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Are Jews radical?, 1935.

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ARE JEWS RADICAL?

By
Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver

At
The Temple

On
Sunday morning, January 13, 1935.



Radicalism is a word which has been frequently bandied about in recent years. It is quite as frequently misunderstood. Some people are in the habit of hurling that word at their opponents in an argument as if the word radical is a blow in itself which will completely demolish them. You are a radical. Hence you are beyond the pale, a sort of outcast of society, a menace. In other words you always have this more or less sinister connotation attached to the word. It was not always a term of condemnation.

The word is derived from the latin word "radicalis" which means roots, having roots. Radicalism is that which goes to the roots of a thing, the source, the origin. The term radicalism, therefore, meant originally, an attitude of thorough-going, right down to the roots of a thing. Not stopping half way but following through an idea or a line of reasoning or a course of action to the ultimate end without stopping half way.

Now in our day the term has come somehow to be mixed up with the idea of violence, attempting forcibly to overthrow institutions. This, of course, confuses attitude with the technique. Now many people in the world who are radical on both economic and social questions would like to see the answer to these questions or the solutions to these problems achieved through peaceful, orderly methods.

A radical is not necessarily a revolutionist. Tolstoi was a radical. Gandhi is a radical. Both of them are pacifists. In

fact, in some countries of the world today, pacifism is also regarded as radicalism and the pacifist, the man who is opposed to violence, is sent into asylum, into concentration camps along with the radicals. On the other hand, in many parts of the world today those who are opposed to radicalism, those who are the defenders of the old order are the very ones to resort to violence and revolution to defend their position, -- the Nazis of Germany, for example, the Fascists of Italy -- so that the idea of violence has been associated with violence only by partisan propagandists.

There are, of course, economic radicals like the communists, for example, who believe in achieving their program through revolution and through dictatorship. But what is radical is not their program, but the method or technique which they advocate by means of revolution and dictatorship. That is as old as the cave man. In our whole history, since the beginning of time, there wasn't a government that did not try to stamp out opposition by force and violence. Why those things are not new. They reek with age.

What is new and radical in the program of the communists, for example, is not the program -- the idea of a classless society and that the distribution of wealth shall be in the hands of society as a whole. There are economic radicals who believe in this very program and who are bitterly set against the methods advocated. The socialists, for example -- they are the bitterest opponents of the technique employed by the communists. The socialists believe in democratic government, in achieving this program through legislative, peaceful parliamentary methods. And these two are bitter opponents

of one another. In fact, the communists hate the socialists much more than they hate the Bolsheviks. And yet in our confused and hectic day, not only are these two bunched together, but even liberals who do not go as far as the socialists do, and anyone who advocates any change in this item -- all these people who are dissatisfied with the status quo are grouped together as one and are by all implications a menace to society.

This is good strategy for reactionaries who make every movement which is seeking change at the expense of the status quo and whose methods are most open to mass condemnation and who make these movements odious, who make one believe, for example, that if a man advocates disarmament he advocates the overthrow of government. These are the tactics today adopted by the skillful reactionary propagandists.

Some of you may have read the book called the "Red Network", by a certain woman, Elizabeth Dilling, in which every prominent citizen in the United States who has ever had anything to do with a progressive movement is grouped along with Bolsheviks, communists. In the "Red Network" she placed Judge Brandeis, Roosevelt and others side by side with avowed communists. She even payed me the extreme compliment of including me among these terrible people. The individual who reads that book gets the impression that ^{all} these people are working for the same object....Chambers of Commerce allow persons like that to address our population and give the impression to people that these

progressive and liberals are under the skin, reds and enemies of society.

Even more ingenious strategy is to identify all liberal movements with some group against which some prejudice, latent or active, has been stirred up so that you can capitalize on the prejudice.

Now in all countries there has been such a movement. The Jewish group everywhere has been looked upon as something foreign. And if you can tie up a liberal movements, radicals movements with this group -- the Jews are already more or less suspect, when then you can convince the gullible masses that these movements are a product of the people itself, the machinations of an alien group which seeks to harm the nation.

