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Shall the ideals for which our men died perish?, 1927.

"SHALL THE IDEALS FOR WHICH OUR MEN
DIED PERISH?"

RABBI ABBA HILLEL SILVER.

THE TEMPLE, SUNDAY MORNING,

NOVEMBER 11, 1927, CLEVELAND.



JOSEPH T. KRAUS
Shorthand
Reporter
CLEVELAND

How best, my friends, can we pay tribute to our precious dead which Armistice Day brings to mind? How best can we match in our lives the sacrifices of those who are no longer with us? Clearly such a tribute must be more than the mere formal laying of the wreath. It must be something expressive of the ideals for which these men died. They died for a few simple, holy ideals of the human race. They died for peace and for freedom.

If we are to perpetuate their memories it must be by way of working in our daily lives, and each in his sphere of influence, for peace and freedom; else their sacrifices are unavailing. How can peace be brought about? Three ways have been suggested by means of which peace will be brought about. One is the way of pacifism. Men should refuse to fight regardless of the provocation, regardless of the menace, regardless of personal safety,--men should refuse to fight. Summoned by their country to take up arms, they should refuse; rather face imprisonment, court martial, death,--but refuse to fight. Just as an individual in whose hand a pistol is forced and who is commanded to shoot an innocent person, is morally bound to refuse, even with the threat of death to himself, so should one who is asked by his country to kill people unknown to him, who have not offended him, refuse.

There have been groups of people who have

adopted this way of ending war. The Quakers, for example, than whom no religious sect nor denomination wrote a more glorious chapter in the last war, refused to fight. Conscientious objectors have been known to rot in prisons and dungeons, to be beaten and maimed by brutal treatment of the military forces; but they refused to fight. Pacifism has an evil odor among us today, and yet the very founder and master of Christendom--while pacifism today is a mark of shame and the brand of cowardice,--the very founder and master of Christendom was an outright pacifist, who urged men to practice the doctrine of non-resistance even to the point of humiliation. "Turn the other cheek to smite it."

And perhaps the greatest tragedy of Christendom is this: that in practice it cannot or will not live up to the ideals of him whom they worship. Pacifism is largely an Oriental attitude of mind. The Oriental, perhaps because of climate, perhaps because he is older and wiser, believes in non-resistance to evil. The Occidental is by temperament and disposition and tradition an activist, not a pacifist. He believes in overcoming evil by deliberate resistance to evil, and his tradition is a bellicose, a belligerent, a warlike tradition. The tradition of Western Europe is the valorous tradition, the viking tradition, the tradition of the god of war; it is the tradition of the Goth and the Vandal and not the tradition of the gentle saint of Galilee.

And so pacifism, as an attitude of mind, as

a philosophy of life, is not likely to be accepted by the peoples of Western Europe. Again, pacifism is quite ineffectual as a means of ending war; for, in the first place, there are all too many people who are all too eager to fight. There are tens of thousands of people in this land and in every land who will join any war quite regardless of what the cause of that war is. The jungle lust for conflict is still very strong in millions of men. There is a hankering for the heroics of war, for the demonstration and the parade and the fluttering flags and the martial airs and the popular acclaim; there is a hankering for the excitement, for the exhilaration of war; there is a hankering to get away from the humdrum tasks of daily life, from the routine, from the unheroic tasks which a man must do in his daily life. And so with all lands and for many generations and centuries to come, there will always be hosts of people for whom pacifism means nothing and for whom war makes a ready appeal.

Again, there are hosts of people who are not eager to fight, who are prior to the declaration of war subjected to a systematic propaganda which so excites them, which so works on their emotion that they are ready to fight when war is declared. And, lastly, pacifism is a safe way of ending war provided all people simultaneously accept pacifism. When a people remains armed whose citizens are willing to fight in the midst of a world of nations unarmed, whose citizens refuse to fight, it is a wolf in a sheep's

clothing. So that pacifism is hardly a way out of war.

The second way which has been suggested is the way of preparedness. Be prepared and no nation will attack you; be strong and peoples will be afraid of you. Make yourself impregnable by surrounding yourself with a wall of steel,--with cruisers and battleships and submarines and airplanes and chemicals; arm yourself to the teeth and you are safe; war will never come to you. This advice is given to us by all the practical people of the world,--generals and diplomats and congressmen, the wise and the sane and the practical. All others who cannot see their point of view are impractical and visionary and dreamers, and oftentimes fools.

