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Economic democracy and security, 1942.

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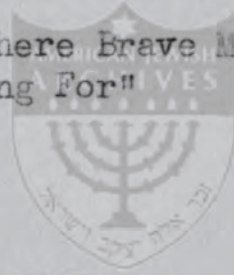
ECONOMIC DEMOCRACY AND SECURITY

The seventh lecture in the series on "Where Brave Men Are Fighting"
and "What Brave Men Are Fighting For"



By

Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver



At
The Temple

On
Sunday morning, November 22, 1942

This should be clear to all thinking men and women at this late stage -- that no democratic government can long survive if citizens are subjected to prolonged periods of economic misery. The process by which democratic government is destroyed because of these prolonged periods of economic misery and suffering on the part of the masses is very simple. These under-privileged masses soon come to exercise their voting power in democratically enacted legislation of an economic character through which they hope to put an end to their economic disabilities. The privileged classes of course seek to resist that economic legislation and when they find themselves unable to avert it because they are out-numbered, because they are in the minority, they first attempt to mislead the masses by means of raising fictitious issues by propaganda of all sorts. And failing in that, they will set about to destroy democratic governments themselves in order to protect their economic privileges and investments. This was the process by means of which democracy was destroyed by big business and industry generally in Italy. That is the basis of Fascism and Nazism.

The President of the United States in an important address a few years ago, in April, 1938 declared: "Democracy has disappeared in several other great nations, not because the people of those nations disliked democracy, but because they had grown tired of unemployment and insecurity, of seeing their children hungry while they sat helpless in the face of government confusion, government weakness through lack of leadership in government....History proves that dictatorships do not grow out of strong and successful governments but out of weak and helpless ones. If by democratic methods people get a government strong enough to protect them from fear and starvation, there democracy grows; but, if they do not, they grow impatient. Therefore, the only sure bulwark of continuing liberty is a government strong enough to protect the interests of the people and a people strong enough and well enough informed to maintain its sovereign control over its government."

...Therefore those who hope to build up a free world after this war, one that will endure, ought to be thinking not merely in terms of political orientations. They ought to be thinking chiefly in terms of economic reconstruction, in terms of bringing about those conditions in which the masses of the people of the earth will be protected against unemployment and want and poverty and insecurity.

When I say that we ought to be thinking in terms of economic reconstruction, I do not mean thinking in terms of Utopia. There will be no Utopia after the war. I know the mood created during the war -- the emotions of people are stirred, all kinds of possibilities are opened up before the imagination of people. I know that at such a time the flight of man's imagination is high. Some men expect and many are led to expect a perfect society to emerge after this war is won, in which all political problems will be solved and one in which all economic problems will be solved and rectified. My own belief is that it is not well to pitch hopes too high for there are bound to be many disappointments. This disappointment is likely to result in bitterness on the part of the masses and make them easy prey to ~~and~~ would be political adventurers.

Those who come to people today with counsels of perfection, with simple and final solutions of all things -- those are poor guides in this tangled and confused and difficult world in which we find ourselves. The simple solution in the economic field must always be the totalitarian solution. And that requires too high a price of men. That is what happened after the last war in many countries of Europe. For the promise of economic security never materializes. Men and nations were asked and did surrender their historic liberties, their human rights, and their political freedom. Those people who after the war will have nothing but a perfect millennium will wake up to find their world a Gestapo paradise, one vast concentration camp. Any doctrinaire solution for this problem in the world must lead to social disaster. So they ought not to be

thinking in terms of Utopia.

On the other hand, those who think of normalcy, as after the last war, or the return to the condition of "business as usual" as if nothing radical had happened in the world -- they, too, are poor guides of men. It will not be possible to return to that way of life. It will not be desired. We must never forget that when we returned after the last war to the normalcy of the period of Harding, Coolidge, Hoover, that led to the disaster of '29 -- the depression. And any effort to meet the situation which will confront us after this war in an utterly unco-ordinated sort of absolutely free manner is likely to return us to the same economic disaster which overtook us such as "the business as usual" period in the 20's.

