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The Strength that is America, 1938.

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THE STRENGTH THAT IS AMERICA

WRHS

By

Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver



At

The Temple

On

Sunday Morning, November 13, 1938

When a plague ravages a country, when epidemics spread through a community, men are concerned where it will strike next.

The plague of diseased ideas which has swept over the world in recent years seems to know no boundaries and has given grave concern as to where it will strike next. The furies of Medievalism which war and the miseries which followed it - death, disaster and poverty - unleashed have swept over continents and many a citadel and many a stronghold of human liberties human rights, values has been destroyed.

Even in this land removed by more than three thousand miles of ocean from the seat of infection which has, up to now, felt rather secure, in recent years, we, too, have become concerned because we have seen the waves beginning to wash, as it were, our own shores. The thoughtful among us have begun to take stock of our spiritual and physical resources which must be called upon to resist the invasion of these hostile anti-democratic ideologies of the Old World. We have launched Congressional investigations to determine the extend of hostile propaganda in our very midst. We have turned our anxious eyes southward to South and Central America. We have been startled by the ominous militarization and the economic and ideologic invasions of the Fascist and Nazi governments.

We had taken a rather complacent and superior attitude to what was happening in the Old World until recently. Now rudely awakened, we have observed with consternation how those ideas have crept into the Western hemisphere, how a net of propaganda is being cast ^{over} ~~the~~ the New World today. Thoughtful Americans have become worried; thoughtful American Jews, doubly worried because the Jew has again become the symbol and is again bearing the brunt of the struggle.

So we have been surveying ourselves more or less, appraising our strength, studying our defenses. And when we do that, a few facts

immediately become clear: first, that no democratic country is immune or can hope to remain immune from that type of anti-democratic propaganda. Democracy being what it is, and dictatorship being what it is, it is inevitable that alien propaganda will find its way into any and every democracy. It will exploit that freedom which democracy always held dear. It will exploit the principles of democracy and use them to destroy democracy.

In the same way a democracy must tolerate native anti-democratic propaganda on the part of those who prefer to defend their economic privileges even at the cost of disrupting the democratic government. Sooner or later, of course, democracy will adopt a far more realistic, practical and common-sense attitude with reference to these principles of freedom which are now being exploited by those dark forces whose chief objective is to destroy it. Democracy can no longer afford to be naive and complacent about what is going on. It will have to "put itself in armor" as a great leader declared here not so long ago. It will not tolerate the organization of private armies of men in uniform parading our streets for the sake of projecting ideas which are the very antithesis, the very death-pronouncement of all that America stands for. Democracy is bound to become, if it ever means to save itself, more ^{red} militaristic, more determined, more crusading. But it is quite impossible to expect that in any democracy, including our own, that hostile propaganda can be completely eradicated.

The second fact that becomes clear is that any democracy can collapse. No one has guaranteed the automatic survival, as it were, of democracy. Given the same set of circumstances and conditions which brought about the defeat of democracy in many of the countries

of the Old World and the same consequences will ensue. We saw it with our own eyes in very recent weeks, in the Czechoslovakian democracy - the finest and noblest democracy in the heart of Europe. Over night it changed radically, changed because it found itself over night in a new constellation of events wherein democracy became inoperative, burdensome, undesirable. It isn't that something happened to the mental life psychosis of the people, or that one day they were good people and the next day they were bad people. It is that when suddenly they were confronted with a situation wherein democracy and the burdens of democratic worked to their disadvantage, at least so they assumed, Czechoslovakia turned sharply dictatorship, and even anti-Semitic. It is strange that a country that most enjoyed the enthusiasm, the admiration of the Jewish people and whose Jewish citizens were the most loyal of its citizens should now, because of the sudden shifting of the constellation of events, launch upon a more or less anti-Semitic program too.