On Armistice Day, two days ago, with the memories of the ten millions slain in the World War still fresh in the minds of people, and the wounds still unhealed, the leader of the American Legion, speaking at St. Louis, had this to say to the American people. This was his Armistice Day message: "Legion Leader Cries: 'Prepare for More War!' Demands Bigger Armies, Guns, Ammunition! America First!" "The World War did not establish an enduring peace and America must prepare for another, bigger conflict," Edward E. Spafford, National Commander of the American Legion declared in an Armistice Day address here today. 'The last war has not been fought. We came out of the war not to celebrate an enduring peace but to celebrate a cessation of hostilities. The people of the country are

coming to the realization that the last war did not end war; that only an armistice was signed. All the resources of the nation shall be completely mobilized at the beginning of this war. The forces in 1917 were not called out to build internationalism; they fought for the United States, and we will combat every move for internationalism. We have heard propagandists preach from our pulpits and lecture platforms; we have seen these sentiments accepted by well-meaning idealists who did not have the least idea of anything practical. Today we probably stand third in naval value, but thanks are fervently given that the Geneva Conference last summer opened the eyes of our many thinking Americans, and we may look forward to this next Congress to answer our prayers for more warships." Not a word of regret at the failure of the Geneva Conference; not a word of regret that this international gathering could not see its way clear to make for disarmament; rather thanks is expressed that it failed and that it opened the eyes of the American people to the need of more warships. "We have seen these sentiments accepted by well-meaning idealists who did not have the least idea of anything practical."

Now the trouble with this way out of war is that it is not. Preparedness has never prevented war. It has always promoted war. This is history. All else is misleading; all else is propaganda. Those nations which have been most prepared have been the nations which have

had most wars. The nations of the earth have been armed for thousands of years and they have been waging wars for thousands of years. That is history; all else is misleading, stupid propaganda. No nation can be adequately prepared. Nations today do not fight singly; they fight in groups. The last World War found the earth divided into two groups, and no nation can prepare itself to defy half the world. Germany tried it and failed. No nation can adequately prepare itself for war without forcing all other nations to do likewise; therefore the ratio of unpreparedness remains constant all the time, and this preparedness brings about a competition among the peoples of the earth in armament, which soon reaches a point where one group demands a showdown in order not to enable the other group to destroy it first. And war ensues. That is history. all else is fantastic talk.

These so-called practical people must answer the argument of the last war, if their contention that preparedness is a preventive of war is logical. In 1914 the nations of Europe were prepared,--all of them. They had been preparing for that war for decades; they knew it was coming; they were armed to the teeth. And yet the war came, a war which engulfed them all, and a war which demanded the sacrifices of ten millions of God's beautiful children slain, and millions more maimed and crippled, and the whole civilization of Europe demoralized and the whole social life disorganized. Where is the wisdom of these practical

people? A hundred billions of dollars,--a hundred thousand and millions of dollars wasted by these "practical" people!

Think what mankind could have done for itself and for civilization if that hundred thousand millions of dollars had been devoted to works of peace; to building schools and universities; to building hospitals and research laboratories; to eradicating illiteracy and ignorance among the backward peoples of the earth; to building a better understanding among peoples,--a propaganda of good will instead of a propaganda of hate and suspicion. Think of what mankind could have done in the way of providing work for the millions of unemployed of the races of the earth! What have these "practical" people to show for these multitudinous sacrifices of the one war--the last war? They are the most impractical who will now come to us--to us who have been eye witnesses of what took place ten years ago, and advise us to restore the world as it was in 1914.

No, preparedness is not the way out. It has been weighed in the balance and found wanting. What is the way out? There have been those who have said that the way out is the way of education, of preaching brotherhood and peace among the peoples of the earth. Education is supremely important. Mankind must educate itself out of a host of antiquated notions and ideas, and it must educate itself into a set of sound principles of international living and relationships. Education is of supreme

importance. We must begin to teach our youth not national independence but international dependence. The very thing which my friend would like to have anathema in the world---internationalism---is the very thing which mankind needs today as much as it needs food. Men must learn that they are internationally dependent, one upon another. That does not mean that every nation shall surrender its prerogatives, or that people shall surrender their particular loyalties to their particular nations. Not at all. It means that all men shall cultivate a sense of international comity made necessary by the constantly increasing international relationships, economic and political, which are taking place in the world today.

We must educate the men of tomorrow into the idea of the utter futility of war. No case can be made out for war at any time. It settles no problems; it does not advance the interests of mankind by an iota; it is destructive; it is wasteful; it is immoral; it is corruptive; it brings to the surface all the jungle instincts,--all the worst rises to the surface like a scum on water. We must educate the generation of tomorrow into the surrendering of some of the conventional lies of our civilization,--the lie of the white man's burden; the lie that the white man must take care of the backward peoples. And that taking care of, of course, means exploiting them, draining them, victimizing them, using them for the white man's benefit. We must by education

eradicate the lie from the consciousness of the races,-- about race superiorities and race inferiorities; that one race is superlatively endowed with superior qualities of mind and soul, and that therefore it is entitled to be a master race, a dominant race in the world.

