

THE
Jewish Veteran

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE
JEWISH WAR VETERANS OF THE UNITED STATES

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FEBRUARY



1938



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IT WILL NOT HAPPEN HERE - - - IF!

How To Preserve Our Democracy

By Hon. HERBERT H. LEHMAN
Governor Of New York

To the vast majority of the people of our country both fascism and communism are abhorrent. They logically see no vital difference between them. In their eyes each is completely destructive of democracy. But in fighting the one they must not forget the urgent necessity of guarding against the menace of the other. Only through constant vigilance can the menace of dictatorship—whether autocratic or communistic—be rendered impotent.

Though the cleavage between dictatorship and democracy is sharp, the steps that lead democracy to dictatorship are not always spectacular. On the contrary, sometimes they are barely discernible. The changes in government which have led to dictatorship abroad were, in many instances, at first hardly perceptible. It is therefore just as important to guard against gradual, insidious change that attacks the roots of democracy as against revolution itself.

Democracy is under pressure from powerful and selfish reactionaries on the extreme right and from equally powerful and selfish radicals on the extreme left. While their political and economic policies may differ, their ultimate objectives are frequently identical. In their greed for power and in their determination to gain their ends they are willing to sacrifice all democratic principles. There is no choice between them. A victory for either would mean the end of democracy.

The development of democracy in this country was not haphazard. It did not come overnight nor as a matter of chance. It was the result of a definite philosophy based on hard experience and was inspired by hatred of tyranny on the part of men who had pioneered to a new land in order to escape oppression at home. These men recognized that no government and no majority had the right to intrude within the field of freedom of thought or of conscience.

Before the new colonies were welded into a union, freedom of conscience was recognized as an inalienable right. Here the idea of civic, religious and personal freedom was born of vital experience and had entered into the souls of men. It was the justification for the birth of a new nation. It had become the spirit of the nation. And so, when the Constitution of the United States was ordained and established, civil and religious liberty in this country were forever after protected by the provision that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble and to petition the government for a redress of grievances."

Dictatorships cannot be controlled by restrictive measures. They can be success-

This trenchant analysis of how Americans can preserve democracy is the most effective statement on the subject yet made. It deserves to be widely read.

THE EDITOR.

fully opposed and nullified only by a militant insistence on civic, religious and personal liberty as guaranteed by our form of government and as practiced by us in our daily lives.

Dictatorships carry on successful propaganda at home and abroad. Democracies, on the other hand, must depend for their strength solely upon their own sound logic and upon a deep-seated and passionate devotion to liberty on the part of their citizens.

The threat to democracy lies, in my opinion, not so much in sudden or revolutionary change. Its greatest danger comes through ignorance, through lethargy and through the failure of the people to defend their fundamental rights against gradual and oftentimes cleverly disguised encroachment.

In all despotic States the first steps toward dictatorship have come through the curtailment or the denial of rights of some of their citizens under the alleged sanction of the majority. A denial of the rights of any of our citizens would lead us inevitably to the plight of despotic countries abroad.

If we are to maintain democracy we must uncompromisingly oppose any principle, either of majority or minority inspiration, which would in the slightest degree weaken the principles of liberty upon which this nation has been founded.

Government and industry have in the past made mistakes of policy and judgment. They will undoubtedly continue to make them in the future. But these mistakes, costly as they are in money, time and effort, do not affect the integrity of our democracy. But let there be injustice in the attitude of government toward any groups, or let there be illegal grasping of power by any group at the expense of others, and we will see democracy in serious jeopardy. A democracy cannot long endure which grants less protection to one citizen than to another in the enjoyment of his political, civic or religious rights. Injustice or privilege to any group of citizens would weaken the entire fabric of government which protects us all.

Equality before the law, civil and religious liberty are inalienable rights guaranteed by our Constitution to all. Yet they must be backed by even a higher law than that of statute—the force of public opinion. Let

us not forget Jefferson's admonition that freedom by law is freedom in practice only where the law is not nullified by public opinion. Back of the law there must be an ever vigilant and articulate public opinion.

The safeguards of our liberties were written into our law through generations of struggle and of sacrifice. They were conceived through struggle. Only through struggle will they be retained.

Men sacrificed themselves cheerfully for a great social and political principle. Should public opinion cease to sustain liberty, democracy would be greatly endangered. Public opinion alone will prevail against the abuses of both the majority and the minority.

Those who would stimulate dictatorship can gain no ground if we adhere to the principle of exact equality to all and to the maintenance of freedom of conscience, of thought and of expression. But let us deviate from that principle even to a hair's breadth and we make a breach through which enemies of liberty can pour.

Loyal and devoted citizens of our country, liberals and conservatives alike, must join hands in their fight against any abridgement of civic and religious liberty.

