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The tides of revolution sweep on, 1931.

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BY

RABBI ABBA HILLEL SILVER
THE TEMPLE, SUNDAY
MAY 3d, 1931

In 1492 the last of the Jews were exiled from Spain by the decree of expulsion of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella.

In 1931 the last of those who inherited the crown of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella were exiled from Spain by the decree of the people.

Alphonso XIII was driven out of his own continent by one of the most peaceful, amazingly, orderly and swift revolutions known to history. Spain has thus joined the ranks of the great democracies of the world. Spain which in a sense has been the most medieval and reactionary country in Europe has now shaken off the shackles of medieval monarchy, of ecclesiastical domination and is facing the dawn of a new day of freedom.

Spain is a glamorous country and its history is a glamorous one. The greatest disaster which ever befell that country was the expulsion of one quarter of a million Jews and some eight hundred thousand Moors from the country.

When the Jews and Moors lived in Spain, Spain was the center of culture, art, science, commerce and wealth. The whole of Europe looked to Spain and to the marvelous Moorish civilization. Europe sent its best sons to the universities founded by the Moslems in Spain, to study. With the expulsion of these people, the Jews and the Moors, induced by narrow religious intolerance, the decline of Spain set in.

There was an afterglow in the Sixteenth Century especially under the reign of Charles V when Spain was the master of Europe and possessor of practically the whole of the Western hemisphere which was discovered and settled upon by Spanish explorers and conquerors.

But the life blood had been drained from it and soon a decline, sharp, amazingly sudden, set in. So that Spain became from being the first rate power of Europe, a third rate power and sank into economic, dormant, political, social, religious reaction of medievalism. And it is just now emerging from it. The tide of liberalism seemingly has now reached even the shores of Spain.

The Republic which has now been set up under the leadership of Zamora through what one might call a model revolution, a revolution accomplished not by bullets but by ballots, really a model revolution, - the Republic which has thus been established, is certain not to have very smoothe sailing in the approximate future. There are many signs showing trying times for the new democracy.

In the first place the forces which overthrew the monarchy, while united in the over-throwing of the monarchy are worlds apart in their world outlook. The main objective attained they may be counted upon to fly apart. There have always been separatist tendencies in Spain. Certain peoples have always sought these intensions, the Province of Basque, Catalonia, Valencia and they may now cause the new republic considerable trouble.

Likewise the separation of Church and State will not be accomplished very amicably. That is not how the church yields to a separation.

The revolt began way back in the days of Cromwell in the middle of the Seventeenth Century in England. The American revolution and the French revolutions at the close of the Eighteenth Century gave absolutism two crushing blows from which it never recovered. The revolution of 1830 practically signed the death warrant of monarchyism in Europe. The World War destroyed the last of the great absolutist powers in Europe, the Czar of all the Russians and scrapped two emperors who flirted with absolutism powers in Austria Hungary and in Germany. Political liberalism, democracy, became inevitable once the middleman began to rise to power, once the industrial revolution placed wealth and therefore power in the hands of the new class, the traders, the merchants and the manufacturers. The old system of monarchy with its medieval tradition of caste and privilege was too inelastic and too cumbersome for the new class of middleman who wanted as little interference by government in their affairs as possible and quite naturally looked with favor upon any movement which would deprive royalty of any or all of its power. Therefore control of government was placed in the hands of the people who at that time were the middle class, -the laboring classes did not yet count. Monarchy was then what Marx would call the Dialectics of history. Here and there a monarch survived through the local

conditions of his country, but the tides of life were sweeping on.

They were bound to overtake it in the long run and swallow it up.

Democracy was triumphant.

Towards the cose of the Nineteenth Century and the beginning of the Twentieth Century the unsettled conditions which followed the World War gave the autocrat and the dictator another and perhaps his last opportunity. Parliamentary government seemed to break down especially in defeated or in economically prostrated countries like Portugal, Spain, Italy, Turkey, Russia, Poland and Hungary.

