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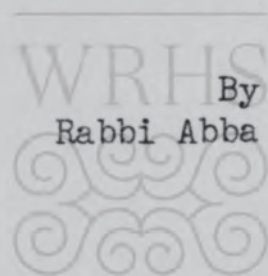
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The immortal story of the English, 1941.

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THE IMMORTAL STORY OF THE ENGLISH



By

Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver



At

The Temple

On

Sunday morning, January 12, 1941

England is fighting for her life today. It took us a long time to realize that England is also fighting for our life today. It took us a long time to realize that England is also fighting for the life and soul of humanity today. England, of course, did not consciously or deliberately enter this war to fight for us or for Humanity. No nation is quite that altruistic. But by staking her all to defend and to preserve her own civilization, her own code, her own political tradition against the deadly foe who is resolved to destroy and supplant them, England, through inspired and sacrificial self-interest, is also serving us and mankind. For her code of freedom, her and tolerance civilization, her traditions of representative government are ours and mankind's.

England is the Mother of Parliaments. England is the cradle of constitutional government. England is the birthplace of essential human rights without which civilization is unthinkable.

The Magna Carta was the first, but certainly not the last charter of freedom and liberty, steadily and increasingly through the centuries fuller more and/comprehensive which the English genius evolved to curb tyranny, absolutism and oppression. The champions and the martyrs of human freedom and progress on the continent of Europe, and throughout the world have always through the last generation, kindled their torches at the fires of England's brave and free spirit. And they always held up England as the example for their own country to follow.

Refugees from political persecution and religious bigotry have always found asylum and sanctuary in England. The thirteen colonies revolted not against the spirit of England, or the political traditions of England, but because of the spirit of England, because of the political traditions of England which were in their hearts and in their blood. They were Englishmen, and they refused to submit to a tyrannous and stupid government in London whose policies were condemned by the best minds in England.

There are good governments, and there are bad governments. And bad governments frequently perpetrate great wrongs and injustices and bring down much grief on their own people, as did, in our own day, the tragic appeasement government of Chamberlain. And the people must thereafter atone in blood and tears for the blind and misguided leadership of their government. But the people, if its soul is sound, if its ideas are right and wholesome, will ultimately surmount its government, outlive false guides and leaders and return to the classic highway of its own true self.

It is therefore no accident of history, my dear friends, that England is today the last great bulwark of human freedom in the whole world, that upon her has evolved again the dread and crushing responsibility to defend what she has so nobly built up through the generations and centuries, and which has become the political and spiritual heritage of the whole Western world.

The cynical and shameless foe, now determined to crush England, thought that England ^{would} ~~did~~ not rise to the challenge. Judging all others by himself, he could not conceive that any nation would shed its blood for anything other than conquest. And this foe was sure and gleefully he proclaimed to the world that England was finished, decadent, that England was through. England was just a bloated, comfort-loving bourgeois nation in its dotage, clinging to an Empire which earlier and more vigorous generations had built and which is now, at the first hard blow, ready to drop it from its languished, weary, fingers. Oh, England will fight, they proclaim cynically! England will fight, to the last Frenchman!

There were many outside of England and many outside the totalitarian lands who believed this and who repeated these dolorous prophecies. There were many in our midst who thought so too. They forgot - we forgot - ~~the~~ the heart of Oak which is England. They forgot the words of a very wise man who said that "the people of England are never so happy as when you tell them

they are ruined."

The English were never exhibitionists. They were not given to national self-adulation. They are not braggarts like Hitler and Mussolini. They are rather masters of under-statement. They have a way of deprecating their own worth. And because of that, people have forgotten the essential unquenchable strength which is England. They had forgotten General French's contemptible little army of 1914. They forgot the quiet, undefeated resoluteness of this race which has enabled it to sermount in the past, over and over again both menace and disaster, and which wrote upon the glorious pages of its history the names of Armada, Trafalgar, Waterloo, and Vimy Ridge. There is a doggedness in that race, an inner strength which can take more and more of the same thing, and come out at the end undefeated.

