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The recrudescence of international intrigue, 1926.

"THE RECRUDESCENCE OF INTERNATIONAL INTRIGUE."

RABBI ABBA HILLEL SILVER, D.D.

THE TEMPLE, SUNDAY MORNING.

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I had a professor once whose favorite maxim was, "The reason why men should study history is to discover how the human race never profited from its experience." And that sentence comes to mind when one thinks of the international events of the past few months in the light of what has preceded. As you will recall, the treaties of Locarno, which were formally signed in London December last, provided for many good and highly desirable things. Among them were the establishment of a neutral zone between Germany and France, provisions for compulsory arbitration between these two countries when disputes shall arise, and mutual guarantees for assistance in case of unwarranted aggression.

Among the stipulations of the treaties was that Germany shall be admitted into the League as a member of the assembly and as a member of the higher legislative body of the League--the Council. The Council of the League of Nations today has in its membership England, France, Italy and Japan as permanent seat holders in the Council, and Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Sweden, Spain, Uruguay and Brazil as temporary seat holders by election. Germany shall be given a permanent seat along with the four major powers.

In good faith Germany made the application. A meeting of the League was summoned. Germany was not admitted into the League. After ten days of wrangling and

charges and counter-charges, with a great deal of backstairs diplomacy coming to the surface, the meeting had to adjourn with nothing accomplished, and the meeting was postponed until September next.

And what had happened, and why has this been so important as to deserve comment? Why was Germany, after having been solicited to join the League and after having made formal application, denied admittance? Why was it not admitted? What had happened? Nothing surprising. Just another instance of a diplomatic confidence game. Even as the treaties of Locarno were being discussed and the world was encouraged to believe that the era of strife and hate and suspicion was coming to an end, and the era of secret diplomacy, even as these negotiations were proceeding England and France entered into secret agreements with Poland with the idea that as soon as Germany will make the application to join the League Poland shall make a similar application. Why? Why, in order to maintain the balance within the League; in order to counterbalance, as it were, to nullify, if you please, the influence of Germany in the League; to put another vote there, always to be counted upon as favorable to the so-called allied powers, to offset the vote of Germany.

Germany was not informed of it; and shortly before the day of the meeting of the League, Poland made its application for a permanent seat in the League, and encouraged by that Spain and Brazil, having only a temporary seat there,

put in their application for permanent seats, with the result that utter confusion ensued. The foreign minister of Great Britain, Chamberlain, who was notoriously guilty of this double-crossing, came to Geneva after having publicly been rebuked by the people of England; impotent, he had made commitments that he could not carry through. And so they came and they wrangled and they went home, abashed, discomfited, with their reputations even more sullied, and the prestige of the League considerably diminished, with Germany still out of the League and with Europe in a greater and a worse condition of affairs, confusion and instability than ever before.

A newspaper publicist, reporting upon the events in Geneva, writes: "The failure of this meeting, designed to consecrate Locarno, may be written down as the most serious event in world politics since the Paris peace conference and of the war. It is a great set-back for the League, and it certainly greatly endangers the whole Locarno peace plan. The eminent Englishman, Gilbert Murry, who was a friend of the League, states to his mind that the League had evidently completely abdicated. At this session there was no meeting of the assembly, there was no public meeting of the Council. Just a few great powers met and quarreled and bartered, wrangled, and accomplished nothing. The League had ceased to function."

Mr. Senator Borah, of the United States Senate, interprets the last occurrence at Geneve to mean

that the old regime of Europe, the regime responsible for the last war, is assuming control again over the direction and the destiny of Europe. Evidently something serious had happened. You see, the League of Nations is not strong enough as yet to suffer many such debacles; it has not as yet many great achievements to its credit to enable it to withstand the severe criticism of such a great faith; in fact, it has many things not to its discredit; but to point to its essential weakness and inability to cope with major problems, the League was silent, the League was compelled to be silent, for example during the French occupation of the Ruhr. It did not speak; it could not speak.

The League was found impotent when Mussolini attacked Corfu and assassinated people; the League was unable to do any effective work in the opium negotiation; the League was silent, the League was compelled to be silent in this colonial war which is still going on in Northern Africa; the League did not speak, the League could not speak when France, carrying out its imperialistic policies in Syria, devastated the city of Damascus and slew men by the hundreds. These were critical problems presented to the thought of the world, problems of international significance, problems in which the nations in league within the League were involved, concerning which the League did nothing because it could do nothing.

