at the morning, as he said, they came out to the coastline of Vietnam. They had bought this boat, \$3,000. They packed on -- and they went out across the South China Sea.

They sailed for four weeks on that skiff across the South China Sea. Nien Tang looked at me and he said, "Rabbi, by the third week we were out of food and water. [17:00] Our children, ourselves, all we ate, all we had to drink, we drink seawater and we ate seaweed. Our children became deathly ill. Their temperatures, they must've been 104, 105, burning, flaming with fever. They lay down at night to sleep screaming in terror and pain. And as we were there, sailing, we were passed by, and we counted them -- we had nothing else to do -- we were passed by in the South China Sea by 23 cargo ships, massive cargo ships filled with cargo going to Singapore, at the center of the economic complex of [18:00] Southeast Asia. And we waved flags, undershirts, whatever we had. Stopped. We didn't ask them to pick us up anymore. All we wanted was that they give us some food and water so that we'd have a chance to live and somehow survive. Not a single ship stopped to pick us up or to give us water or food." Then Nien Tang turned to me and said, "Rabbi, I

now understand for the first time in my life what I had read about in our mission school. I now understood for the first time what it must've been like to have been a Jew in Nazi Germany in the 1930s. As terrible as was the physical pain of starvation and hunger, [19:00] it could not begin to compare with what happened to us humanly, psychologically, the knowledge that our lives meant absolutely nothing to anybody, that human life was worthless, that all this talk about the dignity of life was meaningless, that we were absolutely expendable as human beings, that we were no better in anybody's eyes before the eyes of the world than that piece of flotsam out there in the water."

As he was talking, I remembered another time, 1939, the first boat people whom I [20:00] had any experience with. There was a ship called the *St. Louis*. It had been packed with some 930 Jews who came out of Germany. They, took, like the ethnic Chinese now in Vietnam, of whom there are a million and a quarter, who like the Vietnamese are going to be driven out of that country, who are being robbed, raped, cast about as if they are pieces of driftwood, and I remember how that ship, the *St. Louis*, which before it left all of its people they spent thousands of dollars to buy landing immigration certificates from a Cuban agent, a government agent who came to Hamburg, Germany, [21:00] and they gave everything they had to buy those certificates. They also

got immigration quota numbers in the United States. Well, they sailed for weeks across not the tortuous South China sea, but across the turbulent North Atlantic Ocean. They came to Havana, Cuba. To make a very long and painful story brief, when they landed at Havana, the president of Cuba, Federico Brú, came to them and said, "Your immigration certificates are invalid." "But we paid for them." "They're invalid. We want \$1 million in 24 hours for you to land. If not, we'll send you out." And the Jewish refugee agencies, the JDC, flew people in, trying to beg for them to be given entry. They were pushed out to sea. [22:00] The Joint Distribution Committee told the president of Cuba, "If you send them out to sea and they're sent back to Germany, you are sending them back to certain death, to the extermination camps." They sent cables to every government in Latin America -- Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay. Those who bothered to answer wrote back in the classic statement, "No room at the inn."

When they returned back, they came to Miami, the United States, at the time with its own attitudes toward immigration of foreigners, refused to acknowledge their immigration quotas. They were all sent back to Europe, and when the Nazis overran France and Netherlands and England, they were all eliminated.

I was a young man at that time. [23:00] I went to a rally on behalf of the Jewish boat people in Madison Square Garden, and I listened to Rabbi Stephen Wise, one of our great religious leaders, and Nahum Goldman, standing before a packed rally, pleading, "Take them in. We will make sure they are not a war, a charge on the society. Let them go somewhere where they can live." And I felt the impotence, that sense of helplessness. That rally changed my life, as I think it did the lives of a great many Jewish people. I came away from that meeting with what I think for us has been the one permanent universal lesson out of the Nazi Holocaust. It is really [24:00] a paraphrase of the Book of Leviticus: you shall not stand idly by while the blood of your brothers and sisters cry out to you from the Earth. It is not only South Vietnam, it is not only Vietnamese boat people. What is at issue in this event, this parable, what is at issue in the kind of world in which we live today, Cambodia was not 40 years ago. During the last 18 months, two to three million beings, Cambodians, have been slaughtered. It is, in fact, genocide. And the silence of the world [25:00] is the silence of the cemetery.

