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Too little, too careless, too timid, too late!, 1942.

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TOO LITTLE, TOO CARELESS, TOO TIMID, TOO LATE!"

Our National Morale -- How Not to Undermine It



By
Dr. Abba Hillel Silver

At
The Temple

On
Sunday morning, February 22, 1942

This has been a week of criticism, of bitter complaints and of recriminations among our people, among the peoples of the united nations. The fall of Singapore let loose a wave of indignation here and abroad. In England a reshuffling of the Cabinet was made necessary as a result of the violent criticism in the public press and among the people. And that criticism has not entirely abated even now. Disasters in the Far East shook our American people profoundly and led to a veritable outburst of impotent rage.

The President of the United States found it necessary to warn the American people against unbridled criticism -- the criticism which was aggravated by rumor-mongering in our nation. It was suggested to the American people that sinister forces are behind much of this rumor-mongering capitalizing upon this mood of heart-sick disappointment, apprehension, wrath and disaster.

He will speak again tomorrow night to calm, inform and to restore ~~the~~ confidence and perspective to us all.

This criticism is understandable. It came in the wake of the climax to a series of disasters in the Far East, especially after the fall of Singapore, Bastion, Gibraltar, the defense of the United States against the Japanese aggressors. We were led to believe, and so the entire world was led to believe that that fortress was fully fortified and fully equipped and could resist a year -- instead of which it collapsed in ten weeks. The fall of Singapore, we were led to believe by responsible reporters was due to unpardonable lack of foresight, the failure to arm the native population, a series of ~~z~~ retreats with little fighting.

The fall of Singapore came in the path of the disasters in North Africa which started out so well and petered out in such helpless defeat. It came also in the wake of the escape of the Nazi battleships. But all this touched off

an emotional outburst which has not fully quieted.

Many people deprecate this outburst. I believe that it was a good catharsis for the pent up feelings of people, and it served to ease our overwrought spirits. A people that cannot voice its indignation gets all messed up inside of itself, and it is good for people in high places to know that they are being closely watched, that their actions are being closely scrutinized. It is good for them to hear from time to time the thunder and wrath and disapproval of a people. For these men in high places politically, in the military high places are not infallible. They need from time to time a sharp reminder that they are accountable, that they must produce results, that they must be adequate to the emergencies, or that they must get out. No free people can wait, or will consent to wait until the final disasters, the irreparable disasters overtake them before it speaks up. As a rule, no political leaders and military leaders who begin a war ever end it. They are replaced, when they are found to be not matched to the occasion. That was true in the last war. It has been true in every war. It will be true also in this war. Be that as it may, the American people will not surrender the right of criticism regardless of what officials think about it. It is part of the American character, part of the American tradition, part of our way of life.

And it will not do for those who are being subjected to criticism to try to turn the table against the critics and say: The fault is not ours. It is yours. This was attempted right after the colossal disaster of Pearl Harbor when suddenly the American people was blamed for the disaster of Pearl Harbor. Now the American people is not responsible for the failure at Pearl Harbor. The American people provided Pearl Harbor with a splendid Navy. They paid taxes to build those ships and to equip them, put its full confidence

in its military heads and gave them full power to protect these ships in that Harbor. And that is all the American people could do about it. But these leaders were derelict in their duties, were stupidly blind to what was happening about them. They refused to heed the warnings which were given over and over again to them. It is no fault of the American people. And fortunately the Commission of Inquiry put its finger exactly on the spot. And there it stays.
(criticism of Pensions, Farm, Labor, etc.)

Criticism is frequently very wholesome..../So was the national criticism of the set-up of our Civilian Defense which was being built up as a big tea party instead of a serious war-time problem concerned with the life and death of the American civilian population. That is all to the good. And I hope that the American people will never lose its readiness and capacity for forthright criticism. Every American has as much at stake in this war as the next American. But there is a point where criticism ceases to be helpful, constructive and becomes mere sniping, cantankerous, impatient fault-finding. Criticism based on unverified rumour, criticism based on personal dislike, on partisan bias, mis-interpreting every act of government, suspicious of every motive, running down every responsible official who has a hard job, plain griping -- no war can be won with this frame of mind, such unreasonableness.

The way of a free people is to temper criticism with self-criticism. After the first sharp flash of indignation, let a free man, a responsible free man in dangerous times, when so much is at stake, check himself and ask himself: Am I perhaps over-doing it? Am I helping or harming the cause to which all else must be subordinated? Will my criticism strengthen or weaken the hands of my government? Am I keeping in mind the larger issues, the grand strategy, as it were, which is necessary for victory?

