



Abba Hillel Silver Collection Digitization Project

Featuring collections from the Western Reserve Historical Society and
The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives

MS-4787: Abba Hillel Silver Papers, 1902-1989.

Series V: Writings, 1909-1963, undated.

Reel
175

Box
64

Folder
310

Jan Masaryk, 1933.

"Democracy is safe"
declares President Masaryk in an interview
with Rabbi Silver.

Prague, February 16th 1933.

President Thomas G. Masaryk of Czechoslovakia received in audience today Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver of Cleveland, Ohio, in a three quarter of an hour interview. The 83 years old founder and first President of the Republic of Czechoslovakia declared his unshaken faith in democracy.

Rabbi Silver asked him what he thought of the future of democracy in view of the spread of dictatorships in so many countries of Europe and especially in view of the rise of Hitler in Germany.

all wrong
fact autocratic
President Masaryk declared that democracy is passing through a crisis, but that crisis does not mean defeat. Democracy is safe. While mankind has known monarchical, *and in* forms of government for countless ages; it has experienced democracy only a very short time. ~~It is very new.~~
In a sense it is just coming to be. Mankind has nothing to put in place of democracy. Democracy needs however a great moral content. It is not enough to exploit it for capitalistic individualism and business purposes.

Asked what he thought of the spiritual status of the world, President Masaryk replied that the world was morally ill, and that the war was not the cause of its moral illness, only a tragic symptom of it. The world has come to worship the machine, and force which is an expression of the machine. Human aspirations are all too often, only the desire to possess some kind of ma-

chine or some mechanical toy. The world needs a new mind and a new devotion to spiritual values bound up with a realistic programme of social progress.

In this connection President Masaryk criticised the churches throughout the world for having failed in their spiritual mission. That, he held, was one of the causes of our spiritual ~~degeneration~~ ^{chaos}. The churches are bureaucratic and institutionalised. Unlike their founder, they do not go into the highways and byways of life to reach and mould the lives of men. They have their institutions and their representatives in every town and hamlet in the land. In many countries they have the education of the young in their control, yet they have failed to inspire the rising generation with an enthusiasm for the cultural and spiritual essentials of civilisation.

Asked about the future of liberalism, the president said that liberalism historically ~~was identified~~ ^{developed} ~~with religious movements~~ ^{against ecclesiastical pressure}. Today liberalism has lost ~~its~~ ^{this} ~~religious~~ significance and has become largely a matter of political and ~~party~~ ^{economic} orientation. It does not seem to have anything to offer to the new generation.

- - -