That, of course, was the strategy of the Nazis of Germany. These reactionaries and hirelings capitalized upon the latent and active prejudices which exist against Jews in Germany and persuaded the people that all the liberal movements which were being advocated in Germany were the products of Jewish mentality and foreign to the spirit of the great Germanic race.

Liberalism, democracy -- that is not Germanic. The Teutonic tradition is the tradition of hostile liberalism. Liberalism -- that is a product of the decadent spirit of the Jew. Hitler said: Democracy is fundamentally a Jewish concept, not a Germanic concept." In other words, trade unions, socialism, communism, are not Germanic. They are the product of the Jew who hates the non-Jew and works for

his undoing and hopes to accomplish his undoing through these methods.

Pacifism, too, is a Jewish way of thinking, a sort of conspiracy of the Jews to overthrow the government. The spirit of the old Teutonic race is that of struggle, conquest. The destiny of the German people lies in war and that strategy, my friends, of tying up movements which you wish to make unpopular with a group which is already under prejudice, works. This pandering to reap loyalty, that works. And a people of intelligence, scientifically minded, can actually be persuaded to sell its birthright for a mess of pottage. And they will remain sold until they discover the poison which is in the pot.

Now the propaganda literature of the Nazis is filled with allusions to radicalism and have spilled over into neighboring countries even to our own shores. In recent years we have been told that all the communists in the United States are Jews, that the Jews are seeking to overthrow the democratic government in the United States. All the members of the Brain Trust are Jews; therefore, the New Deal is un-American because it is Jewish.

Now it is a known fact that the anti-Semite or the reactionary is not scrupulous about facts. If they are not available he will force them out of falsehoods and lies. The proportion of Jews in the Communist Party of the United States is smaller than any other nationality in that group. It is less than three percent. The number of communist votes polled in the last election in New York City totalled something like 27,000. There are two million Jews in the United States. That proportion is as small, if not smaller in all the countries of Western Europe. The Jew is largely a middle class individual. He belongs to the peace-loving

class largely.

The trouble with our people is that we are a vocal people. A Jewish communist is very tense, voluble and a very vocal person. It is he who becomes the stump speaker, the organizer. He writes the pamphlets. He seems to be everywhere. It is the volubility that gives the impression that every communist is a Jew and every Jew is a communist.

The Jew, by and large, is a liberal. We have our right wing and our left wing as has any other people..... The right wing is larger than the left wing but both are insignificant to the importance of the great mass to the rank and file of the Jewish people.

The Jew has never sought to overthrow any government by force except those governments in which he was denied his elementary human rights, in which he was singled out for particular discrimination. And he would have been a fool and a coward if he did not set about to overthrow that type of government. But in those countries where the Jews are citizens, he finds himself where his normal interest lie, like any other people, in peace, in democracy and liberalism because his tradition is one of democracy.

The Jew, from the very beginning, had a distrust of royalty, monarchy. When the people of Israel asked for a king, the prophets of Israel pointed out to them the evils of submitting themselves to autocratic dictatorships. In one of the interesting passages of the Midrash we find: "God said to the children of Israel, 'I hope that you will remain free from royalty and the rule of a king.'" Not only was the Jewish tradition one of democracy, but the well-being of the Jew, his sole economic well-being depended upon liberalism and

democracy.

The French Revolution with its doctrine of "liberty-equality-fraternity" gave the Jew of Europe a vast opportunity to feel himself at home. While the fires of the French Revolution were still raging back in 1791, the Jew received his French citizenship. These doctrines of the French Revolution spread over Western Europe in the wake of the armies of Napoleon, and wherever these doctrines triumphed, the ghetto walls began to crumble.

The position of the Jew was worsened. The security of the Jew lies not in the will of an individual or a party or a dictator. The security of the Jewish people lies in law, in inalienable human rights, in recognition as a human being regardless of any political group which is in power. Therefore the Jew is highly opposed to all forms of dictatorship. He is thrown upon the will of the individual as ^{he} was in the Middle Ages.