In our own day, Dunkirk was the symbol of this quality, and the manner in which England rallied after the defeat of Belgium and France, and the reaction of the people to the bombardment to their homes and to their fair city was also a symbol of this quality. And Churchill is a symbol of this same quality - the quality which in the uttermost extremity will not spare blood and toil and tears and sweat to defend the inner sanctuary of its soul. And certainly more symbols of this same quality are the manners in which England recaptured the Medite ranean anfter it had been proclaimed an Italian Lake.

No, this is not a decadent race which the deluded and desperate dictators are now facing. It is not a people unwilling to fight, thought it is a peace-loving people. They loved peace so much that they could not conceive of a foe so enamored of war and so unscrupulous and so cynical and so Machevallian. Their own decent human attitudes betrayed them almost into disaster. They would not be warned as to the nature of the foe until it was almost too late.

And this people now stands between the world's freedom and the world's slavery, and twenty miles from Calais to Dover now separate the Twentieth Century from the Sixteenth Century. It is the English who are guarding that narrow channel to defend their century, and their future, the future of a civilized and decent mankind against the barbarism and decadency of the past.

A wise and observant philosopher, Santayana once wrote this about the English: "What governs the Englishman is his inner atmosphere, the weather in his soul...It is a mass of dumb instincts and allegiances, the love of a certain quality of life, to be maintained manfully...He carries his English weather in his heart wherever he goes, and it becomes a cool spot in the desert, and a steady and sane oracle amongst all the delirious of mankind...It will be a black day for the human race when scientific blackguards, conspirators, churls, and fanatics manage to supplant him..."

Now, what is this weather in his soul? What is the certain quality of life which the English are so manfully guarding today and which we regard as so essential to our own life and to mankind? You can only define that in English terms which are untranslatable. And the first quality is the quality of "Sportsmanship". That can't be translated. It is a profound psychological attitude. To play the game, the game of life according to voluntary, self-imposed rules which must thereafter be observed to the letter and the spirit; not to play foul, to score a point to win; not to take unfair advantage. If the opponents are not equally matched, the stronger is given an artificial disadvantage in order to equalize their chances for victory. Fair play as an ideal in life; not so much victory; not so much getting there; not so much winning the prize. But fair play! Certain things dare not be done. Certain things should not be done, not because of the low profits, but because it isn't cricket. Sportsmanship! That is, free cooperation among competitors of good will wherein men seek to develop their skills not by destroying their

opponents, not at the expense of others, but by challenging others in sport who want opposition, who must have opposition or there can't be any sport. And, the stronger your opponent, the greater the challenge to your skill, and the more exciting the game.

This quality of sportsmanship translated into relationships between nations, between races, between groups - that quality of sportsmanship is utterlacking in the mentality of the Nazis. They simply don't know what that means. To them, nations and races which are weak are to be exploited, and if necessary, to be destroyed. There is no room in the world for little nations. And because they are only bent upon victory and conquest, they resort to every conceivable method. They call it total war, ruthlessness, terror, brutality. Everything goes. Opposition is not to be tolerated. You are either on my side or you must perish.

This quality of sportsmanship the English have exemplified most nobly in the world today.

There is another quality which can only be defined through an English term which is untranslatable and that is -- common sense. There may be people who are wiser human beings, who are more logical, more imaginable, more mystic than the English. There is no people that has more of this uncommon quality "common sense". Emerson many years ago declared: "I find the Englishman to be him of all men who stands firmest in his shoes". The Englishman never drives an idea to its illogical logical conclusion. He does not lose himself readily in metaphysical vagaries, in fine-spun ideologies, in fanatical "isms", as the Germans do, or in passionate crusades. He moves along steadily, somewhat laboriously by the rule of his thumb, by methods of trial and error. He has a hard sense of what life demands, for what at any given moment is practical and feasible and just. He is progressive, but not revolutionary. Or, rather put it this way: He carries through his revolutions without the customary brutal fanfare of revolution. Sometimes he finds it necessary to decapitate a

King. But he doesn't brag about it. He is not proud about it. He doesn't like that brutal method. He builds on the past, on his experiences, on his traditions. He builds through new laws, through revamping the old ways to meet new conditions.