In unsettled post-bellum days dictatorship again raised its head. Half a dozen dictators sprang up in Europe. And for a time these dictators were actually hailed by the very people over whom they exercized their dictatorial power. Democracy for a time became discredited even among the democrats. It became the fashion to question the dogmas of democracy, to point out its weaknesses and because dictators of the type of Mussolini mocked and jeered at democracy. Mussolini spoke of the Goddess of Liberty as that rotting carcass. Lenin of Russia spoke of democracy as Bourgeoise illusion. Pilsudski of Poland spoke of it as of a prostitute.

For four or five years the glow of dictatorship and dictators were extolled. Men seemed to forget the main currents of history. They became impressed with the eddies and cross currents with the surface of things. They forgot the tides which were sweeping on. But life moved on and after a brief reign the years 1930 and 1931 saw a new revolutionary movement sweeping out the dictators and restoring the democratic government. Why, because autocracy is wasteful and inefficient in our present social system.

I remember some five years ago in an address which I delivered here in the city I took occasion to point out at the time when Fassism was being

extolled and praised by American tourists who had returned from Italy, that the victories of dictatorship are early victories, not lasting ones; that dictatorship speeds up government. For a time it speeds up government and then is ensnarled in its own bureaucratic net. It becomes the prey of corruption, favoritism and wilfulness and it has no means at hand by which to correct these abuses. Ultimately it leads a country to financial bank-ruptcy and to moral decay. It is much more speedy than when you have to consult people and pass laws through bodies of people. Men are sometimes deluded by it and think that dictatorship is more efficient than democracy. But before very long the faults of this kind of government become apparent, over-centralization which goes with dictatorship in the long run spells defeat. It became frightfully cumbersome, much more inefficient than the agencies of the democracy before graft began to creep in.

Within the last month I read an article by a keen observer of European affairs which confirmed my judgment of five years ago. The article appears this month in the Scribner's Magazine and is called "Twilight of the Dictators." I came across the following statements:

"It must also be noted that the psychological reaction against dictatorship is gaining, even among the unimportant masses."

The author proceeds to take up in particular the case of Italy where dictatorship has manifested its finest qualities and its greatest success and he indicts the dictatorship of the Fascists in Italy on six scores and shows where it has utterly and miserably failed.

"Italy has been the pet example of a successful dictatorship, and therefore I propose to note first some of the Italian "errors and absurdities"

which are typical of dictatorships and which are at work for the fall of Mussolini's regime; Budget manipulation, artificial stabilization, graft of billions, waste of billions, war preparations costing billions, suppression of parliament, press, public assembly, free masonry, or all critical, controlling factors."

"The crisis which Mussolini admits at last cannot be the result of the American crisis because it began in Italy in 1925. In that year and in the years which followed, until 1929, it was cleverly hidden from the general public by manipulation of the budget, treasury balances, and various official but not necessarily true financial statements.

European economists and financial experts knew this. Perhaps it is possible that the American bankers did not. That they do at present is evident."

The author proceeds in great detail to indicate that the dictatorship of Mussolini is driving Italy to financial bankruptcy not to speak of the budget of setting up a vast military machine which might cause serious trouble throughout Europe.

And that was the case too of the dictatorship in Spain and true also of many of the countries in South America which have recently revolted. And so the revolutionary movement is sweeping these pseudosuperior men, these men on horseback, these saviors of society into the scrap heap. The same story is true in countries like China, India, and Indo-China. China has been in recent years bestirring itself out of its centuries old slumber. China is demanding freedom, national self determination and the end of foreign imperial exploitation.

India through the prophetic voice of Gandhi is demanding the self-same thing, freedom or democracy and the end of foreign dominion and exploitation. China and India are destined to win their freedom. They

may face many and perhaps bloody tribulations in the years to come but it is written in the stars that these people together representing the sum of a billion human beings, a billion human beings, shall be free.

