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A free world for free men, 1942.

A FREE WORLD FOR FREE MEN

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

By
Dr. Abba Hillel Silver

At
The Temple

On
Sunday morning, November 29, 1942

The day after the coming Armistice will not usher in a millennium. The world after this war will be a battered, ruined and impoverished world, a more or less chaotic world. There will be no governments to speak of in the defeated countries. Their leaders and their governments will have vanished and will have been annihilated and the opposing groups and parties will be struggling to seize political power in those countries. All the conditions which prevailed in Europe after the last war with the breakup of Czarist, Hoenzollern rule will be repeated after this war -- all the makings for revolutions and civil strife -- unless an army of occupation will step in quickly and maintain control and order.

The bitter social and economic strife which tore those countries apart before the war will also not disappear on Armistice Day. In fact this strife has been aggravated by what has appeared in the years immediately preceding the war and during the war in the land of dictatorships, by the bitterness and hatred which has been aroused, by the suppression of all opposition and the ruthless persecution of all political enemies. There will be, I am afraid, a tendency towards punitive retribution on a vast scale, and those who hope for a swift and easy reconciliation and peace at the close of this war are I am afraid day-dreaming. There will be a wholesale pay-off and this time it will be the real criminals who will be facing the firing squad and who will be crowding the dungeons and prison cells and who will be afraid for their lives all over the world.

And not only will this pay off result from the action of the citizens and occupied themselves within the erstwhile dictatorship lands, but the presently conquered/ countries who have felt the brute heel of Nazi and Fascist invaders. These countries are waiting for the day of vengeance -- the Poles, Checks, the Dutch, the Norwegian, the Greeks, the Jugoslavs, the Free French, the Jews. They are not likely to forget over night the wholesale slaying of their hostages, the treatment

to which their civilian populations were subjected, their ruined cities and their routed homes.. -- these people who had been submitted to the unspeakable bestiality of the Nazis. "Never in history", someone said recently, "has such a volume of hate been generated, and it will all be released on the day the Armistice is signed." Europe will not quickly cover up her blood . If you wish to know really what is happening in Europe today, you can learn it by studying, if your nerves are strong enough, what is happening to the Jews at this time. Because in them you have this bestiality, you have this unrivaled lust for destruction made manifest in the extreme, in a lesser degree than what is happening to all other peoples. I read from a recent report published by the Polish Government in Exile. This report states that "at least one million Jews have already been annihilated by the Nazis in Poland and that Heinrich Himmler, chief of the Gestapo has ordered the extermination of all of the Jews of Europe by the end of this year. In the Warsaw ghetto, there were only 40,000 Jews left of approximately five hundred thousand who were confined there...More than two hundred fifty thousand Jews were deported from Warsaw since July." Describing the mass expulsion of Jews, the report states that the cars which had only a capacity for 40 carried 150 passengers each. The Nazis covered the floors with lime which was sprinkled with chlorinated water. When the train arrived, half of the passengers were dead....." You will recall that I spoke to you about this at the Memorial Services on Yom Kippur Afternoon.....

I could continue to read from this catalog of unspeakable horror but why should I harrow your spirits? Nevertheless in all history never since the Ghengis Khan or Tamerlane have such things happened. Europe will not quickly cover up this blood.

Following the war there will be hunger in Europe because many farms have been neglected, have been plowed under. The agricultural life of many a country is crippled. There will be widespread poverty. Industry will be crippled in many a land. The economic life in most of those lands will be and are financially bankrupt. There will be staggering unemployment in Europe. Twenty-five million

soldiers will be demobilized whose jobs will not be waiting for them. So that the work of reconstruction after this war will be terribly difficult. There will be a call for statesmanship of the highest order, for men of vision and courage and for a sense of justice on the part of the men who will be guiding the destinies of this world the day after the war.

Our government, fortunately, and the government of Great Britain and the governments of some of the other united nations are not unaware of the staggering problems facing them after the war. Already we have set up a Ministry of Reconstruction to follow this war. Recently our own government appointed Governor Lehman to take charge of feeding countries redeemed from Nazi domination. And surely that agency will continue with the cooperation of other countries after the war. That is a vast problem -- feeding the hungry, caring for the sick.

The next problem will be the one of helping those countries first, the countries of our Allies and friends, and ultimately the countries of our erstwhile enemies -- helping them to help themselves, helping them to work out their own salvation with our assistance, of course, but not with our substance and our material endlessly poured out.

May I point out that America should not assume the role of Sole Bountiful of the whole war-torn world. We should not be made to play the role of the good-natured philanthropist of the rest of the world. It is a pleasant role to assume. It makes you feel good, but it is a dangerous role to assume. It is a role we can not carry through. Our own burden will be terrific to bear after the war. Our own people will have to work much harder for a long time for a lowered standard of living until the crushing burden of war debt will be partially lifted from the shoulders of our own people. For decades to come we shall be paying staggering taxes. For decades to come we, our own people and our children will have the deprivations and privations that go with war. We will therefore not be able to take upon our own shoulders the whole load of reconstruction. We do not possess the strength to do that.

Following the last war we were sold by certain economic powers, sold with the idea that we had to lend billions of dollars to our erstwhile enemies so that they could become lucrative customers for our own manufacturers of our own goods. We did that. Surely we were taught that we could not get our money back except in goods. We don't want their goods, which would flood our own markets and close down our factories. Actually the billions which we did lend to Germany and others did help them. It helped them to build up the equipment in their industrial plants and to become competitors in our own markets, and undersell us in the market of the world. And considerable millions of our loans were used to beautify the cities of Germany, to build stadiums and sport palaces and to equip the security of its military establishment.