There are no superior races and there are no inferior races. There are races that have had greater advantages than other races; there are races who temporarily are more forward, and there are races who are temporarily more backward. Racial chauvinism along with national chauvinism must be eradicated from the minds of the rising generation by a deliberate system of education in school and church and home.

We must eradicate the lie of "My country, right or wrong." We must teach the men of tomorrow to apply the same moral code to national affairs as they apply to private human affairs. Just as a member of my family is not right all the time, quite regardless of my love for him and my sentiments of loyalty towards him, so my country is not right all the time. And it is the sacred duty of a loyal citizen to set his country right when he knows his country to be wrong.

But education is not enough; abstract teaching is not enough. To bring about peace we need machinery for peace. We need the high sentiments for peace expressed in terms of law backed by the force of an international mind and an international organization.

The first thing for the peoples of the earth to do, if they are earnest about bringing about peace, is to outlaw war. There will always be conflict among nations just as there are conflicts among individuals, and these conflicts will be largely economic ones. The mere preaching of brotherliness will not avoid these conflicts. They will come about inevitably. But just as conflicts among individuals are not settled by war but by courts of law, so conflicts among peoples must be settled by law and by courts of law. And the first step is for peoples to outlaw war, to banish it from the realm of international morality, to declare it outlawed, the same as private warfare and the vendetta and dueling is outlawed. Today war is legal; today war is moral. The Chamber of Deputies or a Senator of the United States will actually declare war, thereby making it legal.

Now the time has come for all nations to agree that war is illegal for all time, and that at no time must a people resort to war to gain its objectives, even if these objectives are legitimate; just as you individually have not the right to use a pistol to gain your objectives even if you know that your objectives are right. When that is done, when the outlawry of war has been written into the code of international law, then the nations of the world will be compelled to build up an international machinery for the enforcing of that law, whether it be an international police force similar to the force which we

employ in our cities and in our states and in our countries to enforce our laws; whether it be an international public opinion, organized so that it can at any given moment be focused effectively upon a people which is recalcitrant; whether it be the employment of the economic boycott against a people which does not submit,-- whatever that machinery will be, it will come about if that primary step is first taken--the outlawry of war.

When that is taken the next step will be disarmament. No nation today will disarm under existing conditions. Nations today would be stupid to disarm under existing conditions. A nation which lives in the midst of enemies, in the midst of fear, unable to have recourse to a supreme power to defend its rights, would be foolish to disarm. And so the campaign for disarmament is too previous; it cannot succeed; it broke down in Geneva; it will break down again and again. Because the first step has not been taken: the nations have not covenanted, all of them, to outlaw war as a means of settling international disputes.

That is the thing, friends, which men of today who are mindful of what took place ten years ago, who have pledged themselves to continue the labors for which these precious young men laid down their lives,-- that is the thing for which you ought to work, aggressively work for,--outlawry of war.

I have spoken twice about peace this week.

I shall speak more and more of it. I shall avail myself of every opportunity which is offered to me to speak of it. For I believe that it is the most desperately needed thing in life today. You may not know it or you may know it, but the world today is as near war as it was in 1914. It is the same powder box, and a spark may ignite it at any time. If the nations are not fighting now it is because they are still exhausted from the last war. Another five years of recuperation and they will be ready to enter a death grapple; for the same conditions exist, the same hates, the same suspicions, the same rivalries, the same imperialistic struggles for markets, for the exploitation of backward peoples, the same misunderstandings, the same voices prophesying war, the same competition in armament. Nations today are engaged in an unparalleled, an unprecedented competition in armament. And the United States is not among the backward peoples, either.

To any thinking man, to any man who is alert to what is going on in the world, the situation is fraught with danger; it is menacing. We are today investing hundreds of millions of dollars in all parts of the world. Before long the investors will be looking to the United States to protect their investments in those countries. That has always meant war. For us, for the nations of the world, the situation is a menacing one. And there is but one way out, and that is the way out. The way is not the way of pacifism; the way is not the way of

increased armament; the way is not the way of mere pious wishing for it. The way is the way of organization on the part of men and women in powerful units to demand from their legislators and from their governments an international agreement to outlaw war. That is fair to everybody, great nations and small nations alike.

That is our task, men and women, in this generation. I can never think of peace, I can never think of Armistice Day, without seeing in my mind's eye the rows of crosses which I saw in France and in Flanders. I cannot speak of it without seeing again the shivering bodies which were brought in from the battlefields to the field hospital tents,--their broken sobs, their mutilated bodies,--they all come back to me. And it was all so unnecessary, so futile, so criminally unnecessary.

We must avoid--not prepare for the next war, but avoid the next war.

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