However, if these circumstances and these events do not exist, then almost all kinds of propaganda, quite regardless of how loud or aggressive or insolent, it will not bring about the collapse of democracy. And all the propaganda let loose will not total up to that result which propagandists are after. When there is no war and no defeat in war, when there is no prolonged economic depression which brings misery to millions of people, when there is no bitter industrial conflict which stops or threatens to stop the normal economic processes of a country, when organized labor, organized capital do not resort to extra legal methods to attain their objectives, then democracy will carry on quite regardless of any propaganda that may be going on in its midst. No discriminating legislation against racial or religious groups will be passed. When the reverse is true, all things are possible in any democracy, including our own.

Our task, therefore, the task of all thoughtful Americans, is first to avert war, to work for peace and collective security in the world, an ideal which seems to be so far off at present but which is the only ideal which is likely to lead mankind out of the chaos and morass of our day. We have a peace tradition in our country which is great. Our people is not militaristic. Our government is not imperialistic. We have no ambitions to conquer. Unfortunately we have not worked very realistically to bring about peace in the world. We have been afraid to enter any commitment which would bring about the pacification of the world.

Our task is to bring about economic stability in our country, the sense of economic security and well being among our people and to avert by true industrial statesmanship that kind of bitter struggle which has ruined more than one country in the world. Statesmanship in the field of economics is perhaps the greatest need in democracies today.

In our effort to preserve democracy, however, we shall be definitely aided by a few important factors which are in a sense unique to American life. In the first place, ours is a long established democracy, more than one hundred and fifty years old. We have gone through many crises without destroying the democratic machine. We have even gone through the fires of a Civil War without doing hurt to our democratic traditions. This is very important and very strengthening to remember. No long established democracy went under in Europe since the World War. New democracies which have never had their roots deep down into the life of their people - they have collapsed. But democracies who have a long tradition of living - the French, English, Swiss, American - have not collapsed in spite of Nazism, Fascism, Communism in the whole world. ✓

When the Slav, Teuton, Latin sneer at democracy, they sneer at something they never experienced or knew that was never a part of their very warp and woof. They never knew any long period of self-government, its technique, its privileges and its disciplines. They understand that people must be governed. They do not understand that people also must govern. Here in this country, we like to govern ourselves. Steadily through the years we have extended the right of suffrage to our people. We have liberalized our apparatus to make government more responsible, more direct, because we believe that democracy is not merely a means but also that it is a real end. With this is tied up our conception of the importance and dignity and equality of the individual. We have invulnerable faith in the capacity of democracy, of people to govern themselves, to solve all their issues without surrendering our rights to a duce, a feuhrer. We treasure here, to a degree unknown in the Old World, our personal liberty of action, speech and press. Without them we would feel caged. Violence would be done to our spirit if those personal liberties were taken from us suddenly.

We do not like to be ordered but we can be persuaded, appealed to, reasoned with. We can't be ordered about - without which the German people are unhappy and lost. We are a self-reliant people, a little less so than a generation ago when the pioneering zeal was still strong in the life of the American people, when the farmer was independent and depended upon no one but himself. We have become more and more a nation of employes. The sense of self-reliance and independence however is still very strong among the Americans. The idea of a state totalitarianism, is absolutely hateful to the American system. Americans are not likely

to surrender lightly these personal liberties - that right of self-government and that liberty which has been theirs and their forefathers' for many generations. So that it is not quite correct to draw analogies between what is likely to happen in this country and what is likely to happen in other countries of the world.

Another characteristic make-up is his capacity for self-criticism.
Sometimes we criticise ourselves to excess and are often prone to take too seriously criticism from people from the Old World. We are not averse to appraising ourselves most searchingly. We are not given to the self-glorification of, say, a Mussolini or a Hitler, to ascribe perfection and finality, divine determination to everything we do or say. We are ready to acknowledge our mistakes and to take the blame for our mistakes. When the panic of 1929 had America in its grip, the American people made a remarkable analysis and self-criticism. The fault is ours, we have over-specified. We must do better in the future. When the same thing over-took Germany, it blamed certain people for their economic disaster.

We can reverse ourselves fortunately. Very often we find that a thing which we thought would work, does not work. We enforced prohibition. We found it inoperative, so we abolished it. We find one deal unsatisfactory, we try a new deal. When the new deal is unsatisfactory, we try another deal within the framework of democracy. We are not hostile to experimentation. It is the resiliance, that certain spirit of resurgency in American life which augurs well for democracy and which will serve it in crises which may come in years to come.