In Uganda, several months ago, before Idi Amin was dethroned, black Christian Anglicans came to my office -- incredibly, now, one of them is now the president of Uganda -- to describe what

has been happening to the black Christians in Uganda. Uganda was 85% Christian. Idi Amin was a Sudanese Muslim brought down from the north who controlled Uganda by virtue of sheer terrorism, police state. Three hundred thousand to 400,000 black Christian Ugandans have been massacred, day after day after day. No resolutions of the United Nations. No interventions. It is as if human life became nothing. [26:00] And at every continent on the Earth -- Asia, Africa, South Africa, Rhodesia, Sudan -- were nearly a million black Christians, [anonymous?], were destroyed five years ago. That's the central moral, spiritual issue of our lifetime.

In Latin America and Argentina, they began with the Jews, the conflict between the right and the left-wing terrorists, and then a year ago they went after a Roman Catholic bishop and 12 priests who were concelebrating mass. They were wiped out during the course of that conflict. Central moral, spiritual issue of our lifetime, I am persuaded. The central challenge to Jews and Christians today is the affirmation which is at the heart of both the Torah and the Gospel, [27:00] namely that each human life is created in the sacred image of God, that each human life is of infinite worth and infinite value, and that we all have responsibility for one another, above all for the preservation of human life.

I speak of what sometimes can be almost paralyzing if one concentrates on this entirely. There is an epidemic of dehumanization in the world. It does have to do with a decline in the biblical humanistic tradition, which has become frequently a matter of rote. It's a kind of piety. People go to church on Sunday, or they go to the synagogue on Saturday and Friday, and somehow you recite a liturgical formula and you feel that you have done something religious, [28:00] mystical, magical, and then the rest of the week goes on as if it has no relationship with those affirmations, as though there is no contact, no obligation growing out of those affirmations, and the real world in which people have their being, their existence, without the meaning of their lives. You know, one needs to have perspective on this. The United States of America -- it would be unfair not to say this -- has been the most generous nation in the history of humankind in terms of providing food, clothing, shelter, medical care for millions of human beings throughout the world. But human society, just as in the case of human beings, we do not suffer when we have health and wellbeing. [29:00] We become concerned about our survival when we are affected by sickness and pathology. And if you are a sane, reasonable person, you know that when you began having fever and some form of pathology, you better pay attention to it

and take care of it, if you are to not only survive but to prevail in some reasonable good health. And so there is social pathology, as well.

I recall in terms of what are the possibilities of paying attention to the indices of this kind of social pathology three years ago at a time in which there was starvation and famine raging in the Sahelian zone of West Africa, where literally populations of a country overwhelmingly were dying like cattle, and the cattle were dying, as well. The cattle was the center [30:00] of the economy in Chad and Niger. Received a telephone call from a dear friend, a good friend of Monsignor Egan and myself, Father Ted Hesburgh, who's president of the Overseas Development Council. Father Hessburg called me one day. He says, "It's incredible. It's almost like what happened in Germany to the Jews, Marc." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "The populations in Chad and Niger, people are dying, incredible drought and famine. Whole populations will be wiped out unless something is done." And he said, "We went up recently to the Hill and we were told by the House Appropriations Committee -- we were asking for something like seven million tons of food, and we were told by the House Appropriations Committee, 'We know that you people, you religious types, in a sense you do-gooders, that's your job. [31:00] And it's nice of you to ask about our

providing aid for people who are starving and hungry. But we have no constituency in America to provide \$4 million in money, 7.5 million tons of food. We have no people writing us letters. Nobody's calling up. And we're simply going to turn it down. We simply have -- there's no urgency for us to do this.'" Father Ted called, and we organized a small group consisting of Cardinal Cook, Pat Young, of the National Council of Churches, several other people, and we said to them, "You underestimate the generosity of the American people. The American people, once they know the magnitude of human suffering that is taking place, will not sit by while the silos of America were bursting with rain [32:00] and allow thousands of human beings to die."