Now business and industry in the United States and England and in other free countries in the world have since the outbreak of this war submitted themselves quite readily to a maximum form of government as part of the strategy of the new war. It is irksome, bothersome, definitely restricted, but business men understand that to win the war all this must be done, just as the individual man gives up his career, his freedom of action and puts himself in uniform and submits himself to the rigorous discipline of the army. The businessman and industrialist after the war will not submit as readily to such restrictions. Much of this war-time control will not be necessary in peace time. In fact a good deal of it will be highly undesirable in peacetime, unless men are prepared for all time to come to be subjected to a two-fold bureaucracy, political on the one side and economic on the other -- and that is Fascism.

But that we shall be able to meet the problems which will arise after the war -- inflation disasters which may come with the boom after the war, because we shall be having vastly increased industrial planning in this country -- there will be vast hunger among people for consumers goods denied to them and will continue to be denied to them for the duration -- I believe it will be quite impossible to regulate our economic life after this war without some measure of government planning and supervision so we shall not ~~be~~ be able to carry our economic life on an even keel, steady

keel for the first few years after the war without some kind of government help.

This does not mean that the United States, Great Britain or the rest of the world are going socialistic after this war, although undoubtedly there will take place everywhere in the world a steady accelerated trend toward great^{er} government economic control, toward a more equitable apportionment among the people.

There are many schools of socialism. There are any types and degrees of socialism. The extreme Marian type is only one of them -- that of the complete annulment of private ownership of all capital and land through the medium of class struggle. That is only one form of totalitarianism not suited for every country. There is one country which experimented with it. And it has resulted in much good -- also in much evil. It is doubtful whether any other country following this war will try that type of socialism in that way -- complete collectivism of all things. It is questionable whether Russia itself will continue on that basis after the war. There seems to be dawning upon the people, desirable as all this might be, that it is too high a price to pay in terms of other desirable human values.

Certainly English speaking peoples, the Anglo-Saxons, are not excited by systems generally. They are programatic, experimentalist, gradualists and when absolutely necessary do the most astonishingly radical things in a very conservative manner. Fine spun theories usually follow than precede action. In England and the United States we use the trial and error method, profiting by past mistakes.

Words, names and slogans -- Socialism, Communism -- may for a time beguile and frighten American or English people, but in the long run, words and names and slogans will not keep them from doing what must be done in order to keep government moving forward with a minimum of friction. They are not going to adjust their lives to system, to doctrines and theories that do not suit them, but they will manipulate system, and adjust them, adjust theories and ideas to suit the needs of their distinctive lives and traditions.

Thus, for example, the American people is not likely to accept any economic system which carries with it the corollary of the authoratative state. They won't go it. For centuries they have resisted the all dominant state. They cherish personal liberties and private rights and freedom of thought and the right of freedom of expression just as much as they cherish life itself. They don't want dictatorship even if dictatorship brings with it the promise of an economic millennium . And their distinctive distrust of the all powerful state has of course been re-inforced example of totalitarian in the last twenty-twenty-five years years by the/governments overseas which were entrusted with maximum political and economic power. So that the economic life of the American people after the war is not likely to be all of one neat pattern conforming to some well-thought system or metaphical plan. It is not likely that all forms of economic ~~life~~ enterprise in this country will be brought into one formula, and that one over-all economic program will be adopted and one supreme and all-powerful economic bureaucracy will be entrusted with its execution. Rather there will evolve a pluralism of different types of economic enterprise, some altogether free and individualistic, others subject to varying degrees of central control, governmental or others, and others definitely controlled. Where it will be found necessary for government to interfere, absolutely necessary in order to keep this system under which live, of maximum opportunities, etc. there will intervene, otherwise not. It will not be found necessary to eliminate, for example, the independent farmer, the independent business man who are in a sense born of a free country. In other words, in the realm of economics as in the political world people would like the arrangement where there will be checks and balances to protect themselves against tyranny of the monopoly of labor unions, or tyranny in government. In other words we shall be reaching out in our own experimental way for democracy and not for economic dictatorship.

