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The underground in Europe and America, 1943.



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THE UNDERGROUND IN EUROPE AND AMERICA

How People Fight to Save Freedom And How Others Fight to Destroy It

By  
Dr. Abba Hillel Silver

At  
The Temple

On  
Sunday morning, November 14, 1943



Among the forces fighting for freedom there have been many and frequent manifestations of courage. There are many brave men in the armies who are defending the liberties of men and many heroic acts have been recorded. There is physical courage, I am sure, also among the soldiers of the enemy, and our own fighting men have attested to that fact.

But this war against the dark forces of terror and tyranny will be won not only because of the physical courage of our fighting armies and their superior leadership and equipment and resources, but also because of yet another type of courage, that of the unbeaten civilian population in conquered countries, the underground resister, the guerilla warrior behind the enemy's line, the countless men and women all over Europe today who under the constant threat of discovery, arrest, torture and death, nevertheless carry on acts of resistance, sabotage and embarrassment to the enemy.

Their contribution to victory consists not only in delaying, confusing and diverting the enemy, not only in slowing down production and interfering with the transportation of war materials, not only in demobilizing large numbers of enemy troops for guard duty in the occupied territories, divisions which might otherwise be fighting at the front. Many such divisions have been pinned down in France, Holland, Belgium, Norway, Denmark, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Yugoslavia and Greece because of the fear of popular uprising, and in order to maintain by threat of force production of munitions of war and the security of their lines of communication as much as by threat of invasion. Acts of sabotage are a daily occurrence. Factories are blown up, bridges are mined, troop trains are derailed, Gestapo leaders assassinated, traitors and Quislings are executed, military information is transmitted to our Allies. In some countries, as in Yugoslavia, this resistance is of such a character military that it has taken on the nature of a full scale operation.

But even more important than the contribution of the Underground to the military effort is the contribution to the maintenance of morale, keeping alive the spirit of resistance and the hope of liberation among peoples which have been



conquered and enslaved. No hope is forlorn and no nation is defeated as long as its sons keep their souls incorrupt, even though their bodies are bound in chains. As long as men are prepared to nurse the flame of freedom in the darkness far below, in spite of all menace and overhanging wrath, there is hope that some day that flame will burst forth into great light and illumine the world again. In this war in which the spirit of man has been attacked, as at no time in any preceding war, it is the spirit which counts.

Lewis Mumford, in his "Faith for Living" writes the following:

"In the long run it will not matter for humanity if London is ruined as completely as the heart of Rotterdam, provided that those who die in the ruins pass on to the survivors the spirit that is capable of building a greater London. Nothing whatever is saved if only the bodies and the buildings are saved: to crumble stone by stone; to die, drop by drop.

"Similarly, nothing is lost if the spirit lives; for a little leaven will leaven the whole loaf. It is not those who sought safety first or who surrendered quickest who will carry on the work of our civilization. It is those who barely escaped with their lives, the Czechs who continued the struggle, the Poles, the Norwegians, the French, above all, the brave British who continued to fight. As for the rest, most of them were, pitiably, the appointed victims of fascism because they thought that their material goods mattered and their bodies were worth keeping alive. That is the conviction of corpses."

Take the story of the Jews of Warsaw! There is a Torch, there, in that story to light the way for future generations, to arouse, to inspire, to move and challenge men to great deeds and to nobility.

Nazi bestiality the

Of all the victims of Polish Jews were the most miserable and most unfortunate. Upon them was pronounced the sentence of Nazi extermination. They were put before firing squads, crowded in box cars, in gas chambers, electrocuted. A nation, a whole nation was to be slaughtered. And systematically



in true German fashion and scientifically, city after city in Poland was emptied of its Jews who were taken to appointed places of execution and put to death.