The Englishman cannot be made to utter the unadulterated Romantic rubbish of the Nazis, their chauvenism, their racism. He has too much common sense for that. Not that he lacks imagination. Not at all. A race that can produce a Shakespeare, a Keats, a Shelley and a Milton and a Gulliver's Travels is not lacking in imagination, but fortunately lacks a certain type of ~~unrestrained~~ undisciplined, dangerous imagination. That quality of common sense in relation between men, nations and races, the English exemplify in a remarkably fine way in the world.

And finally, there is this other weather or climate in the soul of the Englishman - a respect for the individual without excessive or undisciplined individualism - because there is an individualism which destroys the individual. The Englishman wants people to respect his rights, but will concede the same right to others. He believes in the principle of live and let live! He ~~accepts~~ acknowledges and will defend the principle of non-conformity although he, himself, is likely to be the most conforming of conformists. In a profound sense, he respects government. For example, he is the most law-abiding citizen in the world, but he insists that government shall not trespass on rights which belong to the individual. His home is his castle which dare not be invaded. Totalitarianism, that is, absolute governmental control over the life and thoughts and the free expressions of an individual is abhorrent to the very soul of the Englishman. For seven hundred ~~xx~~ years he has waged war against the encroaching, the avaricious state.

Now, when you reflect upon these qualities, you will realize that it is just these qualities which are being attacked in the world - Sportsmanship,

Common sense, Tolerance, the rights of the individual -- that have been destroyed in four-fifths of the world. And if they are completely destroyed -- that is, if England moves down, life, I am afraid, will become, brutal, coarse and cheap and regimented all over. But we are determined that these qualities shall not perish in the world and we are determined that England shall not go down. That is why the President of the United States in his last message to Congress called upon this nation to convert itself into an arsenal to defend this civilization which has been so superbly evolved and defended through the generations by the Anglo-Saxon world.

The spirit of England is the spirit of America. The same Bible molded both peoples. The Puritan spirit which for nearly three centuries has fashioned the soul of England and has left its indelible stamp on that people is the same Hebraic spirit of Israel. And its ethics are the ethics of the prophets of Israel.

There were Jews in England since the days of the Romans, small numbers, of course. But they were there. And they lived there all through the Norman and , and they experienced the same fate that Jewish communities experienced throughout Europe all through the Middle Ages. In 1290 they were expelled from England. The same religious bigotry, the same intolerance that existed in the rest of Europe toward the Jew existed in England. By the middle of the seventeenth century a vast transformation came over the English people. From the Time of Cromwell the Jews began to return to England. That have lived there all through these centuries in peace and security. They served England well in all departments of its national life. There have been Jews who were ministers of the Crown in England. Disraeli helped to build up the British Empire. Jews in England were Ambassadors, Lord Chief Justices. One was Viceroy of India. The Jews, for years looked upon England as a friend, a friend in need to defend them.

And the destinies of these two peoples came even closer together during the last war when in 1917, England issued the now famous Balfour Declaration which declared Palestine national homeland of the Jews. And for the first time in Jewish history a great power undertook the responsibility for assisting the Jewish people legally to establish their national-life in a national homeland. And since that time, since 1917, that small Jewish community which had lived there has now grown into a community of some 550,000 souls, today the second largest free Jewish community in the world, which has built its own life, its towns, cities, villages, colonies, its medial centers, its university, its school system, revived its culture, revived its language with the help, and under the protection of Great Britain.