Free men can criticize. But intemperate, unjust, unsifted, ~~xxx~~

injudicious criticism is the sign of one's unfitness for freedom. We have a classic example of that in the history of our own people -- the people of Israel. The drama of the emancipation of our people from the slavery of Egypt and their entry into the Promised Land was also not speedy or easy. It was full of danger, set-backs and hunger and suffering and death. A terrible price had to be paid for national redemption and for ultimate national peace and security. And unfortunately our forefathers who had been slaves for many generations were unprepared to pay the price of freedom. They wanted to be free, free from lash of the the yoke and/taskmaster -- but at no inconvenience to themselves. When Moses and Aaron appeared before Pharaoh and demanded that he lessen the burdens on their people, Pharaoh replied by increasing the burdens of the estates, by making their lives even more miserable, by exacting of them more and heavier taxes -- and the immediate reaction of these slaves was not against Pharaoh and his taskmasters, but against Moses and Aaron and they said to them: "Who asked you to come here and meddle with our destiny? What you are doing is putting a sword into the hands of the Egyptians. When Moses and Aaron finally succeeding in getting these slaves out of Egypt and brought them to the shores of the Red Sea and they saw danger confronting them -- real danger -- they turned against Moses and Aaron. Are there no graves in Egypt that you had to bring us here? and remain Let us alone that we may return/slaves in Egypt. When they crossed the Red Sea and came to the wilderness on the way to the Promised Land, the slaves could not stand the sacrifices demanded of them -- the long, hard way to freedom. They did not have enough food water. They complained to Moses and Aaron: Give us food. When food was finally given to them, they weren't satisfied with the manna. They recalled the food eaten in Egypt. Moses was forced to say unto the Lord: I can no longer stand the burden of these people. When they were led through the wilderness and finally to the very gates of the

Promised Land they hoped for an easy victory over the native inhabitants of Canaan. They thought that when they beheld the Promised Land the doors would be opened wide for them to easily to march in. When the spies which had returned and reported that the land is beautiful, but the cities are strongly fortified, why immediately these would-be free men rose up in protest against Moses and Aaron and demanded of them "why did you bring us here? It would have been better to have perished in Egypt."

My good friends -- that is the first epic of emancipation in the history of mankind. This is typical of every human struggle. This is the manner in which slaves act -- willing to be free, but unwilling to pay the price, never rallying to the support of the leader who carries the heavy burden upon his shoulders, never trying to lift the burdens from off his shoulders, never taking the blame upon himself. In each set-back, in each resistance encountered, they want to cut and run.

This must not be the case with us. This will not be the case for us. This is not the American way. We are not erstwhile slaves. We are a free people who has enjoyed freedom through many years. We are bred in the spirit, in the duties, in the responsibilities as well as in the traditions of freedom. Of course, we shall criticize. If we believe that too little is being done to win the war, we shall speak up. We shall speak up against leaders of government, against the military, against leaders in industry and labor against leaders in civilian defense and civilian life. Nothing will be spared if we are persuaded that too little is being done to win the war. It must be all out or nothing. We shall have to fight as the Russians are fighting. We shall criticize, of course, when we feel that things are done too late, if our leaders are wise after the event. We need a leadership that has foresight.

We need a leadership that has eyes in its head -- not in the back of its head -- a leadership that will look ahead, anticipate. We have the right to demand vision from those in whose hands our fate lies.

We shall criticize if we believe that people who assume critical positions are too careless, sloppy, negligent, off-guard. In a war where the foe is ever on the alert, his finger ever on the trigger, poised at any moment to strike as a rattlesnake strikes, we cannot afford easy-going, off-hand ways for waging this war.

The Normandie is a shameful example of carelessness, whether it was sunk by saboteurs or whether it was burned through carelessness. In either instance it was criminal negligence. We can't afford afford many Normandies in this war.

The American people will criticize if they believe that their leadership is too timid. When a great leader of the French Revolution was asked how France intends to save itself he answered "Through Boldness, more boldness, always boldness!"

This war will not be won with wrecklessness. It will be won by daring. We must take a leaf from our enemies -- take chances. To wait supinely for overwhelming superiority of all things before we strike and in the meantime to suffer one defeat after another may lose the war for us. The morale of the United nations may crack in the meantime and the enemies will take advantage of the low state of morale to gain the upper hand and to make a negotiated peace -- which ~~will defeat the carefully laid plan of the~~ will defeat the carefully laid plan of the the grand strategy of the war, which may never have a chance to be used if the morale of the people breaks in the meantime.

While the American people will exercise the freedom of criticism, the

individuals of our nation will not try to substitute ourselves, and our judgment, our lay military science and our arm-chair strategy for those who are actually charged with the fighting of the war. Nor will they get in their way. They will not strike at them. They will not discredit them. These people will understand that defeats are inevitable in this war as in every major war. In every major war which the American people fought they started at the outset with disaster and defeat. As free men we shall steel ourselves to defeat. We shall have to learn to take our set-backs as the English took Dunkirk, the bombing of their cities, as the Russians took the first disastrous defeats at the hands of Germany.