The city of Warsaw was the largest of the cities in Poland in which the Nazis had herded some 600,000 Jews. Day by day contingents of several thousands were taken from the Ghetto and put to forced labor and some to the slaughter - pen. By April of this year there were no more than 35,000 Jews left. These 35,000 who were left in the Ghetto of Warsaw knew themselves to be doomed. But then the Polish Underground weapons were finally smuggled in. And then began one of the most heroic, tragically gallant chapters of human courage and resistance of this war, of any war! They were doomed! They knew it! These civilians, ragged and starved, with a few rifles and guns and hand grenades faced the overwhelming might of the Wehrmach -- who had guns and planes and heavy artillery. But these men and women decided to fight and they did from cellar and housetops, from trenches and sewers. They fought time and again the Nazi troops who invaded the ghetto and who were driven back leaving their dead on the bloody streets. Day after day the Nazis bombarded the Ghetto with artillery from the air and wielded incendiary bombs into it. They turned the city into a hellish furnace of fire and death. The Jews fought on with their guns knives, axes and with their bare hands. They killed the Nazis by the tens and hundreds. A thousand Nazis were slain. They themselves set fire to over 800 warehouses and factories in the ghetto so as not to leave them in the hands of the enemies. It was only after the last shot was fired and the last rifle dropt from the helpless and lifeless hand that the ghetto was liquidated.

Thus died 35,000 men and women who in a sense will never die -- workers, merchants, teachers, doctors, Rabbis, writers. They stood forth without fear, undaunted among the ruins of a collapsing universe. We must kneel before such courage and spiritual splendor. That ghetto dust will forever be holy dust! For there the spirit of man was vindicated, and the soul of man unconquerable, was



exalted and sanctified.

There is another underground in Europe -- Europe's secret freedom press and that has been a mighty factor in keeping alive the morale of the people. Illegal newspapers appear in outstanding numbers and with astounding regularity all over Europe, from miniature sheets, ~~in~~ the size of an envelope to standard size newspapers which appear every morning, carrying the B.B.C. European news bulletins of the previous night, complete with photographs, carbons and articles. Poland alone has over 150 such papers. Norway has 100. There are some 50 in Belgium. Some have circulations of over 50,000. It is of course extremely dangerous to print such illegal newspapers. Death awaits all those who are discovered. And many have been discovered and most cruelly put to death. But as soon as one is closed down, another takes its place. These brave men and women by the thousands all over Europe are fighting with weapons other than bayonets, but equally as effective. They are the plumed knights of the human spirit! They war upon the rust and dirt of surrender, scepticism, defeatism!

There are other ways in which man's spirit makes itself felt in Europe today. Take Holland. When the destruction of the Jews left in Holland ~~ex~~ was ordered, the freedom loving Dutch who fought for their freedom valiantly for more than a hundred years rose almost as one man in defense of the Jews, their fellow citizens in Holland. The Churches called on the invaders to halt the Nazi arrest of Dutch Jews. Their underground press urged every loyal Hollander to condemn the Nazi ~~bestialities~~ by sending to the German occupation general an individually signed letter: "With disgust and indignation our people have witnessed the introduction of the latest anti-Jewish measures...Now the Jews are to be quickly wiped out; and we who witness it must be deaf, blind and dumb. We may not hear their graves or see their despair. We may not utter our disgust or give words to our pity. If at this moment we should look on and keep silent, God and history will condemn us and rightly name us as accomplices in this mass murder. We demand



that our citizens sabotage the preparations for and the execution of these wholesale deportations. We expect that secretaries, generals, burgomasters and high officials will jeopardize their positions rather than assist the German forces of occupation. Whoever remains indifferent now will find it difficult to justify that attitude on the day of our liberation."

The Dutch guided the Jews to temporary safety and in many instances, Christian Hollanders paid with their lives for the compassion which they showed towards the Jews.

Take Denmark. The same edict of deportation, of extermination was made in Denmark recently. And again the whole Danish people rose almost as one man to help their fellow Jewish citizens to escape the fate which awaited them. Ships that lay in the harbor ready to transport Jews to Palestine were sunk. Fishing boats and yachts cruised and guarded the coast of Denmark to pick up refugee Jews to transport them in safety to Sweden. In Denmark when the Nazis issued an order that every Jew in Denmark was to put on his arm a Star of David, so that he could be singled out among the other Danes, the King of Denmark the next day appeared in the streets with the Star of David on his arm.

Sweden welcomed these refugees who fled, 6000 of them, from Denmark, and gave them shelter for the duration of the war. The Swedish Government launched a formal protest with the Nazis against these atrocities. Norway, under the heel of oppressors rose in defense of the Jewish citizens. The Church of Norway was most outspoken against these mass arrests and persecutions of the Jews. The Provisional Church Council issued a solemn protest also against these measures which were "contrary to Christian ideal of loving one's neighbors, but also against the elementary conception of justice." This message was read in every pulpit of every church in Norway. Christmas Sunday, last year, was set aside by the Church of Norway for the recitation of special prayers for the Jews.