I was reading through a number of books in recent weeks on the subject of post-bellum world and I find also others thinking along those lines. In a very excellent book -- "The Unfinished Task," by Louis Corey, speaking of what might

have been done in Russia instead of their through-going Bolshevism, what might have been done in other countries: "A setup was possible in which mixed forms of economic activity checked and balanced one another to promote efficiency and democracy. Socialization limited to large-scale industry, including the banks and foreign trade, could have been made democratic by the grant of constitutional rights and powers to management, labor unions, and the state to prevent an unopposed centralization of power. Independent business enterprises under functional private ownership and management might have existed along-side national industry and co-operatives where enterprises were too big for private ownership and management and too small for socialization. There was room for co-operatives in agriculture, too, on the larger farms and in joint use of costly machinery, but only as a supplement to private ownership of farms to create a class of independent farmers. In a setup of enterprises a balance is created by means of planning that is limited to the control of strategic economic factors; all-inclusive controls are not necessary for planning and it can go on within a large measure of economic self-government."

In a very stimulating book by Herbert Agar, called "A Time for Greatness" I came across the following thought: "The economic system of the future, if our world has a future, will presumably be a pluralistic system with much old-fashioned capitalism, much state planning of the TVA type, an expanding use of the co-operative techniques, and perhaps an expansion of state ownership in the industries most affected with a public interest."

The basic evil of our economic life, of course, has been the fact that mass production has not been equated with mass consumption. In other words more has been produced than the people have been enabled to buy. Our technological development has been amazingly rapid and our factories are geared to produce almost all that our people need, and more than they are able to pay for. Unfortunately our people have not been given the means to purchase all they need. There is ~~more~~ not enough buying power among our people. In other words, too much come to few and

the too few are unable to consume all that our industry produces with the result that there is periodical over-production, there are periodic market gluts in various commodities which in turn means the lowering of prices, curtailing of production, unemployment, panics.

This evil is further aggravated from time to time by monopolies which arbitrarily restrict production in order to maintain price levels and thus artificial shortages are created to the detriment of the consumers. We have in this country gone through periods in our history when even government has had to compel industry and agriculture to curtail production, to destroy what has been produced, by giving orders to plough under crops while millions of people were unemployed improperly housed and clothed. Our national economy must be planned for wider consumption of goods, not merely in order to raise the standard of living of our people but in order to keep them employed. The power of monopolies which diminish production must be broken. The government may have to take over some of the very large and powerful monopolies and convert them in government projects in order to make capitalism work. This traditional capitalism which thrived upon maximum production and the fullest use of our natural resources will improve the standard of living.

In the prosperous years of the 20's, our national income amounted to some 80 billion dollars. During the depression our national income sank to 40 billions. By the end of this war our national annual income probably will be 150 billion dollars. Under the stress of war we finally put our entire industrial machinery to work -- all our machines, our plants, our land, our mines -- and we are producing nearly four times as much as we produced during the years of depression. After the war we can use the same industrial apparatus, convert, if we have the intelligence, them into the production of consumers' goods, food, raiment, housing comforts for our people -- for all of our people. And there will be enough to go around for everyone. We have learned how to destroy poverty of production. We haven't yet learned how to destroy the poverty of our minds so that all have, and have ~~it~~ at all times.

Fortunately our government is thinking along these lines now, even during the war. The National Resources Planning Board which President Roosevelt set up some time ago issued recently its seventh report in which it calls for "a new bill of rights for the individual designed to ~~s~~ cure social ills which our forefathers did not face." Here is what this report says:

"And now ^{to} the old freedoms we must add new freedoms and restate our objectives in modern terms:

"1) The right to work, usefully and creatively through the productive years.

"2) The right to fair pay, adequate to command the necessities and amenities of life in exchange for work, ideas, thrift and other socially valuable service.

"3) The right to adequate food, clothing, shelter and medical care.

"4) The right to security, with freedom from fear of old age, want, dependency, sickness, unemployment and accident.

"5) The right to live in a system of free enterprise, free from compulsory labor, irresponsible private power, arbitrary public authority and unregulated monopolies.

"6) The right to come and go, to speak or to be silent, free from the spyings of secret political police.

"7) The right to equality before the law, with equal access to justice in fact.

