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Fascist Italy and Jewish Palestine, 1933.

Abstract of Sermon delivered by Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver at The Temple, Ansel and E. 105th Street on Sunday morning, May 28, 1933.

FASCIST ITALY AND JEWISH PALESTINE

Italy has not become a paradise under the Fascist regime. Even with the Dictator it has failed to solve many of the economic problems which harass the world today. Like all other countries it has a severe problem of unemployment, of business failures, of low wages, of diminishing imports and exports and an unbalanced national budget. In the case of Italy this was true under Fascism even before 1929 when the American crisis aggravated the economic situation in all European countries.

Many new and praiseworthy enterprises were launched by the Fascist Government. New roads and thoroughfares have been built, great land reclamation projects have been carried through, important housing projects have been initiated, Italian ports and harbors have been improved, Italian merchant marine has been increased, important excavations have been set afoot which are bringing to light many relics and monuments of ancient Rome. There is also a strong spirit of enterprise, of national vitality, confidence and pride in the country.

But one cannot help asking himself whether this could not have been accomplished under democratic government. Have not similar problems and even greater problems been carried through by democratic countries? Was it necessary to destroy all freedom to achieve all this? Could not a planned national economy such as Mussolini is endeavoring to carry into effect be achieved without political crime and violence; without sending tens of thousands to prison islands and to exile; without immersing the country in a vast spy system and without inflating the military spirits of the people?

Unlike the United States or Great Britain, Italy has no great democratic tradition. Its most vivid political recollections are those of the small City-States of the Renaissance which were in the main dominated by small aristocracies held by masterful individuals of the type of Mussolini. Germany and Russia likewise are now

under the heel of dictators because they lack a great democratic tradition and experience.

America has little to learn from Italy except the need which Italy was quicker to sense, that of planning and controlling our national economy so that the great farming and working classes are not periodically victimized and impoverished.

I was amazed at the progress which Palestine made in recent years in the midst of a world depression. I found Palestine normal and even enjoying a degree of prosperity. It was Palestine's good fortune not to have been over-capitalized, or over-industrialized or over-populated.

Much of the credit must also go to the inherent economic soundness of the Palestine experiment and to the socially constructed methods which have been employed. Much emphasis has been placed upon cooperative and national enterprise rather than upon private enterprise and this has given a certain stability and orderliness to the quick development of recent years. One of the noblest features has been the insistence upon self-work and upon collective work. The private project motif has in many of farms and settlements of Palestine been entirely abandoned or subordinated to the collective idea. These efforts of the new social order have been carried through not by any revolutionary means or through the expropriation of the capital and property of other people. Men built them out of their own resources and by their own labor assisted only by loans from certain national funds.

The new economic and political constellation has made Palestine indispensable in Jewish life. Thousands of refugees from Hitler's Germany are now seeking refuge in Palestine. Palestine must be enabled through industrial and agricultural expansion to absorb the new immigration. Transjordan, which has been an empty and potentially rich country and which was originally to be included in the Palestine Mandate should be opened for colonization.