

# John F. Kennedy – a Speech on the American Spirit [Conspiracy Theories]

## (Excerpts)

2:50 min

In recent months I have spoken many times about how difficult and dangerous a period it is through which we now move. I would like to take this opportunity to say a word about the American spirit in this time of trial.

In the most critical periods of our nation's history, there have always been those fringes of our society who have sought to escape their own responsibility by finding a simple solution, an appealing slogan, or a convenient scapegoat. Financial crises could be explained by the presence of too many immigrants or too few greenbacks.

War could be attributed to munitions makers or international bankers. Peace conferences failed because we were duped by the British or tricked by the French or deceived by the Russians.

It was not the presence of Soviet troops in Eastern Europe that drove it to communism; it was the sell-out at Yalta. It was not a civil war that removed China from the free world; it was treason in high places. At times these fanatics have achieved a temporary success among those who lack the will or the vision to face unpleasant tasks or unsolved problems.

But in time the basic good sense and stability of the great American consensus has always prevailed.

Now we are face to face once again with a period of heightened peril. The risks are great, the burdens heavy, the problems incapable of swift or lasting solution. And under the strains and frustrations imposed by constant tension and harassment, the discordant voices of extremism are heard once again in the land. Men who are unwilling to face up to the danger from without are convinced that the real danger comes from within.

They look suspiciously at their neighbors and their leaders. They call for a 'man on horseback' because they do not trust the people. They find treason in our finest churches, in our highest court, and even in the treatment of our water. They equate the Democratic Party with the welfare state, the welfare state with socialism, and socialism with communism. They object quite rightly to politics' intruding on the military - but they are anxious for the military to engage in politics.

But you and I and most Americans take a different view of our peril. We know that it comes from without, not within. It must be met by quiet preparedness, not provocative speeches.

So let us not heed these counsels of fear and suspicion. Let us concentrate more on keeping enemy bombers and missiles away from our shores, and concentrate less on keeping neighbors away from our shelters. Let us devote more energy to organize the free and friendly nations of the world, with common trade and strategic goals, and devote less energy to organizing armed bands of civilian guerrillas that are more likely to supply local vigilantes than national vigilance.

Let our patriotism be reflected in the creation of confidence rather than crusades of suspicion. Let us prove we think our country great by striving to make it greater. And, above all, let us remember that, however serious the outlook, the one great irreversible trend in world history is on the side of liberty - and so, for all time to come, are we.