Students in Oslo demonstrated against these mass arrests and they helped to hide the Jews from the Gestapo.

This was true also of Belgium and of other countries. Because the destruction of the Jews has become the chief aim of Nazism, his defense has become the chief aim of the underground resistance to Nazism! The underground of free Europe has become the champion of the Jews. This is an amazing phenomenon. The Jew has become the symbol of the struggle of mankind for freedom in the world.

Enslaved Europe has an underground to defend Europe. Free America has an underground to destroy freedom. Europe's underground helps the Jews. The American underground attacks the Jews.

Many of you have read John Roy Carlson's "Undercover", the story of the Nazi underworld of America, the story of how they and native-born fascists, and their dupes are plotting to destroy the United States. It is the marshalling of the facts, and their documentation, rather than their revelation which so startles and amazes the reader. The facts have been startlingly real. Ever since the last world war there has been an underground and the facts have become known steadily.

Following the last war, the overthrow of Czarism, and the rise of Communism in Russia, our country became the stamping ground of ex-Czarist officials and Russian emigres of the type of the pogromist Brois Brasol and Count Spiridovich who propagated here their hate of the Jews as part of their activity to bring about the restoration of the Romanoff Czar. The fear of communism which spread through this country at the time played into their hands. They spread the idea of communism. They propagated the idea that all communists were Jews, and that all Jews were communists and that Bolshevism was a Jewish conspiracy to overthrow Christendom and establish Jewish domination in the world. It was this man, Boris Brasol who sold the idea to Ford. The Dearborn Independent became a sewer of anti-Semitism. It became the sewer of the most virulent type of anti-Semitism in the world. Through the columns of the Dearborn Independent in the early 20's that infamous "Elders of Zion", that infamous text of the Nazis was published serially in the United States.



Detroit became the mecca of White Russians, and of all types of anti-Semites. For seven years that poison was peddled on the very street corners of the cities of our country.

That was the first wave of Old World reaction swishing upon our shores after the last war which carried with it anti-Semitism.

The second wave was set in motion by the Nazis. The Nazis were out to build a world empire and to wage total war to attain it. They had two powerful weapons of propaganda -- anti-communism and anti-Semitism. By means of it they seized control of Germany. By means of it they proceeded to confound and disrupt the national solidarity of every country marked for conquest. Thousands and thousands of trained agents were sent all over the world. Millions of dollars were invested to spread the Nazi philosophy. They invaded many countries. They invaded our country. Soon anti-Semitic books, pamphlets, magazines, societies, meetings, mushroomed out by the hundreds and by the thousands, all singing the same refrain -- the Nazi-Fascist refrain. All used as their prime weapon -- anti-Semitism. It was part of their technique to disrupt peace, to turn class against class, race against race and to prove that democracy is unworkable and that dictatorship is the only form of government for modern society.

As the second world war drew on, Nazi propaganda was intensified. Their object, of course, was to keep America out of the war. The object was to keep America from sending any aid whatsoever to England. Their object was to fight lend-lease, so that we would not interfere with Hitler's scheme of world conquest.

To that was soon added Italian and Japanese propaganda, a veritable conspiracy against our country in magazines, pamphlets, etc. And again I say that one of the chief items in all that propaganda was anti-Semitism. Many people were drawn into this network of Nazi conspiracy -- fanatics, racketeers, crack-pots, men of violent and bitter prejudices, those who hated England, those who hated the Soviet Union, religious bigots, well-intentioned pacifists, /congressman, ministers. The Nazis



knew how to play on each one's principal interest, that particular hope, that particular hate, and America was a happy hunting ground for them. . All of that went on up to Pearl Harbor. Then America was plunged into war. Much of this propaganda collapsed. Many of these agents of Nazism and Facism and Niponism were arrested by the F.B.I. and were found to be actual spies, saboteurs. Many have since been convicted of sedition, imprisoned. Many of the unsuspecting and well-intentioned Americans have materially withdrawn from these organizations and society has discovered for the first time their true character and true objective.