The third factor is our vast natural resources - a whole ~~country~~^{continent}
in which to live. There is room for all. With intelligent management we can make life happier, more abundant for every human being in the country. Ours is not a starved and crowded country like most of those countries

of Europe. And there is a possibility here of steadily rising standards of living for all of our people while in Europe, the standards of living of the people are steadily declining.

Poverty is one of the bitterest foes of democracy. In our land we can abolish it if we have the wisdom and the intelligence.

There is still another factor which is our strength. We have not
4.
fragmentized our national political life. We do not suffer from a host of small political parties and fractions of parties which have made the democratic process in many parts of the world quite impossible, which brought about break-down of parliamentary processes. We have retained by and large a two party system of government, a majority system of government and we have not therefore permitted small groups with party ideologies and religious bias to find their way into the legislative halls through systems of proportional representation or other devices by which minorities find their way in to parliaments and actually scuttle democracy. Pp. 7-8

Lastly, my friends, we are a young nation. We do not belong to
5.
the past. The past belongs to us. We are not overly handicapped by old world animosities. We are a composite people which but for spells of intolerance here and there have been able to get along all of us together in mutual confidence, in mutual cooperation. We have no threatening neighbors on our frontiers and more, therefore, than any other people on the face of this earth, we are able to pursue our chosen way of life without interference.

All this has been our strength up to now. But all this has been not only our strength. It has been our nobility. And it has been the beauty of our land. I think it was Emerson who, many years ago said, "We go to Europe to be Americanized". If there is any man or woman in
✓
this country that needs to be Americanized, I would send him for a spell

to Europe. Here we hold aloft the torch of liberty. At the entrance, at the very gate of America stands a torch of light illuminating the very world we live in. There, in Europe, you see torches to burn synagogues. Here we try to establish law and order and the peaceful ways of life and justice and decency and social tolerance and brotherhood. There, their governments are fostering ~~har~~ arson and extortion and all the vilest indecencies and bestialities in human life. "We go to Europe to be Americanized".

Do not lose faith in America, my friends, in this trying hour of the world. It was a rather successful business man, J.P. Morgan who once advised his son: "Remember my son, that any man who is a bear on the future of this country will go broke. I am not a ~~successful~~ businessman. ^{But} I would re-echo in these words: Anyone who is a bear in the future of America will go broke.

There is too much future here, too much wealth here, too much spiritual and material wealth, too much of initiative and enterprise among our people, too much accumulated good will and generosity too great and prolonged a tradition of liberty, freedom and tolerance for any man to be a bear on the future of this country. We shall ride the storm confidently. We shall reach the safe harbor of our national security.

1/ Waves - Plagues - sermon 514
Concern - State - Congress - Later Am.

2/ What is our strength to resist -
① Same attack - Beas. being what it is
② in "Blind" Automatic Survival

3/ Long Estab - 150 - Civil War
and a large Am. Union

4/ Capre. for Sup. Canton - Reverse
Exposition - Prohib New Deal

5/ Nat. Resources - Starved

6/ Not frag. Id. - Majority Vote
Pop. Front

7/ Law 9 - and broadcast

8/ We go to Europe to "Lovers"

1) Plague - Epidemic - Ideas -

sermon 514

Furies of Med - which war - swept - destroyed - citadels

we, in this land, 3000 - secure + confident - invincibility -

concerned - waves washing over our shores -

take stock - resist - Congress. investigation.

South ward - ominous penetration - Rio Grande -

Readily awashland - whole complacent + superior - drift
entrenched - but - work

That J. Am. - worried; That J. Am. Jews - bent -

Even in our own land - intensification - backward -
indication of Fascist trends.

2) So that we have been surveying same - appraising
forces - studying our defenses - ~~condition~~.

A few facts.

(a) no dem. country ~~immune~~ from J.