And this last fiasco is perhaps the most serious of them all, and it revealed to the world exactly

what the motives were behind the powers within the League. They wish to use the League not as an instrument for establishing peace but as an instrument for selfish aggrandizement, as an instrument for perpetuating the prestige and the prerogatives of the few major powers who came out victorious in the last war. And this is evidently the impression not alone of bystanders but of people who are close to the situation. It was brought home to us when our ambassador in the Court of St. James, Mr. Houghton, and our minister at Switzerland, Mr. Gibson, having been summoned to the White House to familiarize the President and the men in authority concerning actual conditions in Europe, stated--I quote the statement of the ambassador to England--"The League is no longer a world league but an European council which is in process of splitting into two camps, and which is destined to lapse into impotency." That alone is very serious, this blow to the League; but there are even more serious consequences.

The League has summoned a world conference for disarmament to meet in Geneva on May 17th, a few weeks hence. This meeting on May 17th was to be the preliminary meeting looking to a major conference which was to take up the entire matter of the reduction of the burden of armament the world over, a very imperative and desperately needed move in the world. Now it is the common opinion of all the informed peoples in Europe and here that this conference--to which the United States, by the way, has been

invited, and which invitation has been accepted--that this conference will fail. With Germany out of the League, with the Locarno treaties in the air, with Russia unwilling to join this conference, inasmuch as it is not a member of the League, this conference will be futile and is doomed to failure. And in place of the beneficent work which a conference such as this could have accomplished, what will actually take place in Europe and what is actually transpiring today, is this: that the nations of Europe are arming more than at any time since the war; that the nations of Europe are arming to the death, and that the nations of Europe are making secret guarantees, secret alliances, one with another, offensive and defensive, because they are nearly all convinced--and the conviction is becoming stronger as these efforts for peace collapse one after another--that Europe is on the way to another vast, terrible, universal war, which will be even more disastrous than the one we witnessed.

The weakening of the prestige of the League means, for the time being, at least, a set-back in all efforts looking toward the reduction of armaments. There is as a corollary to this still another serious result, namely, that the militaristic groups in every nation abroad or at home naturally seize upon these failures as arguments for increased national armament. That voice has already been heard in every land in Europe and is now being heard in America. You see, the nations cannot agree. The

same diplomatic rivalries are in the world today as existed before 1914, and the same results are to be expected. "Therefore let us prepare, let us not be found wanting when the crisis comes and when war breaks out." And the militarist finds in these new grists for his mill, new arguments for his militaristic preachment--increased armament, increased navies, increased armies; which of course make war even more proximate and even more inevitable.

Then, too, what has transpired in Geneva a few weeks ago would lend great strength to the hands of the isolationists in our land--those who advise the United States not to enter the World Court; those who have maintained consistently that the United States shall not entangle itself, as they put it, in foreign alliances; that the United States should have nothing to do with any agency or institution which the European peoples will set up for the encouragements of amicable settlements among themselves. They now say, "You see the sinister motives of those peoples; you see their wild machinations; you see what they are after. Why should we get into this mess?" That was heard on the floor of the Senate a few days ago. Forgetting, of course, that long before these institutions existed we got into a worse mess--the war. We were dragged into the war as we are likely to be dragged into any war that will tomorrow or the next day take place in Europe. For there is no such thing today as political isolation any

more than there is economic isolation, for America today, more than ever, has investments in Europe, monetary investments if nothing else. To protect America's peace is, to a great degree, dependent upon the preservation of peace in Europe; that any disturbance there, any small fire kindled in any one of a hundred peoples in Europe, may be increased to a vast conflagration which will reach our own shores. For the isolationist finds in each successive defeat of the League argument, even as the militarist does, even as all the reactionary forces in the world do, even as Mussolini does.

We must not minimize what has taken place in Geneva, and yet we must not exaggerate. The League, to my mind, will survive this last catastrophe, but unless the nations of Europe are morally superior to their representatives there assembled, the League of Nations will not long survive their last catastrophe. It is clear that at all costs the League must be saved for the peoples of Europe, for they have nothing else to take its place. I have never advocated the entrance of the United States into the League; I have regarded it as too previous. I have always believed that many persistent acts should take place before the United States is ready to enter the League. For the nations that have entered the League, the League for the European peoples is a reality, and the only agency today there that puts some sort of a check upon their nationalistic rivalries, or, if it does not do that, forces them to

bring these international rivalries and suspicions to the forefront, so that the peoples of the world can see them and judge them. And the United States would do well to use its diplomatic prestige to bring the peoples of Europe to a realization that the League as an instrument for peace, as an instrument for stabilizing their national life, is absolutely necessary, and without being formally identified with the League, America can bring tremendous moral pressure to bear upon the great powers of Europe.

