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Is Gorbachev Good for America?

It is rather obvious that the financial and media establishment in the United States has decided that the political survival of Mikhail Gorbachev is more in our national interest than the freedom of Lithuania or the other Captive Nations. After all, *Time* Magazine proclaimed him the Man of the Decade.

Maybe that's why Rep. Richard Gephardt (D-MO) felt he could come out for direct financial aid to the Soviets like the Marshall Plan which the U.S. taxpayers sent to Western Europe after World War II. Some establishment oracles thought Gephardt had a neat idea, but he didn't score any points with the taxpayers because the day of the free and easy handout is over.

Senator Alfonse D'Amato (R-NY) is not the only one who rebels against the policy of ranking stability with Gorbachev higher on our ladder of priorities than liberty. The world-famous physicist, Dr. Edward Teller, made a speech last night in Washington, D.C., which dispelled some of this Gorbomania. Calling Gorbachev "remarkable," Teller warned that "he is a good Communist who is trying to make Communism respectable."

"Gorbachev is the most intelligent leader the Soviets ever had," Dr. Teller conceded. "Gorbachev may be the most intelligent leader the Russians ever had. He is certainly good for the Soviet Union because he is trying to stop the most horrible malpractice of the Soviet system."

But whether Gorbachev is good for American, Dr. Teller said, "is a very different question." Is making Communism respectable a desirable goal?

Teller explained that Communism is diametrically opposed to America and all it stands for. He praised the framers of the American Constitution for understanding clearly that, in a healthy society, "everybody should have the right and obligation to think for himself; and *that* is the antithesis of Communism, of Socialism, and of planning by government."

Teller described the Soviet system as obsessed with central planning of the economy. That's what makes Communism "the antithesis of American freedom."

Glasnost has given the Russians much more freedom to speak than they used to have, “but then there used to be no freedom of speech and now there is some.” Gorbachev has released a few political prisoners and permitted some persons to leave the country.

He has allowed some freedom to satellite countries. How eager the captive peoples are to escape the chains of Communism is shown by the several elections they have had so far: the Communists received only about ten percent of the vote.

Teller told a little story. He occasionally teaches physics to some Soviet exchange students. One day he invited questions and they asked about flying saucers. He told them there are no such things. Again and again, the students asked the great scientist to tell them about flying saucers. He could not get them off the topic.

Finally one student explained, “But Moscow told us there are no flying saucers, and we cannot believe what Moscow said.” Teller used this experience to illustrate the fact that the credibility of the Soviet government is zero.

Are the Soviets less of a military threat than they were before the Berlin Wall came down? They have cut back somewhat on their spending for conventional weapons but, Teller warned, they have “increased spending on strategic attack weapons. Their rockets are more dangerous than ever.”

The threat from rockets – short-range, middle-range, long-range – has been accelerated. “Now 15 or 20 governments have these dangerous instruments and, by the turn of the century, the number may be 30, 40, or 50.”

Teller pointed out that these rockets “need not be associated with nuclear weapons to be very dangerous. They are sufficiently dangerous if they are associated with gas or bacteriological weapons.”

Teller gave enthusiastic support to the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) because it will be a defense against “any rocket attack of any type – nuclear, bacteriological, high explosives, chemical or whatever.”

Teller described for his listeners some of the advances of the Soviet SDI program. They have mobile ground-to-air missiles which can expand their defenses in a relatively short time.

Teller is convinced that President Bush remains a staunch support of SDI. Teller quoted the President as explicitly saying, when he came to the Lawrence Livermore Laboratory, you do what you promised, and I will do what I promised, because I want safety for the United States.