And I am confident that we shall be able to do that with the great strength and high spiritual resilience in our land. We are going to build morale quite consciously and deliberately even if we do from time to time speak up when we feel something is wrong. We are going to keep the cause for which we are fighting constantly before us. It is a just cause, a holy cause -- and upon that cause we shall build our morale. We shall build our morale upon confidence and leadership and we have great, inspired/determined leadership at the top. We are going to build our morale on confidence and leadership and on confidence for final victory. That victory is sure to come. We are going to try to avoid all defeatist talk. We will try to discourage all defeatist talk on the part of others. We shall try to encourage others.

I came across these words of George Washington this morning. It is part of General Orders issued in 1776 to an ill-formed and bedraggled and poorly equipped army. "The time is now near at hand which must probably determine whether Americans are to be freemen or slaves...The fate of unborn millions will now depend under God, on the courage and conduct of this Army...Let us, therefore, animate and encourage each other, and show the whole world that a freeman contending for

liberty....is superior to any slavish mercenary on earth."

Let us realize that behind every lying rumor is an actual or potential agent of the Axis, a Quisling. We shall try to be on the alert, every one of us against spies, saboteurs. Let us ever be on the alert doing every job, whatever it is. The soldier, the business, the workingman -- any job whether in the home the church, the school, the office -- everyone must be geared to do his job with devotion and zeal to win through to victory.

By the Grace of God, we will win through!



1/ A week of criticism, bitter complaint, recrimination.
Singapore let loose a wave of indignation - England - U.S.
England - forced reorganization of Cabinet - Violent press
and popular attack - not entirely abated.

Disasters - shook Am. people into and led to outburst of
impotent rage and attack.

Pres. of U.S. - found it necessary to warn Am. people.

~~But~~ Unbridled Criticism - aggravated by rumors -
mongering - sinister forces - Am. children set
capitalizing upon this mood of heart-sick disappointment,
affection and wrath.

He will speak to-morrow to calm, to restore per-
spectives.

2/ Understandable - Climax to series of disasters in
Far East - Boston - Liberator - led to believe
fully fortified - adeq. garrisoned - would hold out
for years! - 10 weeks - Colossal blunders -

Population unarmed - Retreat and bitter fighting -

This on top of disasters African Campaigns - pu-
mination - and escape of Nazi battle ships - fueled
off the emot. outburst - not yet fully quieted.

3/ A good catharsis of pent-up feelings! Eased an
over-wrought spirit. A people that cannot voice

- its indignation gets all wound up inside. -
- It is good for those in high places to hear the thunder of a people's wrath and disapproval. They are not infallible. They need from time to time a sharp re-reminder that they are accountable - not immune ^{from} censure - ~~have~~ ^{must} not must inspire ^{seriously} avoid same mistakes or get out! -
 - No free people can afford to wait or will consent to wait - till final disasters before it speaks up.
 - Some ~~but~~ not a unitary process who begin a war - seldom if ever - finish it. They are replaced ~~replaced~~ when they are habitually unsuccessful.

4. Anyhow - our people will not surrender right of center reparations, what officials may think of it. It is part of our character, tradition and way of life.

will not do, for those entrusted for specific acts of interference, bullying and dangerous disruption of unity to turn the center away from East - to the center - Bar Harker. Suddenly the Am. people were blamed for Bar Harker! Why ? Fortunately - Can we begin of in giving showed where the blame really was.

Criticism is frequently very wholesome - Way of the people. Civilian Defense - Revisions - Translators - Contractors Colliers -

5. But there is a point where criticism crosses the helpful constructive - striking - destructive. Caustic terms, impatient fault - finding -

Criticism based on unverified rumors -
" " personal dislikes, or partisan bias.

misinterpreting every act & fact - suspicious & every
motion - running down every respectable official -

Main griping - no man can be won with such a
frame of mind - such ~~all~~ unreasonableness and unfriendly
attitudes.

6/ Way of a Free People is to temper criticism with Self Criticism!
After the first gusts of wrath - check on self and
ask - Am I over-doing it? Am I helping or harming the
~~cause~~ cause to which all else must be subordinated?
Will my criticism strengthen the hands of my foes or
not? Am I keeping in mind the larger issues - the
grand strategy necessary for victory?