That is one of the things which transpired within the last few weeks of international significance which deserves comment. Another one is Mexico. Here we are more closely involved because it concerns a naval power and ourselves. Mexico has been struggling within the last two or three generations to become a modern power, to found a real democracy, to educate and civilize its people. Mexico, since its foundation as a people and as a nation, has been thwarted in its purposes by three baneful agencies. One has been its own landed aristocracy, which has persistently exploited the poor farmer or peasant and appropriated his land; the second has been the foreign investor who, bringing into the country capital, sought to dominate the politics of the country and to exploit the resources of the country, not for the benefit of Mexico but for the benefit of stockholders back home; and the third institution or agency which has retarded Mexican progress has been the church.

Now, back in 1859 Mexico began to break the power of the landed aristocracy by compelling the rich to return the land to the peasants living upon the land, the government reimbursing the land owner for the land thus surrendered--a very courageous and very creditable revolutionary act on the part of the Mexican government. Mexico, too, began to wrestle with this problem of the stranglehold which the church had over its destiny. Not alone did the church possess vast estates, and the peasants living on these estates were impoverished and poverty-stricken, but the church, as such churches who have vested interests usually do, began to meddle in the political life of Mexico, and it became a force for reaction, just as the church in Russia did. Mexico confiscated the estates of the church. First it set about reimbursing the church for the land thus confiscated, but when Mexico discovered that the church was using this money given to it by the government for political propaganda, for efforts to destroy the government, the government ceased to reimburse the church for its confiscated property. And then a few years ago it passed a law that any priest or minister teaching religion in Mexico must be a Mexican citizen--a very wise, a very commendable law; because many of these religious leaders came from foreign countries who had no particular sympathy for Mexico or for Mexican problems, and used the sacred authority of their profession to disrupt and undermine the government of Mexico. This law, like so many laws

of Mexico, was disregarded, until a crisis ensued just a few months ago.

These foreign religious ministers or priests, ignoring the law, brought their political intrigues to such a point that the Mexican government was compelled to carry out the law and to deport them--also a very wise and laudable effort. Whereupon a whole propaganda set loose in these United States. The whole vocabulary of the privileged and the intrenched classes who found their power weakened was again brought into use. Mexico was accused of barbarism, of cruelty, of horrible acts, of exploitation, of being Reds, of being Bolsheviks and what not, because Mexico wanted to clean house, because Mexico wished to defend its own political soul against the intrigues and the machinations of the foreigners. An archbishop of the United States led in this carouse of denunciation, and a congressman on the floor of Congress actually called upon the United States to sever diplomatic relations with Mexico until Mexico changed its constitution.

I speak of this because it is quite serious. Now church interests are anxious for our interference in Mexico. At another time it would be oil interests, and still another time it would be another type of interest. And the United States would do well, to my mind, first, in deference to itself, its ^{own} ideals, secondly, in deference to the moral character which ought to appertain to international relationships.--the United States would do well to

refrain, even at the worst provocation, from interfering in the internal politics of an independent and friendly nation like Mexico. Our relations with Mexico have not always reflected creditably upon us. The Mexican War will remain a standing rebuke, a blot upon the escutcheon of America; and many of the revolutions which brought so much woe and misery upon the peoples of Mexico, many of the riots and outrages of Mexico were directly incited by unscrupulous financial interests of Mexico and of other countries.

Of one other international situation I wish to speak and then I shall be through. I wish to speak of Italy. In the Senate of the United States the question of settlement of the Italian debt will be discussed this week, Italy owes the United States something like two thousand millions of dollars. A tentative arrangement has been made whereby Italy will pay the United States five million dollars annually until 1930, and twelve million dollars from then on on a rising scale until 1987--or when the Meshiach will come--it will pay the maximum amount of the sum of seventy or eighty million dollars annually. Interest is not to begin on the payment of this debt until 1932, and then the interest will be at the rate of one-eighth of 1%, rising through this endless period of years to no more than 2%--and that of course is very liberal on the part of the United States. Italy has not received such good terms from England. Italy is to pay England during the first year ten millions of dollars, the second year two million dollars, and so on.

England will receive in the next five years four times as much from Italy as the United States.

But that is neither here nor there. The point is that Italy will never pay this debt because Italy cannot pay it, and the only reason for making this settlement with the United States and for making these insignificant preliminary payments of five million dollars or so is to enable Italy to borrow more money in the United States; not from the United States but from private interests, and they have already borrowed many millions of dollars--not at the rate of one-eighth of 1%, of course--from the private banks,--private banks are not as charitable,--but at the rate, I understand, of 6% plus a liberal bonus for the carrying of the bonds, the floating of the bonds.