Jewish history has made the Jew a champion of human rights. If that is radicalism, then the Jews must be radical. In the Olden Days and in modern times, the Jew experienced what goes with dictatorship. He knew the oppression and indignation that went with it. He knew chains. And so he has become a breaker of chains. That appeal of "Eisen and Blut", the perverted mission of the German people, will never appeal to the Jews.

This defense of human rights is not radical. That is the eternal life-hunger of the human race.

The Jew is a cosmopolitan. In our day, strangely enough, cosmopolitanism is commonly identified with radicalism. The Jew is not a provincial person. His history is responsible for that. Since the 6th century, before the Common Era -- for the last 2500 years, the Jew has moved across the face of the earth, from the pillars of Hercules to the Gates of _____ and has come in contact with all peoples. He learned their customs. Quite naturally he became less provincial. His horizon, his outlook widened. Naturally the Jew is more international. He became the intermediary between cultures. He became the great interpreter of one people to another. It is no accident that the creator of Esperanto, that international language, was a Jew.

Quite naturally, too, the Jew is more adaptable to new ideas. His very survival depended on his adaptability. Some psychologists claim that the Jew is possessed of a nervous system which allows for more rapid distribution of nervous energy which facilitates adjustment and re-adjustment with greater ease than in the case with other races. I don't know. I question it. It is certain that the Jew had to learn to adapt himself to situations and new ideas or he couldn't survive his wandering in this hostile world for centuries.

It is true that the Jewish mentality is mighty analytical. That is due to training in the Talmud over a period of centuries. The Jewish mind is a very subtle thing. The Jew is not romantic. He probes, he wishes to understand the why, the wherefore, the whither. I remember when I was a boy studying Talmud. Learned the lesson and thought I understood it thoroughly. I remember the rabbi's question -- it is as clear as daylight to me: "Nu, ask something! Find fault!" He was seeking to unravel still

further, still more deeply. Now this type of cosmopolitanism international analytical mind is dangerous only to those classes which feel . It is distinctly helpful to civilization and human progress. Those who benefit from the status quo and who feel themselves endangered by any change are the ones who hate this richer outlook, this freer outlook, in religion, in human existence.

Naturally, the Jewish group, by and large, are pacifists. That is to say, it loves peace. It is an ancient tradition which we found among our people. It was due to the fact, again, that our security depended upon peace. No people suffered as much from war as the Jewish group did. We suffered doubly, at the hands of enemies, and strangely enough, at the hands of friends.

When the war swept over Eastern Europe in 1914, the Jews found themselves on the frontiers. they were not attacked not merely by the German armies but by the Russian armies who represented their own kin. The Germans killed them and the Russians pogromized them.

Naturally the Jew yearns for peace. Somehow, in our day this yearning for peace has been looked on as something distinctly unpatriotic. All these things, my friends, are not radicalism. They represent the profound wisdom of an ancient people who has lived long and lived much. They are not overcome by momentary aberrations and obsessions.

Perhaps this fact has led to the idea of radicalism. The Jew throughout history, has dared to challenge the whole world if he once became convinced or persuaded that he had the truth. The Jew dared to protest where everybody else acquiesced and to be ~~independent~~ independent where everybody else conformed.

When the Jew found himself in the pagan Graeco world, one of the wisest and most civilized kingdoms of the ancient world, this little people of Judea dared to denounce that pagan world of polytheism and idolatry and for two thousand years continued a relentless war upon it. Syria, Babylon and many countries set up idols. This little people scoffed and denounced it and martyred itself for it and won out.

In the ancient world all the people believed in making sacrifices on the altar. Among this little people there arose a group of prophets who scoffed at and denounced this practice. "What do I need all these sacrifices for? I am weary of them." People don't like their sacred motives laughed at and made sport of. When the Jew found himself in the Mohammedan world where every body was a Moslem, he remained different. When the Jew found himself in a Christian world they protested against this different group, this Jewish group.