The billions we loaned in such a moral motive did not restore either Europe or the United States to the economic stability. When this orgy of building could not be carried on any more, the whole economic system collapsed in '29.

These same generous economists on the American scene are already trying to sell us the same thing after this war, again abetted by Nazi sympathizers and Fascist friends, and they will play naturally upon the great motives of forgiveness. As soon as Hitler and Mussolini are out of the way, the American people should turn to the German and Italian people and say to them. Too bad you wrecked the world and brought untold misery on the people. It is too bad you perpetrated this bestiality. It really wasn't your fault. It was the fault of Hitler and Mussolini. You are just innocent victims. Now you are a real democracy. We are delighted with you. From now on we will pour out our money and make you strong again. And for you one hundred thirty millions of Americans will work to make you strong enough to wreck the world again as you did in '39 and in 1914.

I say this not in the spirit of vindictiveness. I say it exclusively on what happened after the last war. The American people should not assume sole responsibility for footing the entire bill. Nor should it give the impression that it is prepared to set in motion a universal Lend-Lease which after the war will drop

"Manna" in very backyard of the world. It will be cruel to disappoint people because we will not be in any position whatsoever to do that. Whatever relief we will be able to give in concert with other peoples without subjecting our own people to increased privations, we will of course in all conscience give. But other nations likewise ~~xix~~ must assume responsibility in feeding the masses of the world -- Great Britain, the countries of South and Central America will be the peoples least affected by the war. Whatever we can do to help restore law and order, to help police Europe, to set up stable governments, we must of course do. Whatever we can do by agreement with other nations to facilitate international trade by removing trade barriers, high tariffs, quota systems, preferences and controls and free exchange of resources and goods -- whatever we can do to facilitate free exchange, we should do...

Whatever we can do following the war for all nations, victor and vanquished alike to give access on equal terms to the trade and raw materials of the earth we should do.

We should not put any artificial chains of an economic nature on the defeated nations. Whatever we can do after the war to stabilize currency in agreement with other nations, and not at our sole expense, we should do. Whatever we can do by way of lending technical skill and our experience to the nations -- erstwhile friends or foes -- help them to rebuild their countries, their factories, etc. that we should do. Intergovernmental loans, the giving of money and even international loans of a private character for profit in the past proved to ^{be} the least helpful, and the most provocative of affliction in the world. If governmental loans are found in some instances to be imperative, they should be made out of a credit pool into which other nations besides the United States should contribute their share....

Whatever we can do with our own industrial machine to produce peacetime materials will be a major contribution to the economic well-being of the whole

world. During the years of the depression -- '29, '39, '40, not only with the machinery we had, but with the manpower we had, the skills we had, America failed to produce 250 billion dollars worth of goods which it could have produced, and by which it could have enriched the rest of the world.

Finally we must do whatever we can to create an atmosphere of political security in the world in which peoples can work, however painfully but nevertheless hopefully to rebuild their lives. That will, perhaps be our major contribution to the world. Whatever we can do to build up an international order based upon collective security, stability, will be our first, and in my judgment, our major contribution to the free world.

And this brings me to the second thought I should like to share with you this morning. Above all, we should insist at the peace conferences uncompromisingly on a charter of human liberty, of human rights wherever our armies and materials have come. We should make no compromise with post-war Fascist and Nazism under whatever guise it will make its appearance, with reaction, with special privileges. We should not accept any expediency arrangement with any government. We should not tolerate any government which continues to impose discriminations upon groups of citizens in lands of race, religion or creed on the plea of this being a domestic affair and no concern of any other people. We have learned, to our great cost, that you cannot do business with Hitler. Also we are learning that you can't do business with Darlan or any other Fascist who may find it desirable to be on our side. These Darlans now and after the war will not only turn traitor but will always be the focal points of international intrigue. I should like to repeat the sentiment expressed by Wendell Willkie in ~~Canada~~ Canada: "Every drop of blood saved through expediency will be paid for by so drawn with the sword." (agree with sentiment). This is the law -- this is the moral law of history.

Let us keep our program clear, our ideals clear if they are to serve as ideals after the war to the world. There will be many voices during the

peace conference who will say: Link up with monarchy. Link up with the reactionary groups. We shall lose the war in so doing, even if we win it on the battlefield.

A free world for free men, a free and liberated world everywhere -- East and West, the Occidental and Oriental, a world free from dictatorship, imperialism, colonialism, a world free for each nation to live in freedom, possessing all rights, including the Jewish nation; and a free world for free men politically free and economically free, politically free and protected against the necessary invasion of government and state of inalienable rights -- politically free regardless of color. We are not altogether free of racial discrimination of other races -- the negro -- in education, etc. It is good for us to beat our own breasts and say: "Mea culpa" -- my sin, even as we point the finger against the sins of other nations. Politically free people, and economically free -- that means secure in the right to work, earn a living, secure against the threat of old age, sickness and dependency -- that is what the masses of the world are dying for today -- a new chance to move on the ever beckoning horizons of fraternity and humanity. They want a chance to build a more decent, kindly world for themselves and for their children.

Midway in the Civil War, at the very turning point in the Civil War, Abraham Lincoln called to his people on the greatest battlefield in the Civil War. My dear friends, we are midway in this war, and perhaps at the turning point. We have no thought that we can take more solemnly to our hearts -- we here and our Allies everywhere -- in this prayerful note of Father Abraham: "We here highly resolve that the dead shall not have died in vain, that this nation under God shall have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."