

TO DAUGHTERS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

Jamestown, N. I., February 22, 1934.

By Robert H. Jackson

It is interesting to see so many uncompromising conservatives assembled in memory of a revolution and to see many who a year ago almost shuddered at the thought of a mere change of administration gathered here to commemorate the birth of Washington, who overthrew the established government by blood shed to give the American of his day a "New Deal". It is one of those strange traits of human nature that very often those strongest for ancestral revolts are strongest against present ones, those most ardent for the first revolution are most cold to the latest one.

Yet there is close relationship — a blood relationship we might say, between all revolutions. A long train of abuses by government is always followed by revolt. The violence of the revolution depends on the length of time it has been delayed, the severity with which it has been suppressed and the force with which those abusing power attempt to hold power. I don't just now think of a single successful revolution in all history that did not prove to be for the good of mankind. In general I favor them all.

The Declaration of Independence elevated the doctrine of rebellion to the dignity of a creed. As a statement of the right to

overturn any government that forsakes or oppresses its people, it has inspired revolutionists everywhere and in all later times. It broke upon the startled monarchs of Europe with the same effect that the doctrine of the Socialist International at Moscow produced in industrial or financial circles in America. Europe was quick to see that a philosophy that would justify one revolution could always be invoked to support another.

Now what does this immortal Declaration of Independence, to which you are committed by ancestral sacrifice and valor say about revolution? It says this -

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shown, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security, --"

A few years later, however, these same forefathers who had preached and practiced revolt wanted to set up a new and stable government. Their interest and their need in that enterprise was to provide permanence, to establish security, to prevent, so far as possible, revolution or revolt. The radicals had become conservatives — they had op-

posed oppression, now they were opposing anarchy. But they did not forget their lessons. They knew that always and everywhere

"The old order changeth, yielding place to new

And God fulfils himself in many ways

Lest one good custom should corrupt the world."

So to provide for stability on the one hand and make room for change on the other, they resorted to the device of periodic elections by the people, of the key men of government. Election was not a new device, but the use of it let popular will regularly overturn the government, was a use of the device unknown to the modern world. Men had theretofore governed by the warrant of brute strength or the accident of royal birth. Thus your forefathers and mine sought to always keep ahead of revolution by having an election, to overturn unpopular, weak or corrupt governments by peaceful voting instead of by rioting. They legalized and systematized revolution, they sought to reach permanence through change, and stability through uncertainty.

The government should itself endure, but administration should come and go. It has worked pretty well as human devices average, for almost a century and a half. Only once have we known armed rebellion in that time while France in 150 years since they cut off the Royal Head of His Most Christian Majesty, King Louis XVI, has had three kings, two emperors and three republics as well as a directorate and a commune, and every change has witnessed more or less bloodshed.

At no time in history was the expedient of peaceful revolution through election more useful than in 1952. All nations have passed through difficult times in the past four years of depression, unemployment and destruction of those values which men and women have sacrificed to create

and save. As always before revolution the conservative class, except in rare administrations, is most influential in governmental affairs, has suffered great discredit. Successive revelations of corruption, exploitation, or betrayal of trust in high places have destroyed confidence in the conservative. Kreuger, the Scandinavian, Lowenstein, the Belgian, Stinnes, the German, Stavisky of France, Insul, Wiggin and Mitchell in America, have given the public a sad succession of shocks as to the moral integrity and the intellectual superiority of ruling classes. Every smaller country and community has had its lesser Kreugers and Wiggins.

All of this broke upon peoples made hysterical and hateful by a world war. Statesmen of the old tradition had been ousted by a Labor Government in England, the strong Hohenzollern dynasty had fled Germany, the Hapsburgs had fallen in Austria and Spain, a dictator ruled in Italy, while strange and bloody figures held the ancient Kremlin in Moscow and rules Russia. Old countries like Austria-Hungary were dismembered, new ones like Poland, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia had been established or reestablished, vast territories like Alsace Lorraine had been transferred to government of alien speech and race.

Upon background such as this came in 1929 the collapse of the economic system in which the peoples of all countries had invested their savings, by which the workmen of all nations were fed and sheltered and clad.

Some nations have dealt with the resulting unrest with "strong" measures. The outcome of this "strong" policy of stubborn conservatives has made charming Havana a bloody shambles, changed beautiful Paris to a scene of riot and revolt, while gay Vienna gives up the waltz for warlike

and the Blue Danube is made red with blood. And America, too made a hesitant effort at suppression and our own beautiful capitol city witnessed soldiers shooting at ex-soldiers during the late days of the Hoover regime. We were far on the road to bloodshed in our own country.

At this critical time in our affairs the principle of lawful revolution at the ballot box saved us from unlawful and violent efforts to change a government that had become unpopular, weak and ineffective. The peaceful transfer of governmental control from the reactionary Hoover administration to the liberal Roosevelt administration was the great example of constitutional revolution, and the outstanding justification of a legal system for overthrow of government.

This peaceful change has ushered into office the most powerful administration of my time. Where preceding administrations were checked and balanced and stalled by opposition within their own party this one moves on from measure to measure with a safe parliamentary majority of its own political party and pretty general support in the party of opposition.

Some timid people, who have so long seen hesitation where they now see courage, who are accustomed to confusion and opposition and now see leadership and cooperation, cry out about a "dictatorship."