It is this spirit of persistence, in the face of the whole world, to be different, to dissent, which I believe has given the world the idea that the Jew is a radical. If that is radicalism, then the world ought to be grateful to the Jew. It is this spirit that makes for human progress in civilization. It is this spirit which made possible for our people an Einstein who can challenge the entire orthodox accepted system of physics with a system of his own. This spirit is also responsible for a Freud and a Karl Marx.

I hope that the time will never come when a Jew, for the sake of peace of mind, will quench these fires within him and consent to become a conformist, a blind follower to uniformity. That sentence from Isaiah which I read this morning: "I, the Lord your God, have summoned you in righteousness and have taken all of this and have fashioned and have

set you as a covenant for the people, as a light unto the nations to open the eyes of the blind, to bring the imprisoned out of the prison-house and they that dwell in darkness out of the dungeons." That was given to us as our mission, as our challenge long, long ago. I pray that we may remain faithful to these, our historic traditions.



1. Radicalism - branded - misunderstood - hurled - denied
you are a radical - hence -

(a) Word did not always - "radicalism" - having roots - pertains
source, origin: Radicalism - thorough - 1/2 way.

(b) In our day identified with violence - forcible over thaw
this confuses.

A man ~~can~~^{may} be a radical on that question -
not necessarily a Revolutionist

Talbot - Gandhi.

In fact Pacifism is now branded

(c) ^{on the other hand} Many who resort to violence - ^{anti-Term} Fascist etc are
enemies of radicalism - defenders of old order

(d) Clearly apparent - partisan propaganda

(e) There are econ. radicals = Communists = revol. Dict
= as old as care man - There hasn't been a soul
= what is new is not - roots with age - 1 small

(f) There are econ. radicals = socialists:

(g) Bit most enemies - Bolshavik - grouped together
liberals - progressives - radicals - imperialists

(h) This is good strategy for Reactionaries!

Make every movement seeking change at expense
odious - looking - most open to mass condemnation
Make men believe that the who-disarmament kidney

Wall - Elizabeth Tilling - "The Red Network"

2. Even more ingenious strategy - identify with groups
against whom a prejudice - Capitalize -

In as much as Jewish group - Everywhere - differs foreigners
by having liberal - You suggest to subvert -

(a) Strategy of Nazis - Doctors - who feared
liberalism - not Germanic virt - hostile - Jewish
Princ. & leadership - Mittler - "Dear-fundamentally"
Trade Unions etc. product of J. intellect - hated
Pacifism - struggle & battle - "Aristocrat & Blut"

(b) And it works! This pandering - obfuscation
See birth-right - poison

3. Prop. Lit. of Nazis reels - Spilled over - This country
What are Facts?

Propa. of Jews in Am. P. Smaller - Less > 3%
27,600 votes - N.Y.C. - 2 million Jews

(a) Propat. as small as smaller in Am. countries
Middle Class

✓ The Trouble is - Vocal People - A few Jews
as much noise - J. Com. is very ardent -
valuable - Becomes orator, stump speaker
pamphleteer - Everywhere is evidence!

4. J. by and large - Liberals - Right wing - Left wing

(1) J. has sought to overthrow no Govt - except

(2) Jews naturally a Liberal - Tradition = distrust of Kings

אין אדם מליכא דאין אדם מליכא דאין אדם מליכא

(3) His Pol. & Econ. well being = French Revol.

(4) Any thing which is opposed - Absolutism -

(5) It's security law - not men or parties

5. Jewish exper. made Jew Liberal - human rights - in order

(1) "For he knew soul of stranger - Egypt -

"Yea, a sword ~~to~~ shall pierce thy soul - that of
many hearts may be revealed

(2) He knew oppression - indignity - spitting -

He knew chaos -

No "Ensen and Blut" -

(3) Cosmopolitan - not provincial - Since b.c. 450 a
cosmopolitan - travels over sea, earth - met other
peoples - cultures - learned their ways - customs - outlook -
broadened - his horizon widened - this fit. view
less dogmatic - rigid!