"8) The right to education, for work, for citizenship and for personal growth and happiness.

"9) The right to rest, recreation and adventure, the opportunity to enjoy life and take part in an advancing civilization."

That is the new bill of rights for every human being. This is a rich land blessed by God, rich in natural resources..

Our country doesn't need millionaires. We don't have to put all that this great land can produce in the hands of the few. It is no tragedy that a ceiling of \$25,000 has been placed on people's income, either for those individuals and certainly not for the rest of the people. Last year only 80 people in the whole of Great Britain were left to whom the tax collector left 5000 lbs -- 80 people -- and Great Britain is a better, finer country today.

What is important is what the great prophet Micah and the Great prophet Isaiah said 2700 years ago. I am sometimes amazed when I read over and over again the great prophecies of so long ago. They are so apt, so immediately relevant to the modern times. When I was a boy I was taught a passage from Isaiah which I thought was a beautiful sentiment expressed in the Bible, but as so many think -- from the Bible.

"But in the end of days it shall come to pass
That the mountains of the Lord's house shall be
established as the top of the mountains,
And it shall be exalted above the hills;
And peoples shall flow unto it.
And many nations shall go and say:
'Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of
the Lord,
And to the house of the God of Jacob;
And He will teach us of His ways,
And we will walk in His paths';
For out of Zion shall go forth the law,
And the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.
And He shall judge between many peoples,
And shall decide concerning mighty nations
afar off;
And they shall beat their swords into plowshares,
And their spears into pruning-hooks;
Nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
Neither shall they learn war any more.
But they shall sit every man under his vine &
and under his fig-tree;
And none shall make them afraid;
For the mouth of the Lord of hosts
hath spoken."

Here are the free basic ideals of the modern world, all expressed in four brief sentences, vast, colorful. The first is that of a League of Nations - at Geneva, -- "and many nations shall go and say: 'Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord'...And we will walk in His paths" -- international law from a recognized center of the world to which all nations voluntarily subscribe -- a League of Nations as a result of which will come about international disarmament -- and only organization of the world first, collective acceptance of international law first. Then comes disarmament -- "beating of swords into ploughshares". Finally, the whole system of permanent peace must be built upon economic sufficiency -- not every man in a palace -- "But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig-tree;" -- not in a mansion -- but under a vine and fig tree -- "And none shall make them afraid". -- Freedom from fear, fear persecution, fear of old age, fear of unemployment.

Can we have that kind of a world after the war? Most assuredly we can if we seek it with all our hearts, with all our might, in the spirit not of class struggle, of hatred, doctrinaire attitudes, but if we seek it in a spirit of courage, in the spirit of brotherly cooperation.

1/ Is. ① League ② Disarmament ③ Econ. security. HAVE spoken.

2/ No democ. govt can long survive econ. misery & insecurity.
The under-privileged masses will naturally attempt to use
their voting power to enact such econ. legislation which will
remedy their conditions. The privilege classes - will seek to
prevent it. Finding econ. unable to avert hostile legist.
they will attempt first to mislead, & ~~deceive~~ ^{deceive} the masses
with fictitious issues and confusing propaganda, &
then - destroy the democ. process altogether. This is
what big bus. interests & natl. classes did in pr. &
Italy. This is the story behind Fas. Italy -
Pres. R. = Apr. 14 - 1938 (Just)

However, those who are hoping for a free, democ. world after the war,
must think basically in terms of econ. reconstruction to
give people a decent & fairly secure econ. existence.

3/ We should not be thinking of Hitler's. The war word, as
a rule, gives wings to ^{big} ~~big~~ flights of imagination
in all realms, pol. as well as econ. - ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~same~~ ^{same} as expecting,
and many are being encouraged to expect, the perfect etc. to
emerge from this war, all pol. problems will be solved, and
all econ. wrongs & inequalities ^{any} ~~every~~ where on the face of the
earth, will be righted.

It is well not to pitch human hopes too high, but
fantasy & disappointment plunge men into ^{profound} ~~utter~~ ^{profound} ~~utter~~ despair
and make ^{men in the past} ~~them~~ ^{very} ~~convinced~~ ^{of} dangers & adventures.
Our generation has had a taste of all-out violence in
Communism, Fas. Italy - and it has a bitter taste.