"It can't happen here" has become a much-used slogan. The lesson learned from foreign lands serves as a warning of what can happen when people are supine or indifferent.

But "it will not happen here" providing we value our liberties highly enough to be ever vigilant and ever militant in their defense.

—O—

Jew Helped Ecuador Win Her Freedom

The recent action of the Ecuadorean government in ordering the expulsion by February 18th of all Jews not engaged in farming recalls the part played by the Polish-Jewish military adventurer, Isidor Borrowski, in helping Ecuador win her freedom from Spain. Borrowski had fought in the Polish army during the abortive wars of independence and had also seen service with Napoleon. When Simon Bolivar, the liberator of South America, called for volunteers, Borrowski went to South America. For more than ten years he served under Bolivar and was conspicuous in the battles that resulted in Ecuadorean independence. He was killed in the siege of Herrat, Afghanistan, in 1837.

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The Lesson Of Nazism

January 30th marked five years since the late Paul von Hindenburg appointed Adolf Hitler chancellor of Germany and thus set into motion a train of startling events which have edged the world closer and closer to an international tragedy. Let us turn back and see what has happened, and why, since that fateful day.

The Nazi regime was no sooner in power than all freedom and liberty departed from Germany. First the Jews, then the Protestants, and now the Catholics, felt the iron hand of Hitlerism. Human rights ceased to exist. Culture vanished. Religion and labor were crushed. In their place were enthroned paganism, brutal force, economic slavery and the ideology of "might makes right." Oppression, concentration camps, censorship, government control of every phase of human life, became the signposts of Nazism in the Third Reich.

While the iron heel of Nazism strode like a Colossus over a fear-prostrated Germany, Nazi propagandists spread like a plague over the rest of the world. With the fanaticism of zealots these agents of Hitlerism appeared in every country of the world, proclaiming the might of Nazi Germany, brow-beating the smaller nations, bluffing the big powers and defying treaty obligations everywhere.

Openly committed to military conquest to achieve its foreign aims—return of its colonies, control over German minorities in other countries, access to raw materials and markets, and a free hand in Central Europe—the Nazi regime's agents spent millions to gain their objectives. One country after another succumbed to Nazi wiles. First it was Poland that loosened its ties with France. Then came Austria. Now it is Rumania. Tomorrow it will be Yugoslavia and Bulgaria. Allied with Italy and Japan, Germany, or rather the Nazi regime, is "riding herd" on the world. And wherever nomic victory, the rights of minorities have gone, on the scrapheap.

Having found anti-Semitism a successful weapon in its march to power in Germany, the Hitler government used it as a spear-head everywhere else. The result was an

unparalleled epidemic of anti-Jewish persecution and discrimination, largely inspired and financed by Nazi sources. If one were to mark a map of the world with red spots to indicate those areas where Jews are suffering today these spots would cover Germany, Poland, Rumania, Austria, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Ecuador, Mexico, Paraguay and Danzig. And even in areas left unmarked the hand of Nazism has also been visible in the unprecedented anti-Jewish propaganda that has appeared in the United States, Canada, Italy, England, South Africa, Brazil, Belgium, Holland, Switzerland, Argentina, and Czechoslovakia.

This upsurge of anti-Semitism has coincided with bold attacks on democracy, attacks which if not directly motivated by Nazis are at least inspired and often financed by them. Violent upheavals in Austria, Spain and Brazil, the Italian conquest of Ethiopia, Japan's rape of China, Germany's threat to Czechoslovakia, the bold defiance by the Fascist powers of all treaty obligations are all of a piece with assaults on Jews and other minorities. And while all this has been going on the democratic nations of the world, whose number continues to grow smaller, stand idly by. True they are arming feverishly in anticipation of war. But they have done nothing to curb Fascist and Nazi efforts at undermining democracy. On the contrary, some of them have tried to buy off the dictators.

After five years of this it must be clear to all who have eyes to see that the world cannot long remain half democratic and half Fascist and Nazi. It is of course not our concern how any other nation governs itself but it is very much our concern when other powers seek to impose, by guile and trickery and propaganda, their alien forms of government upon us. And that is what has been happening not only in the United States but throughout the world.

When the Nazi regime first came into power world Jewry tried to meet the situation single-handed by a boycott and protests and appeals to minority treaties. But it is now apparent that these measures have been unavailing. German Jewry is doomed. The Jews of other countries under Nazi influence are about to suffer the fate of German Jewry. It is no longer possible nor advisable for Jews to make it a lone fight. It never should have been their fight alone. There were some far-sighted men and women who warned in 1933 that after the Jews the Nazis would find other victims. And they have. The next potential victim is democracy itself.