And so we organized a group, we set about to organize to bring to the attention of the churches and synagogues of America, the priests, the ministers, the laypeople, the rabbis, the nuns, and within a matter of weeks we saw to it that members of Congress received thousands of telegrams and letters and telephone calls. We organized delegations of Christians and Jews around the country who went to their Congressmen and centers and said, "America cannot be itself, true to itself, to stand by while millions of people... We know this is happening. We cannot say that in Munich and Dachau we didn't know what was going on. It was on the newspaper and television every night." And literally

within three weeks' time, the House reversed itself on the foreign aid bill, and then the Senate reversed itself, and within a matter of several [33:00] weeks, there were tons of food in the pipelines. There are literally hundreds of thousands of people alive today because a group of Christian and Jewish leaders cared, not only affirmed their belief in the dignity of human life, of responsibility for the welfare of human beings and society, but acted out those values in the real world, in a way that affected the decision making of the most powerful nation of the world.

Footnote: those of you who think that, you know, this kind of religion, do-gooders... There was nobody else on the Hill advocating [34:00] that food be made available for these millions of starving people. Nobody from the universities, nobody from the labor unions, nobody from any segment of life. This small group of religious leaders, who really felt the prophetic burden of doing justice and caring for the poor and the orphan and the widow, and to feed the hungry, that these were not pieties of the prophet Isaiah, in the year 700 before the present era, but that these were commanding moral imperatives by which one creates one's identity as a Christian and a Jew in a real world. It's no accident that when the Foreign Aid Bill came in for some trouble a year ago, the

president of the United States called together 26 religious leaders: Catholics, Protestants, Evangelicals, Greek Orthodox [35:00] Jews, black church leaders, Hispanics. And that group of 26 leaders, knowing what foreign aid meant in terms of economic development, land reform, meeting the basic needs of millions of human beings, some of whom are living on something like \$50 a year, in a world in which there are 800 million people starving as of this moment now, and we in a country which has been blessed in unparalleled ways, the richest society in the history of humankind, where our problems are not what you eat today but the fact that we waste enough in one bar mitzvah, probably even in one wake, in one confirmation party to fill, feed [36:00] whole villages. Whole villages in Vietnam, Cambodia, Africa, Latin America, the Middle East.

So the first thing I'm trying to say here is that we have taken these fundamental affirmations which are at the heart of the Biblical tradition and at the center of the democratic ethos, which rests on a central affirmation on the dignity of every human life created in the sacred image of God. We stake our existence on that belief that it is of an ultimate meaning to us. It either means that or it means that human life is worthless, and that human beings are expendable, and that human beings can be used for anybody else's [37:00] revolution,

terrorism, violence. Once you allow that possibility, then you are laying the foundation for moral anarchy in the universe, and the possibilities of what happened under the Nazis and under Stalinism, that's now happening in many countries throughout the world -- there are 60 countries today, Amnesty International tells us, that systematically use torture and massacre to maintain themselves in governance. So that affirmation is at the heart of a whole question of what is responsibility for leadership in the kind of world in which we live today.

There are a number of companion points to be made, one of which I think has to do with people who are involved in corporate structures. There's a kind of piety, almost a radical chic, [38:00] that somehow to feel revolutionary one has to be anti-establishment, anti-structures. I tell you, if there had not been the structures of the Roman Catholic Church, its hierarchy, its structure, its network of churches around the country, had there not been the structures, the establishment, the system of the Protestant churches around America, of the synagogues, of their social welfare establishment -- those structures made possible the mobilization of conscience, of public will, of political responsibility, and those structures and countries all over the world have become the most effective instruments for bringing food and clothing and medicine, life itself to millions

of human beings throughout the world. The issue is not whether establishments are good or bad. [39:00] The issue is to what purpose one puts structures, and if structures were not there we would have to create them. And people who walk around and talk about, you know, the heroes of today are the people living out on the fields really have no sense of responsibility of how does one take care of 4 billion people in the world. If you do not have systems and bureaucracies and structures, you have to create it from the ground up to meet vast human need, to produce and distribute and meet those needs.