In other words, the United States government, through the settlement of its debt with Italy, the funding of its debt, has enabled Italy to borrow money in the United States to maintain and preserve the dictatorship of that cutthroat Mussolini. In his dictatorship, which is the worst and the most infamous dictatorship in Europe today, Mussolini has established a reign of terror in Italy. Mussolini has pared down the power of parliament to a minimum until it has become a cat paw. Mussolini has deprived the municipalities of Italy of their autonomy; he has established a central autocracy to which every city and village and town in Italy must submit. Mussolini has done away with the freedom of the press in Italy--even worse than

the bolsheviks have done in Russia. And Mussolini has carried out a program of expatriation, of persecution, of murder, against those who oppose his Fascistic policies.

A few days ago the trial of Matteotti--I believe that is how his name is to be pronounced, although I am not sure--closed in Italy. Matteotti, you will recall, was a member of the Italian parliament who had certain revelations to make about the infamous activities of Mussolini, and Mussolini, directly or indirectly, had Matteotti kidnapped and assassinated. The assassins were apprehended, and after months and months of delay, they were brought to trial, and so corrupt have the courts of Italy become, so intimidated by the power of Fascism, that two of the murderers were acquitted altogether, and the other two were sentenced to two and a half months in jail.

An indication of the manner in which Mussolini carries on his activities is this telegram which was recently made public. There was in Italy a young author by the name of Cabuchi, a courageous writer who sought to make known to his compatriots the kind of a man Mussolini is, and the kind of work he is doing for Italy. Mussolini wires to the prefect of Turin the following: "I am told that the well known Cabuchi was recently in Turin and that he is now in Sicily. Please inform me, and see that you render his life still more difficult for this insipid opposer of the government in Fascism." And to render a life more difficult in the vocabulary of Fascism means the stiletto.

A sample of the imperialistic ambitions of Fascism and of its Allah and prophet Mussolini, may be found in these two quotations coming from newspapers who are very close to Mussolini, after the treaties of Locarno were signed. "This is not the first time," says the article, "that a peace treaty has been concluded. After the Napoleonic wars the principal contracting parties swore eternal peace and friendship, but that does not prevent new wars from breaking out; anyhow (please note this) perpetual peace would be immoral and iniquitous. Let us realize in a matter of fact way that the Locarno pact means a temporary necessity. When private persons and state exchequers have a new abundance of gold we shall again discuss the map of Europe."

And this phrase: "If Italy does not wish to follow the course that eventually leads to ruin and slavery, she must possess herself of her own raw materials and her own lands for the purpose of colonization, it being understood that these will be outside of Europe, that is to say, colonies and colonial empire like France and England. The consciousness of this historic and unquestionable necessity makes it the true essence of Italian imperialism."

In other words, under the leadership of this man Mussolini, who has the most fantastic and the most wild, imperialistic ambitions, Italy is about to engage in a program of territorial expansion, which means but one thing in the world--War! Italy has been rattling the sabre, and

the United States is likely to make it possible, through financing this dictator and his cohorts, who are destined to bring untold misery upon Italy and perhaps upon the whole of Europe,--the United States, unconsciously, indirectly, will help to strengthen his power and their power in Italy.

I could point to many others, but I need not. I have tried to indicate some of the dark clouds which are hovering on the international horizon; I have tried to indicate to you that the situation in the world today is not one of security and stability, but peace is still a long, long way off, and the implications to us as citizens of America, as lovers of peace, are quite apparent. We must continue to work in consecration of soul for peace; we must continue to insist upon morality as being the agency for controlling the relationship between ourselves and other peoples and between other peoples among themselves.

One of the noble acts of our government during the past year has been our resolve to enter the World Court. The next step should now be taken; the next step is an international conference for the reduction of armament, and nothing should be permitted to stand in the way of the quick summoning of such a conference, and America ought to take an aggressive and an affirmative leadership in this work. And the next step after that is the complete outlawry of war among all peoples--a voluntary agreement among all the peoples of the world; and that means only six

or eight. For if the six or eight leading powers do that the rest must follow. An agreement among them to outlaw war--outlaw it as an instrument for settling international disputes, even as we have outlawed private murder. And the last step, as far as the United States is concerned, the last and the ultimate step--which is a long, long way off, is the entering into a league with all the nations of the earth; a league not based upon the Treaty of Versailles, a league not intended to preserve a status quo, a league not of victors against vanquished, but a league of free peoples whose aim and purpose is to seek peace and to pursue it.

That is our great opportunity, and that is our great challenge for the years to come.

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