It is interesting to note in this connection that the governments which are oppressing and dominating these people and denying them their freedom are themselves democracies. England, France and Indo-China are free democratic governments which shows again how confused and involved are frequently the acts and policies of men and nature. Democracy itself is no guarantee against war, foreign, aggressive, imperialistic,—against all manner of wrong.

Democracy then, if I were to summarize, today stands vindicated.

But there is one great threat facing democracy, facing imperialism in government in economics and that's the threat of Russia.

In Russia dictatorship is still vigorous, virile and on the defensive. In Russia dictatorship is not apologetic. It is being extolled and praised.

Through a dictatorship Russia has set up a revolutionary system of government and social life and is reconstructing the whole civilization. Russia defends dictatorship on the ground that it alone can achieve the desired end not for the privileged, for the few, for the clique, but for the masses of the country. The ballot, the whole paraphernalia of democratic government, free press, the right of free assembly, all these are looked upon and practically branded as obstacles in the way of achieving the great ends of revolution.

The spokesman of Russian dictatorship, the dictatorship of the proletariat maintain that democracy and liberalism are out-worn and out-dated concepts; that they may have served their day and their generation but the new conditions of life require a new set of governmental machinery. They maintain, that as far as the masses of the earth are concerned, democracy is a snare and a delusion for popular government only, a farce, never a government

of the masses, but always a government of the few. It is the men who control wealth and industry who also control legislation and the machinery of government. No radical reform benefiting the masses, they maintain, can ever be achieved under liberal democratic government. They point to the increase of wealth in the hands of the few in spite of the democratic government. They point to unemployment situations which throw millions out of work and force them to want and misery and their power of the ballot, their avowed control of government, in no way helps them to solve their economic problem.

And so the battle line is drawn. The conflict of the future is not between democracy and monarchy. That struggle has been ended and the victor is democracy. The struggle of the future, my friends, I believe, is going to be between the democratic government with its philosophy of economic individualism and dictatorship with every philosophy of socialism and state ownership and management of industry and all agriculture. And the next century or two will decide the issue.

It is clear, is it not, that revolutions of a sort are going on in practically every country of the earth, even when these revolutions do not express themselves in new political forms. The machine, mass production, the industrialization of countries, the international character of finance, these things are revamping completely our economic and social structure even though their//p manifestations, their workings are not sharp and dramatic enough to attract our attention. There is revolution going on in the economic and therefore in the social and political life in every country of Western Europe, in England and in the United States.

They speak of Russia with its five year plan through which
every Russian may achieve his has already been achieved by some

pountries of Europe and in the United States. At the close of the five year

plan, assuming that it would be 100% successful, Russia will be industrialized fully up to 20% of American industrialization. This has already taken place on a far larger scale in countries like Germany, England and the United States.

The question therefore presents itself, can democratic government continue to function adequately, in that new economic set up which the machine has created. Is it elastic enough to accommodate itself to the new economic forces which have been let loose in the world. Can popular democratic government exercise a sufficiently powerful control over this great consideration of wealth so that wealth may serve the interests of the masses, not merely the interests of the classes? Can it permit vast units of power to be set up in competition with political power seemingly concentrated in democratic government? Will some form of collective planning and control be necessary in the years to come? Can a middle ground be found between collectiveism on the one hand and individualism on the other?

In other words can the promised virtues of state ownership or control of industry and the clear benefits of a free and individual life under a democracy, can these two be in some way accommodated one to another. That will be the task to my mind, of countries like ours to work out in the next few generations. If the struggle is unavoidable, if the challenge of Russia, the Soviet, is a real challenge, and I believe that it is a real challenge, then it is clear that if democracies, liberal governments, want to save themselves they have got to set about cleaning house.

The ultimate test, my friends, will not be the test of theory, what you like or what I like, the ultimate test will be what country in the world will give its people a higher standard of living.

Russia will not be able to feed its people indefinitely on

That's not characteristic of human nature. Ultimately the test will be can the Soviet give its people a higher standard of living, greater economic security than the capitalist government can? If it can it will succeed and eventually destroy the Capitalist system throughout the world.