J. being what it is - creep in - insinuate - Explot

Trojan Horse - Madison Sq -

In same way - how to tolerate - ~~vicious~~ - privilege
Disrupt - Empire - advance Guard -

J. must talk common-sense -

And Mistrust - Unfore -

(b) Any J. can collapse - antennae survival

Given same set - Geas ^{constellations} Antennae.

3/. Humane - if these circumst. tenets do not - shall
may be very low - tot up
When there is no war - defeat -
No discriminat. legislat. -
When reverse -

4/. Our task : (1) Avert War - Peace - ~~"the"~~
(2) Econ. stability (3) Labr - Capital / Statesmanship -
Division in ranks / labor

5/. In our efforts to preserve D. - aided.

(1) Long - extab. D - 150 - Fires
not a single Dem. collapsed -

When Slav - jeer - Web -

Never known self - sent - Peple must be permeated!

We like to power numbers - extended suffrage

not merely a means - End - Tied up - Inalienable

Have Invulnerable Faith - Issues -

Treasure our Personal Liberty - caged -

Ordered about - German - unhappily - lost

Self - restraint - less since nation employees

State Total - hateful -

Suspense - not lightly surrender

6/ Given to Self Criticism - too excess - self approval -

Self glorification -

Accounting mistakes - take blame - 1929

Revenue - Prohibition - New Deal -

Experiments - Exhibit.

7/ Vast Natural Resources - Whole Continent -

Room for all - with intell. management

Starved, crowded Econ.

Rising standard - for Italy - Falling

8/ Not Fragmented our Pol. life - numerous

- each with its pet idea - "isn't" - race.

Machinery to break down - paralyzes Pol. Inst.

Returned 2 Party - majority - Prepared

9/ Young Nation - we do not belong to Past

not merely handicraft - old - wood ammunition

Composite - spells -

No threatening neighbor on our frontiers

More > any other people free to pursue

10/ All this is our strength.

Tell our inseparable

Prayer

11/ Not only strong - noble, beautiful -

"We go to Europe to be Americanized" - Emerson

Torch!

12/ Do not lose faith in Amer -

"Remember, my son, that any man who is a
boon in the future of this country, will go with



J. Bertram Myers

It is a debate - being what they are. ^{the will invade, creep in, seep in,}
communal ~~itself~~ - the other - will be ^{being a} it must, tolerate that invasion.
It has to handle the forces which have caused its destruction.

Trojan Horse!

In same way - tolerate various movements - fostered by
those who wish to defend their econ. interests against rad. change -
& who set out their above allegiance to Const. - or Dem - or
any other principle.

D. take simple common sense precautions - ^{Private Arms - Unions -}
(b) Any D. can collapse - including our own. No one has
underwritten an automatic renewal as a D. ^{given} ~~which~~ ^{that}
charac. constellation of ^{forces} ~~which~~ ^{which} ~~disrupts~~ ^{disrupts} ~~free port~~ ⁱⁿ
this country - as in any other ^{country} - & D. will go under here
also - ^{until it is worth} ^{some for - & that's who} ^{It's}

Czech. was a Dem.

with that constellation of ^{pol. econ.} ~~circumst.~~ ^{circumst.} which make
D. undeniable or insuperable.

3. However - if these circumst. events are not prevented - no amount of prep.
however unpleasant & distasteful it may be, will shield the foundations
a long, estab. democ. ~~constitutions~~ ^{constitutions}. The ^{pub} ~~orgs.~~ ^{orgs.} may be very noisy
& very insistent, but their sum total does not tot up to anything.

When there is no war and defeat in war - no prolonged econ.
depression or suffering - ^{little trouble} ~~no~~ ^{no} ~~individual~~ ^{individual} ~~strife~~ ^{strife} leading to a break-down
a threatened break-down of econ. processes - when labor or capital
does not resort to extra-legal methods to gain their objectives -
then D. will carry on - and under its aegis no discernible
to reveal a ref. basis. ~~can~~ ^{can} possible be evoked.

When the reverse is true - all things are possible.

4/ Our task is: ① Great war - collective security - "daughter" ② Econ. stability.
③ Labor - Capital & state manhood.