One other point I want to make in terms of what I believe are central affirmations which need to be dealt with in responsible ways is really the second parable that I want to share with you, namely that the second time we went over to Southeast Asia, we went because there were not 1,500 people leaving Vietnam as there were in February, but by the end of [40:00] December of '78 there were 50 to 60,000 human beings coming out of that part of the world, [sitting?] across those boats, being turned away from their countries, 60% of whom were sinking in the South China Sea. We came back, not incidentally, with a series of recommendations. This group of 14 citizens, Christians and Jews, a series of recommendations to the president of the United States that we presented to him, to Brzezinski, to [Cyrus?]

(inaudible), to the heads of both members of Congress, and thank God the government has adopted 11 of the 12 recommendations we've made. We were the first to demand that this government open up its immigration quotas, to double them from 7,000 a month to 14,000. [41:00] To begin thinking of bringing 100,000 people, not just 50,000 people a year. First to ask for making available the necessary funds to resettle and rehabilitate human beings, plus a series of other recommendations, and they were acted upon, together with recommendations coming from Catholic Relief Service and Immigration Service, the Protestant Church World Service, the Jewish [Joint?] Distribution Committee in (inaudible) who worked together as if they were one, bound together by one concern about the saving of human lives.

But the second experience took place on the east coast of Malaysia, and I have to ask you to hear me out in terms of the event itself. This is not Jewish propaganda. It is not Zionist propaganda. I saw this with my own eyes, and I hardly yet [42:00] recoil from it. Walking up the east coast of Malaysia, in the northern province of Terengganu, there's an island off Terengganu called [Pulau?] Bidong. You've seen it. Bradley went there and did a CBS documentary. Three months before there was nobody on that island. When we came there in December there were 60,000 human beings packed on that island -- Vietnamese, ethnic

Chinese -- a tinderbox. Four toilets, 60,000 people, three water wells. As I was standing on the east coast of Terengganu province, which is a very conservative Muslim province. As many of you may know, the rivalries between the Malaysians, who are Muslims, and the ethnic Chinese has been of long duration, but I [want?] experience that. [43:00] A boatload of people came in out of the South China Sea as we were standing there. I was standing with a man by the name of Hanson, a young commissioner of the United Nations High Commissioner Refugees. A boatload of about 250-some people, Vietnamese, ethnic Chinese.

As it came in to land, to beach on that east coast of Malaysia, suddenly a whole kampong, a whole village of Malaysians, Muslims, of the stripe of Ayatollah Khomeini, fanatic Islamic tradition, people who believe they have the last word of God's revelation and everyone else is an infidel, came down off that island screaming, "[*Kafiri?*]! Infidels! Pork eaters!" Muslims don't eat pork, like Jews -- [44:00] some Jews. (laughter) And the Chinese do eat pork. But that became a caricature, a stereotype of some kind of pejorative character defamation. And that entire village, enraged, inflamed with a kind of both religious and political zeal, pushed that boat off the shore. They pushed it out into the water. It hit a reef. The boat cracked apart, and there in front of our eyes, 250-some human

beings sank. I grabbed [hold of?] Hanson. I said, "My God! Do something!" We went out. We began pulling people out, elderly women like my mother. I mean, I saw -- just the Chinese eyes were different -- an elderly woman. It's my mother. [45:00] Pulled out whoever we could out of the water. The rest of them sank. I said, "Hanson, what the hell's going on here? This is maddening! How could this go on?" And this very calm, cool Swede says to me, "Well, Rabbi, you have to understand, this weekend that's the third boat that's gone down like that. This is an internal problem. It's for the militia, the police problem. There isn't very much we can do." We came back to the president of the United States demanding that the Southern Fleet be brought out of Subic Bay in the Philippines and lift out of the water whoever is floating around and has no place to go, and now the United States and Japan and Italy have begun to do that, and there are now thousands of people who have been saved.