I always thought it was the first duty of a government to govern. I thank God that we have a new government sufficiently popular to be granted leadership and courageous enough to take it and to take responsibility for our salvation. Not for anything would I see this country turn back to "government by chatter."

Wherein does this administration differ in its philosophy from

the preceding ones? It is too early to weigh the effort of each specific measure. The full import of some of these will take years to appraise and generations will be affected by them. Difficulties of administration by newly and quickly set up agencies, may tend to obscure the real purpose of some laws. Nor is this the time or place to argue the political issues raised by various features of the administration program. But it is appropriate at any time or place that the underlying philosophy of the governing party be discussed.

The fear most often expressed by the conservative is that the new government will destroy "rugged individualism" through its extending help to the citizen and through the many measures for his protection. From Ogden Mills down through the ranks the opposition is concerned lest the government do too much for its citizens and too far take over management of interests heretofore called private.

I am myself an individualist of the school of Emerson. Self reliance, self help and independence of other people I believe to be the basis of character and essential to success.

But this creed of self reliance has been in the past century perverted and misused. It has become a creed of exaggerated selfishness and exploitation. True individualism would teach that a man should have the product of his labor, so as to have an incentive to labor. The modern application of it is that a few men should have all they make and also all they can get from others through exploiting either the employer relation, or the investor relation. That is not individualism, that is its self destruction of individualism.

Those who are now preaching that the government will break down

the initiative of the individual by assuming his burdens, have been false in the past to the faith they profess. Those who protest a Federal subsidy to our school districts to build school houses have never been heard to protest Federal subsidies to shipping companies or to air transport companies. Those who want to stop unemployed relief because a few poor beggars get food or shelter by fraud, shout that the President is unjust when he cancels air mail contracts obtained by shady dealings and evidenced by correspondence that is destroyed as soon as called for by the Senate. Those same people who think it unconstitutional for the government to try to protect a home owner from loss of his home have for years advocated a protective tariff to protect industrialists from competition. They say relief to women and children is demoralizing but they never object to having the business of the country demoralized by R. F. C. loans from the government. The fact is that these "rugged individualists" are more rugged than individualist. Their philosophy never stood in the way of a subsidy — provided they got it.

But they say the cost of caring for our own people in distress is terrible — and so it is. But they never said a word about the cost of feeding Belgians and French or of sending fabulous sums to European nations which has not been repaid.

And conservatives like James W. Beck, ask "if the government can go into a little tailor shop and tell him what he may charge for pressing trousers, where is our liberty?" But what about the government going into your home and taking your boy to be sent into a foreign war. It always seemed to me that when the constitution stretched far enough to cover a selective draft law for foreign service there was not enough left

of our traditional "liberty" to talk about. Is our gold better protected than our boys so that the government cannot call for gold but can for the youth?

There is an individualism of the wilderness and the frontier. It was based on brute strength — a relentless survival of the fittest. There is also an individualism of organized society where ones acts do not begin and end within himself alone. The frontier individualist, with a trusty gun and a strong arm can work out his own salvation. But where food and shelter and clothing and education and opportunity all depend on an exchange of work for wages, and then an exchange of wages for commodities, individualism has a different meaning.

In its new surroundings the individualism of the wilderness had run awack. It urged people to work and then gave them no jobs, it urged them to save and let their savings be wiped out by bank failures, foreclosures and falling values. The thrifty man with home half paid for came out in the same position as the spendthrift who never tried to buy a home. They stood in the bread line together, the idle and the industrious, the thrifty and the extravagant. If that does not destroy the incentive to work then what would?

The work of this administration has been in the direction of releasing the energies of a despairing and hopeless people.

Will men quit saving because their savings are now guaranteed and protected in all of our banks so they are sure not to lose them? Isn't it a greater incentive to thrift than before?

Will people quit working to buy homes because the government steps in to help save them in depression?

Will men quit trying to become independent just because a new

securities law makes it more dangerous for sharks to sell them fake securities?

To ask these questions is to answer them. I know many measures hurriedly taken by the administration, are so far inadequate, many are imperfect, some have been defectively administered but every step has been in the direction of encouraging in our people an industrious and self disciplined life, and toward releasing their energies from bondage to fear and their talents or strength from exploitation.

Is individualism endangered?

Not while one's eyes see while those of another merely look, not while one hand is quick and another slow, not while one mind grasps what another misses. The road to opportunity is not closed. No administration ever reached out and sought its helpers among such young men, or so disregarded social position or financial situation. It has sought men who know, men who have studied, men who are intellectually prepared. The hope of the United States is that out of humble homes, unknown to either fame or wealth, will come men and women who will prepare themselves and grow to a mastery of industry and politics. No administration ever by precept and example gave them more encouragement to try out new fields, to experiment, to have open minds, to throw off old traditions and blaze trails of their own. If this era does not release an unsuspected flow of new energy and enterprise, I shall fail as a prophet.

There have been death blows dealt -- there may be more. But they will not be dealt to individualism, nor to liberalism, nor even to honest conservatism. They are dealt to favoritism in administration of the law, to economic exploitation. The dead are those who have sought

turn government to their own purposes. Thomas Curtis Clark has described them -

"We are the dead -- who were too deaf to hear
The Cries of justice -- what had we to fear?
We scorned the law; we were too blind to see
That all are slaves unless all men are free:
Now we are dead.

We are the dead: our kingdom built on lust
For gold and power is prostrate in the dust;
Our glory fades, our banners now are furled.
New days are here, a vision wakes the world
And we are dead."