They have had differences, of course, between them -- of the fulfillment of the Mandate. We shall have difficulties, I am sure, in the future, in the years to come. But in all our difficulties with Great Britain, we have never for a moment lost our confidence in the essential justice, in the sense of fair play of this people. We had difficulties with governments of Great Britain, but frequently appealed to the people of England over the heads of the government. It is no wonder then that now, when England is at war, the Jews of Palestine have offered themselves almost to a man to help Great Britain. Thousands have mobilized. Many of them are fighting with the British forces in Northern Africa and in Greece. We have moved along, side by side with England. We pray to God that it may be given to these two peoples to move cooperatively on side by side in the years to come.

What will happen in the years to come, no one knows. The hour is grave for England and for mankind. The next few weeks, the next few months may bring to the English many trials and tribulations that have been unknown in their long history, for the power of that fanatical force is not yet broken.

But we have confidence, as the English have, in the justice of their cause, faith in the ideals which they are defending, trust in God, and they have again proclaimed to the world that Britain never, never, never, shall be slaves.



1) England is fighting for her life to-day.

It took us a long time to realize that E. is also fighting for ^{our} life, and the soul of Humanity.

E. did not consciously or deliberately enter the War, to fight for us or for Humanity. No nation is quite that altruistic.

But by standing her all to defend ^{to preserve} her civilization, her ^{own} code, her ^{own} political traditions ag. a deadly foe who is resolved to destroy and to supplant them, E., through inspired and sacrificial self-interest, is serving us and mankind.

For her civilization, her code of freedom and tolerance, her pol. traditions of ^{repres.} self-govt. are ours and mankind's.

E. is the Mother of Parliaments, the cradle of constitutional govt, the birth-place of essential human rights, without which W. Eur. civiliz. is unthinkable.

The Magna Charter, was the first, but not the last charter of freedom, steadily and increasingly fuller and comprehensive, which the English genius evolved to curb the tyranny, absolutism and oppression.

The champions and martyrs of human freedom and progress as the Continent of Europe and thence the earth, kindled their torches at the fires of E's brave & free spirit, and held E. up as an example for their own countries to follow.

Refugees from pol. persecution and ^{long always} religious ^{freedom} asylum and sanctuary in E. - even those Marxists.

The 13 colonies rebelled not ag. the spirit of E. but her ^{spirit} of E. which was in their hearts and in their blood. They were Englishmen & they ^{refused} to ~~be~~ to

They had forgotten that the people of E. are never so happy as when you tell them they are ruined.

Never exhibit honors - Self-adulators - Braggarts like H. C. M. Master, Understatement. - They rather deflate their virtues.

~~They~~ had forgotten Gen. French's contemptible little army of 1914. -

They had forgotten that great, deep, undefeated resoluteness of the race which ~~has~~ enabled it to surmount both menace and desaster over times again - ~~from the Crusades~~ and which with Crusades, ~~the Crusades~~, Trafalgar, Waterloo, and Vimy Ridge upon the pages of history a doggedness - unyielding them - unwear strength which can take it, and more of the same thing, and come out undefeated in the end. (How they rallied after defeat)

Dunkirk! is the symbol, it. - And E's reaction to threat, invasion! And Churchill: Blud, toil, tears, weat". And the way the cor vi ban with the bombardment, their hunger & athes - And Lidi Baran, and Bardia. - And the way they recap. the Nel after it had been proclaimed an Italian lake -

3/ No, it is not a decendent race! that the deluded & desperate dictator are now facing. In a people unwilling to fight - the a greatly peace-loving people. They loved peace so much that they could not conceive that there is a war so en- among war - as the Nazis - and so unscrupulous and so machivellian. Their own decent human with thats betrayed them. They would not be warned, until it was almost too late.

4. And this people now stands bet. the world's freedom and the world's slavery - and 20 miles - from Calais to Dover now separates the S.C. from the 16th - and England is guarding that narrow channel for the 20th C - & for the Future of the Society.