The task therefore facing peoples today is not to denounce or criticize what's good or not good in Russia, but it is to set their own house in order. It is so to reorganize their own industrial life that inefficiency shall be eliminated, that want and poverty shall be eliminated, that all who work shall have a greater share in the things produced, a fuller measure of economic security to all toilers of the land, that the threat of unemployment shall be removed, that men and women who toil shall be given protection against sickness, old age and disability, that wars caused by capitalist rivalry and competition be eliminated, eliminate competitive armaments, to distribute social goods more equitably among the laboring masses of the earth.

If these things are done democracy, economic liberalism will survive. It has given men, many men, the right to live their own lives without being constrained by social pressure, by the machine. If we can not make these adjustments, why then it will go the way of Feudalism, of monarchy. The tides of life sweep on irresistably.

I believe that the great democracies of the earth are awakening to the realizations of the terribly difficult tasks of reorganization on an economic level which are confronting them. If we wish to maintain some form of free democratic government without dictatorship of class or group we have so to reconstruct our economic system that men will want democracy and find in it the sure way of attaining the good life.

Sermon 357 ABSTRACT OF THE ADDRESS THE TIDES OF REVOLUTION SWEEP ON BY RABBI ABBA HILLEL SILVER THE TEMPLE, SUNDAY, MAY 3d, 1931 Alphonso XIII was driven out of Spain by his own people in a revolution which for speed, effectiveness and bloddlessness is almost unmatched in history. Monarchy in Spain could not survive nor will monarchy survive much longer anywheres else. The monarchial system is an anachronism in our present civilization. And so is dictatorship. For a time following the World War parliamentary government seemed to break down. A crop of dictators appeared. They were hailed as saviors by those who never understand the main currents of human history. Men grew sceptical of democracy. But again the irresistable tides of human progress are sweeping these little, self-designated, supermen into the gulf of oblivion. Autocracy is wasteful and inefficient in our present economic civilization. Whatever victories it achieves are early victories, never lasting ones. For a time it speeds up government and then is ensnarled in its own bureaucratic net. It becomes the prey of corruption, favoritism and wilfulness and it has no means at hand by which to correct these abuses. Ultimately it leads a country to financial bankruptcy and to moral decay. The tides of revolution are also sweeping out foreign dictatorships over subject peoples. The fires are raging in China, India, Indo-China and in some of our Latin American Republics. The European democracies have themselves been culpable of the worst autocratic exploitation of subject peoples. But the day of their emancipation is at hand. The only dictatorship which is today threatening democracy is that of

Russia, where it is vigorous and on the defensive. Back of it is a vast social passion, a sincerety for the wellbeing of the masses. It maintains that liberalism and democracy are a snare and a delusion, the masses enjoy only the illusion of self government not its substance; the rulers in a democracy are not the people but a few who control wealth and economic power and the channels of education and public opinion and the very instruments of government. It is maintained that no radical reform to benefit the masses can be carried through under existing democratic governments.

So the battle line is drawn. The struggle of tomorrow is not between democracy and monarchy. That is over and done with. The struggle will be between the democratic state built on the philosphy of political liberalism and economic individualism, and the Soviet state built on the philosophy of class dictatorship, at least as an ad interim measure, and socialism. The next century or two will decide the issue.

If the democratic government can discover a middle ground between collective control and planning, which seem to be indicating by our new industrial civilization and individualism which has yielded so many cultural and spiritual values to mankind, if it can find ways of eliminating poverty and want, distribute social goods more equitably, secure men against the hazards of unemployment, sickness and old age, eliminate capitalistic wars and competitive armaments, our democratic civilization will survive. If not, then the tides of life will sweep it aside.

Ultimately the issue will be decided not on the basis of theory or personal preferences but whether the Russian system will give its people a higher standard of living and more of the good things of life than the capitalist system in other countries. Neither propaganda nor revolutionary enthusiasm in the last analysis determine the real processes of history.

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