

ADDRESS BY VICE PRESIDENT GERALD R. FORD
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN COMMENCEMENT
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When I was an undergraduate a popular young novelist named Thomas Wolfe wrote a book called "You Can't Go Home Again." His title stated a cruel rule of life; in general, you cannot return to the scenes of your younger days and recapture the happiness that memory has stored away while erasing the bad moments.

But there are two places I always feel at home. One is the House of Representatives, where I served 25 years before becoming our country's first "instant Vice President" last December 6th.

The other place where I will always feel I belong is this beautiful and hospitable campus. Here I spent four memorable years that made possible the next forty -- well, it is really only thirty-nine.

And for the benefit of those who have been wondering, since I became Vice President, whether or not I am able to make the right decisions -- I say with pride that I turned down chances to go to Harvard.....and to Michigan State.

Thanks to Harry Kipke, I had a job here at Michigan and for my meals I waited on tables at the University hospital. I remember I budgeted myself \$2 per week for entertainment and spending money. But since I did part of my hashing in the student nurses' cafeteria, I never felt shortchanged on the social side.

Undergraduates weren't allowed to have cars then, so we never had to worry about getting enough gasoline. There wasn't any television, so if you wanted to see a football

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game you had to go to it by foot, bus or train. It has gotten around that I played a little football here -- and I did wear my helmet -- but I have skillfully managed to conceal that I studied economics. There have always been too many amateur economists in Washington.

I have been trying to remember my own commencement. For the life of me I can't remember who the speaker was or what he said. I am probably doing some fine American a disservice and I expect the same treatment 39 years from today.

Let me start with a quotation from one of the great world leaders of this century whose words have been read by millions.

"Democracy is correlative with centralism and freedom with discipline. They are the two opposites of a single entity, contradictory as well as united, and we should not one-sidedly emphasize one to the denial of the other.

"Within the ranks of the people, we cannot do without freedom, nor can we do without discipline; we cannot do without democracy, nor can we do without centralism."

This is one of the thoughts of Chairman Mao, taken from this little red book which I was given two summers ago during my trip to the People's Republic of China with the late Hale Boggs, Majority Leader of the House. This was one of the most fascinating experiences of my life.

I do not suggest I have been converted by the thoughts of Chairman Mao. Words like democracy and freedom have different meanings in China and in America. As Americans, we found the People's Republic of China rather short on both democracy and freedom and long on discipline and centralism.

Chairman Mao's definition of discipline for the Chinese Communist Party, for example, is stated very explicitly:

1. The individual is subordinate to the organization.
2. The minority is subordinate to the majority.

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3. The lower level is subordinate to the higher level,
and
4. The entire Membership is subordinate to the Central
Committee.

However hard that would be for Americans of any political party to swallow, I imagine Chinese who have grown up since Chairman Mao's revolution would find the definitions of freedom in our Bill of Rights equally alarming.

When I was in my junior year here, Chairman Mao was leading the famous "Long March" of his comrades to the interior of China. When we studied current world affairs in the 1930's, we were almost oblivious to them, believing that the Western-style democracy of Dr. Sun Yat Sen was bringing China out of her long isolation and division.

I thought of this while spending almost a whole night in animated conversation with Premier Chou En Lai, a veteran of the Long March and as gracious a host as he is a tough debater. Probably the Premier thought of Congressman Boggs and me as mere boys, for he and Chairman Mao have been around a long time.

But almost the only Chinese we saw who were older than ourselves were China's top echelon of leaders. The overwhelming impression one brings away from a visit to the People's Republic is that it is a country of young people. Perhaps most of my generation of Chinese perished in the long war with Japan and the Revolution that followed -- I do not know, but we seldom saw them. We did see and talk to literally hundreds of dedicated and disciplined young men and women who grew up after World War II and who live by the Thoughts of Chairman Mao.

Wherever we went, to rural commune or factory or school, we were struck by the intensity of their motivation toward the common goals set for them by their leaders. The desire of today's Chinese to reform their society through their own

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resources and by their own hard work, and their apparently total belief in and devotion to their system of government, is both tremendously impressive and a little frightening to Americans.

This was particularly true among students, although we saw only one university, and it was almost deserted. During the so-called Great Cultural Revolution, Chairman Mao decided that university students were getting too big for their britches, too far removed from the reality of the workers' and peasants' hard struggle for subsistence.

So Chairman Mao, without waiting for any act of Congress or court order or national election, simply closed up all the universities and sent the students, professors, administrators and all back to the farms and the factories and the army -- the lucky ones got the army -- for three or four years to learn about life as it really is.

Only now are the institutions of higher learning being reorganized, with the new students admitted on the basis of correct ideology and party recommendations rather than the ancient Chinese system of scholarly examinations -- the direct ancestors of College Boards and probably no worse.