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econ. enterprise will be put into one formula, and that one one-all econ. programme will be adopted, & one supreme & all-powerful econ. bureaucracy will be entrusted with ~~the~~ its execution. Rather there will exist a plurality of diff. ^{mixed forms, econ. activity} types of econ. enterprise, some altogether free from govt control, others subject to it to varying degrees - & still others subject to govt. activities. When govt intervention is required there it ~~shall~~ ^{will} be necessary to eliminate the middle farmer or business man intermediary, otherwise not. In the realm of economics as in politics our people will resist on their deeds & balances which alone protect men from oppression. They will reject econ. dominance and econ. dictatorship. (Jawah p. 109) Corey & Herbert Agar "A Time for Justice" p. 17: Basic level of our day ^{consumption} has not left space with mass production. Our tech. devlop. has been amazingly rapid, and our factories are geared to produce almost all that our people need, and more than they are able to pay for. That is to say the distribution wealth has lagged behind the production ^{not enough they pay for it}. Wealth of this kind ^{caused too much unemployment} has caused periodic gluts in various commodities - with consequent fall in prices, curtailment in production, unemployment. Even regulated by monopolies - who frequently restrict arbitrarily the output of these industries, in order to maintain price-levels & thus artificial shortages are created to the detriment of the economy. - Govt, itself, is frequently disturbed by our unplanned market plan for wider consumption of food & goods - to keep our people employed and to raise their standard of living: but they have not found the way to do this without disturbing the balance of the economy.

9) The power of monopolies to diminish production in order to maintain high prices, must be broken. Govt. may have to take on a number, these very large ^{public corporations} ~~and~~ monopolies ^{with TVA} ~~order to achieve this~~. This would help, rather than hurt handicraft craftsman, which thrived upon maximum production, without use of our nat. resources, and an improved standard of living.

10) In previous years 20 - our nat. income was 80 B. During depression went down to 40 B. By end of war our current nat. income will probably be 150 B. Under stress, we - we really went to work - to produce - that all our plants, our machines, our land, our mines ^{our power - our transportation, our skills} ~~to work~~ - we can do it in peace - household producing consumer goods - food, raiment, housing, comforts - for our people - all of them. Enough to go round! - If we have intelligence - to distribute widely - ^{Poorer & goods vision}

11) Pres. R's National Resources Planning Board - 7th Report called for a new "Bill of Rights" designed to cure social ills which our forefathers did not face (I note) - ~~1944~~

A country does not need unbearances -

Putting ceiling 25,000 - no calamity -

Last year there were only 50 persons in all, Britain to whom the tax-collector left an income of 5,000 - Better country now than ever was -

Angelica Balabanoff - "My Life as a Rebel"

"Those who began to use such methods in the interest of the cause would in time become the slaves of their own means".

Oppression, Persecution, intrigue, espionage, methods.



1/ Micah

2/ No democ. govt. can long survive - Underprivileged masses
voting power - Privileged classes resist - Unable to avert
mislead - disorder - Big Bus. + Student - German Italy
Pres. Roosevelt (Jawahar)

Hence, those who hope for free world - seem neurotic

3/ Should not think - Utopias - World - Some are expecting -
perfect society -

It is well not to pitch -

Our generation has had a taste of Utopias

The man who offers counsel, perfection - Simple -

"Simple" solution - to take human solution - too high

For an econ. security - which never really worked

Those who will have nothing - Kingdom - Josephus Paracelsus

Any doctor means solution - disaster

4/ On the other hand - no return to Normalcy - possible

We must not forget - Harding - 20 -

Unplanned - will lead to similar

Bus. industry - here, England, have submitted - strategy

They will not submit as readily - part of strategy

much, this control will not be necessary - pos. here

In fact, highly undesirable, unless - humanity - Foreign

But that we can avert disaster - Business + Inflation -

vastly increased - Keel - unrealistic

econ. enterprise will be brut into one formula.
 One over-all econ. program - one uniform econ. bureaucracy
 Rather - mixed forms, econ. activity - a pluralism of
 diff. types of econ. enterprise: Some altogether free
 when govt intervention -
 It will not be necessary to eliminate ind. farmer class
 In the realm of econ - as in politics - Chubb & Blaine
tyranny - econ. duress - no econ. dictators. (109)