From pillar, Hercules to gate of Hades - he travelled

(4) Naturally - he is less provincial - was international.
Intermediary bet. cultures.
Great Translator!

Great interpreter of one culture to another!
- International language!
- brotherhood

(5) was adaptable to new ideas! less orthodox!

4/ Some claim that Jew is possessed of a nervous system which
allows for more rapid discharge of nervous energy. This
facilitates adjustment & readjustment with material
changes in case with other races.

I do not know! But certainly he had to become more
flexibly adaptable to new situations or surroundings!

2672 4/ And also more analytical - less given to romanticism - this is
why? why? why? - Galun's theory -

4/ (6) Naturally his inner Peace! Prophets! was his
dearest prize -

6: This love & peace brotherhood, right, man - some call radicalism!
in our days
- It is only profound wisdom of an ancient people - which has
hard lay, seen much, and learned the profound lessons of life
& human relationships. This is not radicalism. This is
meaningful everlasting hope.

7. Perhaps this has contributed to ideas of radicalism.

Jew dared to challenge while world was becoming convinced of truth. He dared to protest when all acquiesced. He dared to be different, when all conformed.

(1) Polytheism. - 7/10,000 - worked 2000 yrs. before from Abraham to death of paganism - alone!

(2) Sacrifices. - 7/10,000 in 1000 B.C.

Rel. is "doing justice etc" -

(3) When Jew found himself in Pagan places. Kenn. world he resisted & protested

In Muhammadan & Christian world. - too - Every where he resisted & ultimately helped to understand uniformity -

~~fact~~ Facts in Renaissance & Reformation.

(4) This spirit of courage to criticize, to dissent, to cling to truth however unpopular & isolated - is with many ind. Jews to-day.

Frend - Einstein - Mary -

8. Leaven & ferment of Civilization.

וְהָיָה יְהוָה לְכָל הָעָם כְּמֵהָיָה לְיִשְׂרָאֵל
וְהָיָה יְהוָה לְכָל הָעָם כְּמֵהָיָה לְיִשְׂרָאֵל

1/ Radicalism - word - bandied - hurl - pale - outlaw
sinister connotation - a term of condemnation

2/ Not always - "radicals" - that which goes
to roots - source - orig.:

An attitude of the going - not stopping $\frac{1}{2}$
line of reasoning - or course of action

3/ In our day - mixed up with (Violence)
Confusion of attitude with technique

There are many radical
Tolstoi - Gandhi - Both pacifists

In fact in some countries - Pacifism
regarded as Radicalism - carries

On the other hand - opponents of radicals -
defenders - resort - Nazi - Fascist

Partizan propaganda - identifies -

4/ There are, of course, economic radicals
- communits -

But what is radical - is not their technique

- Socialists believe in same program -
- Yet hardly judgment identifies two
and all dissatisfied with status quo

5). Good strategy for reactionary! to make
every progressive movement - suspect
- Wearmament - Un. form - labor union -
"The Red Network" - Elizabeth Dilling -
Cleveland C. & C. - Secret -

6). An even more ingenious device -
moderate - by linking - disparaged groups
foreign - Jews -
✓ Bismarck -
Nazis banned
Hitler! denouncing -
for conspiracy of Jews

Peace

NEW DEAL See birth-right - men - poison

7/ Charge Jews are racials exploited by Nazis

1. 600,000 ^{July 1932} - ~~5 million~~ - ~~Leaders~~ - Leaders.

Reichstag - 89 Communists

Nov. 1932 100 "

8/ Spilled over this country.

4 1/2 m. Jews.

~~26,000 members~~, Com. Party.

26,000 reg. members, Com. Party. 3%

- smaller

About 1 3/4 m. Jews in N.Y. - Deuts 27,000

- ~~smaller~~

9/ Jews largely middle class - not Commun.

Trouble - over people - very vocal

a J. Communist - tense, volatile

Stump speaker - organizer -

His volatility -

10/ Jews liberals! Right wing - Left wing -

11/ Never right to over them by force

except - elem. human rights - Conard!