5/ Santayana: "What governs the Englishman is his inner atmosphere, the weather in his soul... It is a mass of dumb instincts and allegiances, the love of a certain quality of life, to be maintained manfully.... He carries his English weather in his heart wherever he goes, and it becomes a cool spot in the desert, and a steady and sane oracle amongst all the deliriums of mankind.... It will be a black day for the human race when scientific blackguards, conspirators, churches, and fanatics manage to upplant him."

I What is this weather in his soul - this certain quality of life? You can define it only in terms which are not translatable into any other language.

I Sportsmanship - profound psych. ath rule! To "play" the game - the same life - not so much according to V.P. self-imposed and former accepted rules! but to "play foul" in order to win! but to take advantage: If your opponents are not evenly matched - give him an handicap! the stronger is given an artificial disadvantage in order to equalize their chances of winning.
"Fair Play!" as an ideal in life: Not so much victory as Fair Play! It is not cricket - to do certain things -

Sportsmanship - is free cooperation among competitors - (5)
wherein men seek to develop their skills ~~not~~ not at the
expense of others, but by challenging & there you do not disparage
in sport - you want opposition - & the stronger the better.
without opposition - there is no sport!

This quality seems to be utterly lacking in the mentality
of Nazis - Fascist - weak and then to be exploited or
developed! No room is made for little people - nations.
Sent only a crusade & victory - Brutal Ruthless
Opposition can not be tolerated. Either on my side - or
perish!

II "Common Sense" - There may be people wise - unloved,
unimaginative - unhappy - but now - has
more uncommon common sense!

Emerson - "I find the Englishman to be him, & all men who
stand firmest in his shoes"

Never denies an idea to its "illogical" logical conclusions
He does not lose himself readily in metaphysical legacies,
in fine - speculative - in fanatical "isms," in
passionate crusades -
He works along by sub, think - by trial & error,
He has a hard sense for what he demands, for what at
at any given moment is practical flexible & just.

He is progressive - but not revolutionary - rather, he carries ^{as a rule} his ~~revolutionary~~ ^{with} ~~him~~ ^{out} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~Part~~ ^{Part} - ^{from time he will deaferate him - long about it - he doesn't}
He builds on the Past - on his experience - on his traditions

but he is pragmatic, building, through law, new laws - reworking old ones to meet new conditions.

He cannot be made to utter the unachieved Romantic

sublimity of Fos - Nezi - reason & chance in Not that he lacks imagination - Shalehem - Kats - Shilky - but for
lacks imag. of a certain kind.

III Respect for rights of individual. Wants people to respect

his rights. Will concede same right to others. Live and

let live! Acknowledges & defends principle of "Non-enforcement". Tolerant!

Respects Govt. but demands that Govt. shall respect him.

"An Englishman's home is his castle" - not to be invaded!

Then are domains where he the alien is master.

Total is abhorrent to his very soul! For 7000 years

he has waged war upon the encroaching state.

4/ All these "Qualities & Arts" - Shalehem, Common sense - Respect
for individual ^{liberty} attached in world to-day.

If they are destroyed - life will become brutal, cheap, regimen-
ted -

5/ he pray that they will not be - Arsenal -

- Spirit of England - close to Spirit of Israel. Same Bible inspired
them both. - "Pious Progress"

Our own Spirit was Hebrew Spirit - & Modern E is in
it stamped by "molds" of Christianity

There is a deep vein of purity in English people - 1 bit. egyptian -

→ Jews - Roman - ^{9 Brit. ethics} Under Norman & King Henry's - Resentment - Exile - 1290
→ few days / Council on - Jews have come into Eng. & have
lived there - after ~~several centuries~~ exclusion - in place.

The 2 peoples have gotten along splendidly - E. as Protector!

Jews = Ministers, the Crown - Disraeli - 13th Empire
 Ambassadors
 Lord Chief Justice
 Colonial Governors
 Viceroy of India

→ Balfour Declar. 1917 - Palestine - 550,000 -

Fighting side by side - Jews in Army - in Eg. & Suez.

Future?
8/ 'Britons never will be slaves'

