A Conversation with CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER

In this conversation, Krauthammer reflects on his upbringing in a politically-tumultuous Quebec, his work in medicine, and his views on Zionism, Judaism, and religion. Krauthammer and Kristol also discuss some of the key ideas, questions, and themes of his writing—including the "Reagan Doctrine," an idea he coined, the role of America in a new post-Cold War world, and whether the America of 2015 is in decline.

On the Sixties and Quebec, Krauthammer says: Normally it takes till middle age to realize that Left and Right are essentially, at the extremes, the equivalent: totalitarian. [I saw as a student] that extreme nationalism and extreme socialism don't just meet in Berlin in 1933, they can meet at [McGill University in Montreal] in 1968. I became very acutely aware of the dangers, the hypocrisies...of the political extremes. It cleansed me very early in my political evolution of any romanticism.

On religion and belief, Krauthammer says: I'm not a sort of traditional theist. I can't say I believe in even the God of Judaism, or [of] Christianity, or [of] Islam. I'm not sure I can believe in a God of history, who is really interested in our little lives, and who listens to us... But there's a tradition, sort of Jewish agnosticism... I feel an obligation to Jewish history, to carry it on, to respect the texts, to study them, to transmit them.

On Obama and America in retreat, Krauthammer says: We elected a president who found the country to be fatigued, and this was the perfect opportunity to impose his view of the world, which is of America being non-exceptional, America not having the mandate of heaven, America having forfeited, if it ever had it, the moral authority to be the arbiter of the world, which is what we were. [He was] thus a man who ordered a retreat.

Chapters in CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER Conversation