8/ Basic Evil - Mass consumption.
 One Tech. progress - was able to pay for
 sustenance, wealth - not enough buy up power
 too much want to too few who could -
Perishable goods - fall in prices -
 Evil aggravated by monopolies - arbitrarily
restricted - deficient / consumer
sent, itself
 Our Nat. econ. - must plan for wider consumption
 of goods ^{in cases} - to keep people employed & raise

(3)

necessary in place-time, and in fact highly undesirable unless
we wish to live permanently under a great pol. Keen bureaucracy
vested with absolute power — and that is fascism!

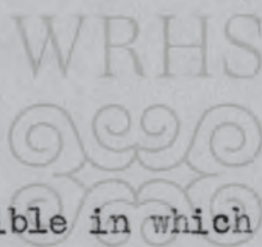
But that we can avert the disaster of hyperinflation
imined. of by this war — with a vastly increased industrial
capacity ^{of goods} ~~to produce~~, and a ~~growing~~ ^{hungry} ~~for~~ ^{for} ~~carriers~~ ^{for carriers},
foods long denied it, and a whole ~~world~~ ^{world} ~~cries~~ ^{cries} ~~for~~ ^{for} ~~and~~ ^{and} ~~the~~ ^{the}
~~foods~~ ~~food~~ ~~output~~ ^{output} ~~our~~ ~~future~~ ~~positions~~ — ~~and~~ ^{and} ~~that~~ ^{that} ~~we~~ ^{we}
can maintain a ~~even~~ ^{even} ~~econ.~~ ^{econ.} ~~level~~ ^{level} ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~future~~ ^{future}, with out
some form of ^{national} ~~planning~~ ^{planning}, + ~~strict~~ ^{regulation} ~~regulation~~ — is, in any judgment,
unrealistic.

5. That does not mean that U.S. or rest of world is going
socialist after the war — (the undoubtedly) there will take place
everywhere a trend towards greater joint control of every
activities and a more equitable apportionment of wealth
a people produces. ^{There are many types of socialism + degrees}
and the excessive Marxian type — that is the complete
annulment of private ownership of all capital &
land through the medium of class struggle (the dictatorship
of the proletariat — is only one, then; not necessarily
linked to every country, people, & perhaps, not
really linked to any. The one country — Russia —
resulted in much good — but also in much evil.
Doubtful whether any other country will try it — ^{in so short a}
^{as the} Russians did. But in terms of other human values too high.

in so short a
time
as the
Russians
did
despite
human
values
too
high

also collected
in index
1942

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 established as the top of the mountains,
 And it shall be exalted above the hills;
 And peoples shall flow unto it.
 And many nations shall go and say:
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 the Lord,
 And to the house of the God of Jacob;
 And He will teach us of His ways,
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 For out of Zion shall go forth the law,
 And the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.
 And He shall judge between many peoples,
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 And they shall beat their swords into plowshares,
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A TIME FOR GREATNESS
By
Herbert Agar

Those who began to use such methods in the interest of the cause would in time become the slaves of their own means."

MY LIFE AS A REBEL
By
Angeleca Balabanoff



"Democracy has disappeared in several other great nations, not because the people of those nations disliked democracy, but because they had grown tired of unemployment and insecurity, of seeing their children hungry while they sat helpless in the face of government confusion, government weakness through lack of leadership in government.... History proves that dictatorships do not grow out of strong and successful governments but out of weak and helpless ones. If by democratic methods people get a government strong enough to protect them from fear and starvation, there democracy grows; but, if they do not, they grow impatient. Therefore, the only sure bulwark of continuing liberty is a government strong enough to protect the interests of the people and a people strong enough and well enough informed to maintain its sovereign control over its government.

Ben. Ruvet Apr. 14-1938