Some of the former students and faculty who have been reinstated and restored to grace told us enthusiastically that getting their hands dirty and feet muddy was a great experience, better equipping them to obey Chairman Mao's command to "Serve the People." I confess I found it difficult to disbelieve them, although it will take a generation to assess what deep damage this strong medicine may have done to China's scientific and educational development.

Weighing all that I saw and learned in those weeks, I returned to my own country with renewed faith in our unique emphasis on individuality and freedom. We are a new nation by Chinese reckoning even as we near our Bicentennial, and

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our civilization is an amalgam of many older ones, most of them young compared to China's.

Yet we can learn from Chairman Mao's precept -- and indeed the Romans were struggling with it when the Great Wall of China was built -- that freedom and discipline are the contradictory opposites of a single entity -- neither of which should be overemphasized -- both of which are essential in any society.

From the earliest records of organized communities to tomorrow's newspaper or television talk show, human beings have made a continuous effort to find the perfect mix of these elements -- discipline and dedication on the one hand; individuality and freedom on the other.

The search for proper proportion goes on not only in government but in organized groups of all sizes, in the family, and in our individual lives.

Among the ancient Greeks, the Athenians were long on freedom and the Spartans on discipline; the Spartans won the wars but the Athenians still capture our minds. Roman legions conquered their world with discipline, dedication and iron swords while the free and lawless mobs of Rome carried the Republic first to chaos, then into dictatorship.

Thereafter, the Roman world was a model of law and order but bereft of creativity and fatal for free thinkers. The Renaissance world was almost the reverse.

Whenever a society goes too far in one direction or another it is in trouble; too much discipline begets despotism, even the best of which corrodes the human spirit. Too much individuality and freedom brings disorder and anarchy in which no man can live in safety, let alone create for the common good.

You have seen these contradictory forces clash in your own lives. Youth cries for individuality and freedom; parents and preachers and professors -- yes, and most politicians too -- come down hard for discipline and

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dedication.

It is no accident that the several fields of academic inquiry are formally called "disciplines." On the other hand, now that you have each received a degree for mastering your particular discipline, you rightly feel you have earned a greater measure of freedom. But remember Chairman Mao: "We should not onesidedly emphasize one to the denial of the other. -- We cannot do without freedom, nor can we do without discipline."

Without a continuous readjustment of the delicate balance between discipline and freedom, between dedication and individuality, you cannot have either a happy life or a good society.

Perhaps you are wondering.....what is he doing talking to us like a philosopher, when he is a politician. Well, so is Chairman Mao a politician, even though he is a Communist and I certainly am not. But what are politicians for, except to seek in government that same elusive balance between freedom and discipline we have both recommended to you?

I strongly believe that our Constitution and the traditions and institutions that have grown up under it are much better able to maintain this balance than those of the People's Republic.

But I also believe that America can use a little extra measure of discipline and dedication today -- not to any individual or political party -- but to the enduring ideals of our country which Abraham Lincoln called "the last best hope of earth."

Those ideals cannot be perfectly articulated -- certainly never better than Lincoln did -- yet they add up to faith in the American people and the Constitutional conscience of the nation.

I would insult your intelligence and the vote which is

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now yours under that Constitution -- which I never had as a Michigan student -- if I remained silent on the political torment which our country is undergoing today with its center in Washington. I would insult you also if I gave you a purely political speech. My views have been pretty well broadcast.

So I will close with these general observations:

I am proud to be a citizen of a country which can openly debate the legal and moral fitness of its highest government leaders without riot or revolution, without reprisals or repression, and within a Constitutional system so strong and secure that its position in the community of nations is undiminished.

I believe that truth is the glue that holds government together and that to the extent that truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth becomes known, the sooner this tragic chapter in our history can be closed.

I have every confidence in the ultimate wisdom and justice of the American people, even though that elusive thing called "public opinion" may fall into short-range errors. I cannot understand how anyone can criticize the President for "taking his case to the people" unless what the critic really wants is to negate the verdict of the people.

I cannot imagine any other country in the world where the opposition would seek, and the chief executive would allow, the dissemination of his most private and personal conversations with his staff which, to be honest, do not exactly confer sainthood on anyone concerned. Certainly Chairman Mao is never going to do this.

When all is said and done -- and the sooner the better -- I firmly hope and fervently pray that our country will be stronger and wiser for its present ordeal. Throughout our nearly 200 years as a nation we have emerged from every adversity a bigger and better people. In my own lifetime, and indeed in yours, Americans have made giant strides toward

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equality among ourselves and peaceful relations with all others, toward a greater sharing of our material abundance and a greater awareness of our spiritual want.

Another well-known writer of my student years, John Steinbeck, said movingly in "The Grapes of Wrath":

"Unlike any other thing in the Universe, Man grows beyond his work, walks up the stairs of his concepts, emerges ahead of his accomplishments."

This is what the University of Michigan tries to prepare us for. I trust it will be true for each of you as you start that joyous journey of work, concepts and accomplishment.

God bless you all.

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