11/. But when he enjoys citizenship - his
interests lie in elemental liberalism

✓ (1) From the beg. of history - a destruct of Royalty!
Samuel - Prophets -

✓ (2) Renaissance - Prot. Repr. - H. Rev. - Rep.

(3) All power, dictatorship, despotism

12/. Our history has made us a champion
of human rights

(1) Remember Egypt! Revolution!

No knee chains!

"Eisen und Blut"

But this is not radicalism - external h/h-hungry!

13/. Jew = cosmopolitan - not provincial
His history! 2000 years -

great interpreter! - intermediary!
Esperanto!

But this is classic dream, all
religion - 18-19C!

(1) See what inferior Nat. is doing!

14). Jew - receptive to new ideas ^{French} ~~European~~
Survival dependent - adaptability.

Some psycho-claim - persecuted nervous system
rapid deat., nervous energy

15). Jewish mentality - analytical ^{French} ~~European~~ Talmud.
- probes = why? wherefore? Whither?
not so mystic & romantic

My Talmud Teacher!

16). But this cosmops. ~~is~~ analyt. mind.
is dangerous to whom?

17. Naturally Jews are peace advocates

(1) / x x x

(2) Security depends on Peace - suffer
 doubly. Win or Lose - Germany

(3) Peace - today - suspect.

- precipitate of ancient wisdom!

18. Jew has dared to stand alone! Rabbi calm

(1) Paganism - 1 dollar -

- 211 list -

(2) Samprates - 6,712 in -

(3) In Christian world - remained Jew!

In Moslems .. - " Jew

(4) A stiff-willed people! Survival!

(5) Virtue to be treasured by Aryans?

19. I hope time will never come when

Jew for sale (peace) must -

Conformist - a blind follower -

"I - the last - Samprates) as -

the arts, are disproportionate to our numbers. Whatever we are, they damn us for it. Even the graves our dead are defiled. But mostly they damn the German Jews as being Communists bent on destroying Germany. Yet where are the facts? In 1932, there were 600,000 Jewish men, women and children in Germany. Surely less than half of them could have been voters. Yet in that year the German Communist vote was just short of 5,000,000. In the July 1932 Reichstag there were 89 Communists. How many of them do you suppose were Jews? Not one; not a single one. In the November 1932 Reichstag (the last before the advent of the Hitler regime) there were 100 Communist members. Not one of them was a Jew. And despite this, the propaganda machine of Germany has dinned into the ears of the world that all the Jews of Germany are Communists and all the Communists are Jews. Falsehood so absurd should long since have been disproved to the world.

We praise men for the quality of noble fortitude; for bearing ills silently and without whimpering. Yet there comes also a time for speech; for vigorous defense and clear denial. We must not too long let calumny and libel go unanswered. Here in America most of the anti-Semitic organizations repeat the German arguments. Whatever we are, whatever we do, for this they would damn us. Do a handful of Jews work for the Government? That they call a crime. Do we give our best in industry, arts, the sciences? Then they declare we control the country. Does one poor Jew commit petty larceny? Then we are all thieves. It is sheer nonsense. But we must not overlook such nonsense. Mostly our enemies imitate Germany crying "Wolf! Wolf!", with the same old arguments about Communism. Let one Jew declare himself a Communist. At once the professional anti-Semites, the loathsome merchants of hate, announce that we all are communistic conspirators engaged in a vast scheme to wreck the country.

Here Are The Facts

What are the facts? The population of this country is about 125,000,000. There are from four and one-half to five million Jews in the United States. The entire registration of the Communist party is but 26,000 members. The population of New York City is about 7,000,000. Almost 2,000,000 of them are Jews. The entire Communist party in New York has 8,000 registered members. The Jewish population of Philadelphia is 250,000. The entire enrolled Communist party of Philadelphia is 1,500. We do not know how many of the 8,000 Communists of New York, of the 1,500 of Philadelphia, are Jews. But the total Communist registration in and of itself shows that whether the Jews of New York and Philadelphia are Democrats or Republicans, one thing is certain, and that is that they are not Communists.