Today the situation calls for Jews not only to join hands with all who oppose everything that is contrary to democracy, whether it is Nazism, Fascism or Communism, but to arouse the populace to aggressively act to combat these alien-isms to save democracy and civilization. Only under democracies can Jews have a future. Only under democracies can any people be free and contented. That is the lesson the world has learned after five years of Hitlersim. Whether it will profit from that lesson only time will tell.

Honorary Membership

Long before Dr. William E. Dodd resigned as United States ambassador to Germany because he could not square his disgust for Nazism with his democratic ideals, he had made it plain to his Nazi hosts that only his diplomatic status prevented him from speaking more plainly than he did on several occasions in Berlin. Hence it was no surprise that as soon as he had become a private citizen he cut loose with the most devastating anti-Nazi blast heard since Gen. Johnson started taking shots at Hitler.

Dr. Dodd's speech hit home. He warned the world that Nazism was a danger that must be checked if the world is to be saved from destruction. He called Hitler a "killer." And lots of other things. He was so outspoken that the German ambassador lodged a protest with the State Department.

All of which of course is already water under the bridge. But we'd like to recommend that Dr. Dodd be elected to honorary membership in J.W.V. We have comparatively few honorary members but those we do have stand for the very things J.W.V. advocates. Among our honorary members are Governor Earle of Pennsylvania, Senator Gerry of Rhode Island, Samuel Untermyer and Judge Day of Ohio, all fearless and outspoken leaders of humanity. The 1938 national encampment would do itself honor if it added the name of William E. Dodd to that list.

The U.S.S. Levy

Last March J.W.V. launched a movement to have the Navy Department name a destroyer in honor of Commodore Uriah P. Levy, who once held the highest rank in the United States Navy. Commodore Levy, it will be recalled, was a hero of the War of 1812, during which he sank twenty-one British vessels. He was also responsible for the abolition of corporal punishment in the Navy. It was Levy, too, who presented to Congress in 1833 a bronze statue of Thomas Jefferson in the role of signing the Declaration of Independence, the first statue to be owned by the United States.

In response to J.W.V.'s suggestion, Secretary of the Navy Claude S. Swanson advised the Jewish Veteran that "the name of Captain Levy already appears on a list of names which have been submitted to the Department from time to time and it will be given consideration with others when the time arrives for the assignment of names to additional destroyers."

Since then nothing more has been heard on this subject. But in view of the fact that the government has embarked on an extensive program of naval construction we suggest that national headquarters and every post through its Representatives and Senators ought to press the subject at this time. Levy was a great seaman and a great patriot. A United States destroyer bearing his name would be a fitting tribute.

THE WAR WITH SPAIN

A Jewish Volunteer Reminiscences

By ISIDORE WEILL

*Past Commander-in-Chief of the
Hebrew Veterans of the War With Spain*

This is the first of a series of articles by Comrade Weill and other Jewish veterans of the Spanish-American War in which they will tell of their own experiences and of Jewish participation in the war with Spain, the 40th anniversary of which is being observed this year.

THE EDITOR.

IT might truthfully be said that the War with Spain really began on February 15, 1898, when the battleship Maine was sunk in Havana harbor. From that day until April 21st, when President McKinley signed the declaration of war, both houses of Congress debated the matter, exhausting every effort on the part of the United States to impress upon Spain the necessity of ending her cruelty to the people of Cuba. The board of inquiry blamed the sinking of the Maine directly on Spain in a report signed by Lieut. Comm. Adolph Marix, U. S. N. (later to be appointed Rear-Admiral by President Theodore Roosevelt), which said the ship was blown up from the outside.

The Rev. Dr. Madison C. Peters, who wrote "Justice to the Jew," stated that fifteen Jewish sailors went down with the Maine. In later years, the American Jewish Historical Society delegated Mark J. Katz, with the assistance of Past Commander Isidore Fried of Manhattan Post No. 1, to attempt to substantiate this assertion. They had the assistance of the Rev. Father John P. Chidwick, chaplain of the Maine, and several members of the crew, but the records showed that there were no Jews aboard the Maine when she went to the bottom of Havana harbor. Commander Albert Moritz, U. S. N., retired, supervised the installation of the machinery of the Maine and was assigned as her chief engineer but at the last moment was transferred to another ship. Commander Moritz, who is now blind and lives in Brooklyn, has on several occasions addressed J. W. V. comrades.

At the time of the Spanish-American War there were no Jewish chaplains in the armed forces of the United States. Consequently Jews in foreign military and naval service were deprived of spiritual aid. In some of the larger camps, however, a few rabbis and theological students held services for the Jewish soldiers. One of these was Rabbi Meyer S. Levy of San Francisco, who rendered spiritual services to soldiers bound for the Philippine Islands. In later years he was elected an honorary member of the Hebrew Veterans of the War with Spain. Another who rendered chaplain service was Dr. Simon R. Cohen, now rabbi emeritus of Union Temple in Brooklyn, but then a senior at the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati. He served as acting chaplain in some of the large camps. He too was an honorary member of the Hebrew Veterans.