The movement has gone underground, but it has not disappeared. Attorney Francis Biddle said the other day: "The flood of their teaching is still with us." and many of these people are still active, cautiously, under different names, under different slogans and banners. They are waiting for their day, to hate again.

Mr. Carlson summarizes his experience with the Nazi-Fascist, anti-democratic underworld. I will read it to you:

"Wily Nazi propagandists will stop at nothing to sabotage the war and sabotage the peace. If they do not succeed with one method they are determined to succeed with any of the hundred other methods they have devised and tested on the conquered countries. But there are ways loyal Americans can stop them and help Democracy emerge as victor at the peace table.

"After more than four years in the Nazi underworld, I've summarized Hitler's program for the subversion of our Democracy and the overthrow of our capitalist order. It includes: (1) Anti-Semitism to serve as a social dissolvent; (2) Red-baiting to serve as a screen for Nazi propaganda; (3) lies or half-truths to gain the support of the politically ignorant; (4) super-patriotism to arouse his disciples emotionally; (5) a perverted brand of nationalism which most frequently utilizes the slogans 'America First' and 'America for the Americans'; (6) anti-British propaganda to rally German, Irish, Italian, Spanish and nativist sentiment; (7) an attempt to undermine confidence in the Administration in order to facilitate the acceptance of revolutionary doctrines; (8) defamation of Democracy by exaggerating its failings as a device to 'soften up' resistance; (10) the systematic cultivation of mass hatred as a means of blinding reason; (11) the pitting of group against group, race against race, religion against religion to break down national unity; (12) encouraging an attitude of ridicule ~~in~~ toward the operation of Nazi propaganda in an effort to draw a red herring across its trail; (13) the adulation of Hitler as the deliverer from, and of Nazism as the panacea for, the evils of Communism,



Judaism, unemployment, the national debt and anything else you choose to name; finally, (14) agitation for a 'Third Party' or a 'new leadership' native fascist in sentiment, to set up the American New Order by 'Constitutional methods' and ostensibly in order to 'preserve the Constituion,' but which at the same time would be friendly to, collaborate with, or appease Hitler's New Order.

"If and when fascism -- by whatever name it may be called -- is foisted on America, it may bear little resemblance to the original product conceived by Mussolini and propagated methodically in America under the guise of 'patriotism' by a horde of Nazi agents...But they have trained heirs to carry the torch in Park Avenue circles as well as in the side streets. Therein lies the greatest danger to American Democracy, and the winning of the peace.

"Ignorance of the true nature of Nazism and the multiple nativist forms it takes; the prejudices and hates it feeds on; the reason-blinding power of its sugary appeals, which to capital promises the suppression of labor, and to labor the suppression of capital, ignorance of its drug-like strategy which works best while Americans suspect it the least (Boston is a tragic example) -- against all these manifestations of political ignorance, truth is our most potent weapon."

And that ruth must be actively disseminated through our press, through our schools, through our churches, through voluntary organizations of citizens who wish to keep America safe and free for all of its people. The undercover must uncovered, exposed. And the surest way of detecting this Nazi underground in America, the surest way of disintegrating it, is to rid it of anti-Semitism. Every anti-Semitic agency, organization, group, person must be uncovered, must be regarded as a potential Nazi-Fascist agent in the United States. By that sign shall ye know them. Anti-Semitism is just as much a menace to America, to its traditional way of life, as it is to the Jewish citizens. Let no man imagine that American can remain free and embrace those sacred privileges which America has enjoyed for ~~centuries~~ a century and a half while one segment of its population is discriminated against. It can't be done. In Europe the Jew was the first, not the only one, -- first was the Jew, then the non-Jews -- always that is the law. You can't have hate, intolerance against one group. It attacks other groups until it eats out the vitals of the entire nation. Their aim is very cunning, but very ruthless. However if American citizens are on the alert and if they actively fight it as they are doing today on the battle fronts, fighting actively these same Nazi doctrines, they can be curbed in this country. Vigilance



must be observed. It is the price which the free man will pay for the privilege of peace.. Whenever manifestations of race intolerance, whether against the negro or against th Jew, wherever attempt made to sow distrust between group and group, against class and class, then Americans ought to rise, Jew and non-Jew alone to stamp that out. That/will prove our salvation....