5/ ~~the~~ In our struggle to preserve D. we are aided by 9 numbers
& highly important facts.

① A long establ. D. - 150 yrs. old - comes thru crisis ^{even so} (Civil War)
Not a single old Dem. has collapsed in Europe - Constitution abst.

Monarchies have -

When Har., Tenter or Future - comes at D. & Freedom - they live
at something which they have never really exp. for a long time - not
part, war, & war (war) & their psyche - teacher - life -

They have never known self-govt - its temper, its principles &
its discrepancies. They fully understand that people must
be governed. They simply do not understand that people
must govern - or know.

^{We left to govern}
We have steadily extended the suffrage - from -

It is not merely a means - an end - Popular Sovereignty

Tied up with our conception of the importance & significance &
Equality of the modern world -

We shall not betray lightly surrender it.
We have unshakable faith in ability to meet crises without delay. as
We treasure our personal liberties - action - speech - press -

that - we would feel caged without them.

We don't like to be ordered about. All the German - Prussian

by drill sergeant - enjoys it - just lost without it -

Self-reliant - strong body - less war formers but still strong!

State Total. is hateful to very core of America.

Too much Nat. control - suspicious & encroachment
has our liberties -

- some ^{only} to express

(2) We are given to self criticism - ~~we~~ to self-appraisal -
~~assume self-criticism - 1926 Paris - Germany~~
we can acknowledge mistakes - we can reverse ourselves.

Prohibition -

we can have a new deal within the existing frame-work -
& subsequently make as many modifications as we desire.

(3) Vast Natural Resources - We have a full commitment
in which this - Room for all - Nature abundant &
generous - with intelligent management ~~the~~
~~could be~~ life can be made happier, richer & fuller for
every man. - Standard, crowded, European countries -
Rising standard of living - Diet, with all this far-far, luxury.
We can have an ~~even~~ - with in an ~~pop.~~ ^{labor}.

(4) We have not fragmented our ^{pol. life} into ^{shreds}
~~fragmented~~ ^{each with its own ideal. its own - a goal a utopia}
~~fragmented~~ ^{by little} ~~pol. parties, & fractions & connected by~~ ^{by} ~~which~~
~~into~~ ^{into} ~~themselves~~ ^{ultimately} ~~diverging~~ ^{diverging} ~~down~~ ^{down} ~~to~~ ^{to} ~~which~~ ^{which} ~~causes~~ ^{causes} ~~the~~ ^{the}
~~machine~~ ^{machine} ~~divided~~ ^{divided} ~~to~~ ^{to} ~~bring~~ ^{bring} ~~down~~ ^{down} ~~and~~ ^{and} ~~paralyze~~ ^{paralyze} ~~all~~ ^{all} ~~part~~ ^{part} ~~part~~ ^{part} ~~to~~ ^{to}
We have retained the ~~majority~~ ^{majority} ~~rule~~ ^{rule} ~~and~~ ^{and} ~~have~~ ^{have} ~~freighted~~ ^{freighted}
under it.

(5) We are a young nation. We do not belong to Past. Past
helps turn - We are not ^{overly} ^{handcuffed} ^{with} ^{old} -
~~old~~ ^{old} ~~annals~~ ^{annals} ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~past~~ ^{past} ~~but~~ ^{but} ~~for~~ ^{for} ~~there~~ ^{there} ~~has~~ ^{has} ~~been~~ ^{been} ~~change~~ ^{change}
We have no threatening neighbors on
our frontiers. More than any other people, we are free to
pursue the ~~our~~ ^{our} ~~chosen~~ ^{chosen} ~~way~~ ^{way} ~~life~~ ^{life}.

→ "Then Union, holding all, fusing, absorbing, blending all
these, even these, & ring"

6. This ~~is~~ is our strength! Till now insupportable. Our prayer - also for future.

① is only strong - but noble & beautiful!
"We go to Europe to be Americans" - Emerson -

Tach, h. h. h.
"Sympathy"
- our - our - our -

7. Do not lose faith in him!

"Remember, my son, that any man who is a hearer on the future
of this country will go back" J. Pierpont Morgan.