The United States entered the war with Spain primarily to free Cuba, yet the first engagement of the war took place on the other side of the world. It was on May 1, 1898, that Commodore Dewey destroyed the Spanish fleet under the command of Admiral Montojo in Manila Bay, taking the entire Spanish crew prisoners. But Dewey deemed it unwise to attempt to capture Manila and occupy it until troop re-enforcements arrived from the United States. The first

Philippine-bound expedition left San Francisco on May 25, under the command of Brigadier-General Thomas Anderson, arriving at Cavita, P. I., on June 30th. On July 25th he was joined by the Eighth Army Corps commanded by Major-General Wesley R. Merritt. Manila was captured on August 13th. In the meantime General Emilio Aguinaldo had gathered a force of 12,000 Filipino troops in the expectation of looting the city after its surrender. But he was soon made to understand by General Merritt that he would have to remain outside the walled city and await orders. This touched off the Filipino insurrection against the Americans in 1899.

At the outbreak of the Spanish-American War the Jewish population of the United States was about 1,000,000, or 1.4% of the total population. Yet there were 6,000 Jews in the army, or somewhat more than 2% of the total force. Had more of our Jewish young men of those days known more of the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492 the Jews in the American army would have been multiplied five-fold. Shortly after I volunteered for service in the war against Spain, I met an elderly Jewish gentleman, a distant relative, who had fled from Germany in 1848. "I am happy to see that you have enlisted to fight against Spain," he said to me. "It is the duty of every Jewish young man to do likewise, as the horrors of the Spanish Inquisition are still fresh in my mind. If I were a younger man, I would be happy to sacrifice my life to free these enslaved people." Those words have always impressed me deeply.

At the beginning of the war, the United States Army consisted of 2,413 officers and 26,040 enlisted men, spread over the entire country. On April 24, 1898, President McKinley called for 125,000 volunteers, followed by a second call on May 25th for 75,000 more to serve for two years unless discharged sooner. Both quotas were filled almost immediately after the enactment of legislation authorizing the organization of this hundred percent volunteer army. Equipment was bought from the National Guard as the regular army had hardly enough to equip itself. Manufacturers could not turn out supplies fast enough to meet the needs of the volunteer troops sent to the front and to the camps.

I enlisted in the U. S. Volunteer Signal

Corps, where my services as an electrician were most useful. The War Department had no signal equipment. My captain, a West Point graduate, was dispatched to Albany, N. Y., to purchase all the signal equipment from the National Guard. After three weeks we received our blue uniforms—fit for use in Alaska—and were immediately ordered to Santiago, Cuba, the second Signal company to leave for the front. We were without any rations until we reached Newport News, Va., and boarded a transport for Charleston, S. C. As the transport La Grande Duchesse moved away from the dock and the band of the 2d Wisconsin Infantry played martial airs while crowds on the dock cheered, several excited officers began firing their revolvers into the air. A number of us had climbed into the ship's rigging and the bullets were grazing our faces until someone warned the officers to cease firing.

The voyage lasted 18 days, our original destination being countermanded at sea as we were ordered to Porto Rico with General Miles. Our food consisted of hard tack, mouldy canned cornbeef in storage for years and canned tomatoes in one half gallon cans, mostly swollen. I remember giving one of the cooks fifty cents for a small piece of fresh meat and two slices of bread. The meat was so tainted that I had to throw it overboard and be content with just the bread. In Porto Rico they added sow belly, full of maggots, to our rations. We had to parboil it to kill them. Later we received embalmed beef, which caused charges to be brought by General Miles against Commissary General Eagan, who was forced to leave the army.

Another incident which will always linger in my memory occurred on August 12th, 1898, near Aibonito, Porto Rico. Just as the light artillery batteries were ready to open fire across the valley, and the infantry ready to charge, Lieut. William C. McLoughlin of the Signal Corps rushed up to the commanding officer and handed him the telegram from General Miles' headquarters announcing the signing of the armistice.

We of the Spanish-American War are getting old, whether we admit it or not. We are moving along and the years are moving with us very rapidly. The Spanish-American War altered the course of our history and made the United States foremost among the nations of the world. America has never engaged in a war of conquest. She has never fought either to gain territory or treasure by capitalizing on the weakness of others. We of America have always fought in defense of weakness, in support of justice and to right the wrongs that tyranny would inflict upon the helpless.

In 1898 our government acted, and our people approved, because we saw a weak people, almost at our door, oppressed and holding out its hands to us for assistance

(Continued on page 7)