My point is this: to come to an island like [Pulau Tengah?] and Pulau Bidong, to watch the [46:00] ethnic Chinese when they come on that island go to one end of the island and create their own isolated ghetto, and the Vietnamese go to the other end of the island, create their own ghetto, not building common facilities to meet each other's needs, where both of them are under incredible pressure, the racial and religious hatred, the

animosity, the Muslim rejection of Christians and Buddhists and others, the Vietnamese and the Thais, the racial and religious hatred... You have to experience the kind of madness where people believe that they are doing the will of God, [in Chaolo?] they're doing the will of God by destroying another human being who has no right to be himself or herself in their own terms. It's the kind of triumphalism that Monsignor Egan was talking about earlier that all of us have had at one form [47:00] or another: the Orthodox Jews in Israel today who throw rocks at other Jews because they have no right to [ride on the Sabbath?]. I respect the right to preserve the Sabbath on its own terms, but the notion that you have the right of God literally to destroy other human beings to enforce your will... I mean, Ayatollah Khomeini, you know, this great revolution that was to destroy the shah of Iran, indeed a monarchical fascist who violated the rights of many people. Real question of whether the replacement of the shah of Iran by Ayatollah Khomeini has been a major contribution to the betterment of humankind, a man who has now massacred, executed overnight without any judicial procedure 600 human beings because they have corrupted God's Earth, and he has an absolute right from God, a pipeline from God to push Christians and Jews and Baha'i [48:00] and others into prison without any recourse to justice.

See, what I'm trying to say is this, what Father Egan was saying earlier: we take for granted what is one of the greatest achievements in human history, namely the American democratic experiment, which built not only into the structure of our Constitution and the Bill of Rights but into the very American way of life that fundamental conception that the uniqueness of this society is its pluralism, the right of every religious, racial, ethnic groups to be itself in its own terms, that every Catholic, Protestant, Evangelical, Greek Orthodox, black, Hispanic, [49:00] red American comes to the American table not by suffering but by right, comes to the American dialogue table as a peer, and that while every group comes to the table with its own agenda, with its own set of natural priorities, its own set of interests, the democratic society hinges on an affirmation of the common welfare, that we have a responsibility for the social contract for the welfare of this entire society. And the point at which this society begins to become fragmented, when a group says its own interests are superior to those of the rest of the society, we begin to be in very great trouble, and we begin to lay a foundation what, God forbid, could become the Balkanization of America. This is the only country in the world which has been spared the experience of the religious wars of Europe and Asia [50:00] and Africa and Latin America. And so the need to not take for granted the religious, racial pluralism,

the recognition that something very precious has been developed in this society, namely not only that we indulge the right of another to be each other, to tolerate another, but in fact, as Martin Buber used to say about the life of a dialogue, the responsibility is not only that not to seek to undermine the faith conviction of another, but to seek to affirm the other in the fullness of his or her selfhood, in his or her own terms.

I would suggest to you that the most important export that the United States has to give to the world is not Coca-Cola, which - - the Coca-Colonial Empire they call us in Latin America.

[51:00] Nor is it even our gadgets. Conceivably, for the future of the human race, the most important cultural model we represent that is embodied in our leadership as well as in our society is that of the democratic experiment of religious and cultural pluralism. Africa will not survive unless it learns a model of that kind, of creating unity in the midst of diversity. Nigeria and Biafra almost went up in flames in '67, '68 because that lesson was not learned. Sudan went down in flames with nearly a million human beings being killed because there was no conception of how do you create a unified society where the unity of a society has a priority over the claims of the various [52:00] tribal groups. And that's true now in Asia. It is true now in the Middle East, an experiment with which we are now all

engaged in terms of the religious, racial, cultural pluralism, which Islamic theology must accommodate to -- it has no vision of pluralism in the world. Only the modernists in the Islamic world (inaudible) [Kkan of?] Pakistan beginning to develop a modernist theology of pluralism. And so I guess, in summary, what I'm trying to say is that as one thinks in terms of what are the responsibility of leadership in the kind of world in which we live today, it's not simply a matter, I believe, of passive choice. When you live in a world in which the United States and the [53:00] Soviet Union alone today, if we do not build another single intercontinental ballistic missile, we have in the silos of America alone the capacity to create 658,000 Hiroshimas, and the Soviet Union... (break in tape)

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