

FEB 25 1962

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Approved For Release 1999/09/16 : CIA-RDP70-00

YUMA, ARIZ.

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Sen. Goldwater and Robert Welch

Back in the year 1958, the founder and leader of the John Birch Society published his "firm belief" that President Eisenhower "is a dedicated, conscious agent of the Communist conspiracy . . ." Despite the obvious idiocy of this assertion, its author, Robert Welch, began suddenly to rise as the new prophet of the extreme right-wingers in an America that should have known better.

Actually, Welch's activities in the anti-communist field began earlier. As early as January of 1956 he was publishing "One Man's Opinion," later to become "American Opinion," a monthly magazine which advanced his peculiar and disturbed thesis. And what was his thesis? His thesis was that the government of the United States and its principal leaders, including Dwight and Milton Eisenhower and John Foster Dulles and his brother Allen, of the CIA, actively engaged in a conspiracy designed to turn the United States over to the communists.

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And so for five long years he preached his twisted sermons. But what was surprising—and shocking—was that so many Americans should have taken leave of their senses and joined forces with Welch. To organize their efforts, he formed the John Birch Society with himself as its leader—and made it clear that the society would be run from the top, down. At the bottom were the members who received his dictums from on high.

Incredible as it may seem, a justice of the Arizona Supreme Court—M.T. Phelps—even consented to serve on the "advisory council" of this strange organization headed by this weird mentality.

Welch and his John Birch Society obviously presented a difficult problem for many conservative Americans. Many of them openly agreed with, and supported him. But others apparently had misgivings, no matter how welcome his attacks on the liberals, the Democrats, the United Nations, the Supreme Court, the moderate Republicans. His extravagances must finally have outweighed his assets. For the leaders of the conservative wing have now parted company with Robert Welch.

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The February 13th issue of National Review, a leading conservative magazine, carries a lengthy repudiation of the Welch

premise that the U.S. government is part of the communist conspiracy. It describes Welch as a man "whose views on current affairs are, at so many critical points x x x so far removed from common sense."

Two weeks later, the same magazine publishes a letter from Sen. Barry Goldwater of Arizona. It reads, in part:

"I think you have clearly stated the problem which Mr. Welch's continued leadership of the John Birch Society poses for sincere conservatives. It is a problem which requires all of us who believe in the concepts of constitutional government and individual liberty to make it plain that we do not intend to depart from the truth in the pursuit of the aims we believe are in the best interests of the American people. x x x I believe the best thing Mr. Welch could do to serve the cause of anti-Communism in the United States would be to resign. I am sure you realize this is a difficult decision for me to make, for I am well acquainted with Mr. Welch's dedication. However, we cannot allow the emblem of irresponsibility to be attached to the conservative banner."

—BARRY GOLDWATER
U.S. Senator (Ariz.)

We welcome Senator Goldwater's decision to renounce Robert Welch and his "emblem of irresponsibility." Calling for Welch's resignation may not make Senator Goldwater the darling of the liberals, but it will clarify his position with respect to the Welch thesis that the U.S. government is deliberately betraying the American people. And from the practical standpoint, Welch would soon have become — if he hadn't already done so—a political liability to a man who is running for the presidency.

What remains unexplained, however, is why it took so long for Senator Goldwater to see the glaring flaw in Welch's position. Welch has been assiduously smearing U.S. governments, Republican and Democratic alike, for six years, in word and in print. His smear of President Eisenhower, which Senator Goldwater couldn't possibly have missed, came in 1958. Yet as recently as last December, Senator Goldwater dodged the issue. "I do not propose," he said, "to become embroiled in any dispute over the merits of the Birch Society or its members."

But Goldwater, finally, has become embroiled. He has taken his position, however tardy it may be. And for that, we in Arizona are thankful.

Approved For Release 1999/09/16 : CIA-RDP70-00058R000200100087-3