7/ Free men can criticize but ~~slaves~~ ^{unwieldy, ineffective} ~~unwieldy, ineffective~~ criticism
is sign of ~~sp. servitude~~ ^{unfitness} for Freedom.
- (Children of Israel) ~~abandoned~~ ^{abandoned} them. Enslavement + Exile
into Barren Land was also not speedy or easy. Full of
dangers, set-backs - battles - hunger - and suffering. Pain.
Unprepared for sacrifices demanded by Freedom. Wanted
to be free - אין - but at no inconvenience to Egypt.

① - God's promise to Israel - "to put a sword in their hands to
slay us"

② ~~that~~ at Red Sea - no graves in Egypt - Is not this
what we said to you - let us alone - that we may
remain slaves to Egypt.

(3) Wilderness - Ford - Wannob - not satisfied - 1/25/51

(4) > 3 3 1/2 1/2 1/2 1/2 - 'I cannot hear -

(5) Promised Land - easy victory - Spies = 1/25/51
2/1/51 2/1/51 2/1/51 2/1/51

8/ This is the manner in which slaves act -
trying to ~~be~~ be free - knowing to pay price
Impatient - surely - clamorous - unmerciful
never rallying to the side - never fired leaders - (fight enemies)
never taking any blame unto themselves.
at first set-back - cut and run! (Panic)

9/ This must not be - will not be - the way of the Am.
people.

We shall entice - when we believe (Too little) is being
done to win the war - in spirit - in military estab -
in industry - in civilian ranks - all-out (Commitment)

(Too late) tardy - Wise after the event! We need
a military leadership that (has Foresight) - 1/1/51
1/1/51 - look ahead - Anticipate - with first-
mortars - Right to demand U.S. and and from
those in whose name - (Fate).

Too Careless - slipping - off-guard - in a war where
he is on the alert - on the trigger - poised to
strike like a deadly rattlesnake.

"Normandie" ① Salvage ② Carelessness - as even French

On me.

5

Too Timid - Danton - "Blunders - New Boldness! and
always Boldness!

Not recklessness - but daring!

A leap from our enemies - Talk chambers!

To wait supinely - for an overwhelming supremacy before
we strike - and in the mean time to suffer one major
defeat after another - and lose one important position after
another - may lose us the war!

The moral of the United Nations may crack - in the
mean time. The Aggressors will gain the upper hand -
and a ^{unyielding} claim for a negotiated peace - ~~and~~ ^{and} defeat
the carefully laid plan of the grand strategy / the
war!

N/. But we shall not try to substitute ourselves -
our judgment - our key military science - and our
arm-chain strategy for those who are ^{actually} charged with
the plan and solemn responsibility. We shall not get in
their way - we shall not snipe at them, or attempt to
discredit them - until they have palpably betrayed their
unfitness for the task.

① Blunders are inevitable in ~~war~~ this war. We
suffered defeats at first in every major war in which we
have ever engaged. We shall have to steel ourselves to
defeat! - unprepared -

②. Talk it as Russians took their early defeats -
 - as English took their Wander - Bombing -
 - We can take it!

③ Consciously Stipendiously Build Made!

① Keep Cause -

② Confidence in leadership -

③ Confidence in final victory.

11). Avoid defeatist talk! - Encourage each other Working too

Scotch harmful rumors!


Behind every lying rumor is an actual or potential

knishling or foreign agent.

Be on the alert! against spies, informers, and saboteurs.

Do your job - with devotion and zeal -

12). We will win them!



"THE time is now near at hand which must probably determine whether Americans are to be freemen or slaves . . . The fate of unborn millions will now depend, under God, on the courage and conduct of this Army . . . Let us, therefore, animate and encourage each other, and show the whole world that a freeman contending for liberty... is superior to any slavish mercenary on earth."

George Washington

General Orders

July 2, 1776.

fully:

Save old rubber, save waste paper,
Save the celery tops for stew,
But with all your wartime saving
Save your sense of humor, too.



QUESTION. One of our Army-camp correspondents writes to tell us about the small boy traveling with his dad. The youngster noticed two uniformed men sitting in the seat across the train aisle. Pointing to one soldier, he asked: "Daddy, what's he going to do?"

Dad was perplexed for a moment, but then: "He's going to lick Hitler."

The boy thought that over for a minute before he came up with another question: "Well, what's the other one going to do?"

INVITATION. What's your pet peeve? Sure you have one. We all do. Take the ladies who have already talked about theirs for **THIS WEEK**. In this issue, Joan Dillon, a shopper, answers Sally Lee, salesgirl, and tells what "Burns Me Up" — about salesgirls.

What burns *you* up? About your boss, job, wife, husband. Write and tell us — we'll pay \$5 for those we publish. Send your pet peeves to: "Here's What Burns Me Up" Editor, **THIS WEEK**, 420 Lexington Avenue, N. Y. C. (Unused contributions cannot be acknowledged or returned.) M.