



Atlas Freedom Dinner Toast to Freedom

By John Lenczowski

During the Cold War, we in the West were reminded of a key element of freedom that we tend to forget when we exercise that freedom too long without struggle.

This is its moral core.

The Cold War was a war between two philosophies of life and between liberty and slavery.

But ultimately, it was a war between good and evil.

Perhaps the most dramatic manifestation of the moral core of liberty was revealed when we witnessed the Cold War going on within the Soviet Empire.

We saw some people who were fully enslaved – those who had sold their souls to the communist system.

But we also saw others whose enslavement was only external.

These were people who possessed what we can call an "inner freedom."

This inner freedom consisted of a refusal to submit to the false moral standards imposed by the regime – standards that did not comport with the Natural Moral Law – the Law of Decent Behavior – the law written on the human heart, some say by nature, but most say by God.

True, these people were enslaved by the fundamental injustice imposed on society by the regime.

They had lost their external liberty because their human rights had been violated.

But those possessed of inner freedom never lost sight of the fact of the injustice. They never accepted that their rights had been taken away – because they knew that they continued to possess those rights, which were inalienable. They knew that no one could take them away because they had been endowed those rights not by man, but by their Creator.

Inner freedom, then, was the continued possession of the conviction that there is such a thing as justice no matter what the laws of the communist system said – because there exists a transcendent, objective, universal, moral order in the world by which they would live no matter what external injustices were imposed upon them.

These were the people who refused to be accessories to the repression of their fellow man.



These were the people who refused to repeat the official falsehoods of the regime.

This inner freedom required courage. But, ultimately, it was sustained spiritually.

You could see it, for example, in the hearts of the millions of Poles who heeded Pope John Paul II as he repeated the words of Jesus: "Be not afraid."

You could see it in the witness of Whittaker Chambers, the American editor, a believing communist who spied for the Soviet Union, and converted from communism to the cause of freedom. Chambers saw that there is what he called "a logic of the soul" that was more powerful than the logic of mere human reason – the "logic of the mind."

No matter how apparently logical were the mental constructs and political solutions of Marxism, they were always trumped by the little voice of conscience:

– The voice that would haunt some communists like himself;

– The voice that told them that their daily work in support of the communist system was causing gross injustice, human suffering, slavery, and murder.

So freedom has a moral – and ultimately, spiritual – core.

Our Founders recognized this.

They said that a free people must be a self-governing people.

And to govern oneself means to control oneself, to control one's evil impulses, one's basest passions.

People who cannot control themselves are incapable of producing order.

And because society demands order even before liberty, it will demand government to impose that order so that the most basic functions of society can take place.

True freedom, then, is freedom first from one's vices, freedom from evil, freedom from dishonesty – because only when we pursue lives of virtue do we avoid inviting big government to come and restrain us.

Only when we possess inner freedom do we avoid becoming accessories to the violation of other people's rights and freedoms.

We in the West, with our allies who possessed inner freedom in the East, won the Cold War. It was truly an epic moral conflict.

Let us raise a toast to that victory of freedom and be grateful that we are still free to pass the lessons of that war on to the next generation.

This toast took place at Atlas's Annual Freedom Dinner on November 12, 2008