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Is Democracy doomed?

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I s D e m o c r a c y d o o m e d ?
.....

Erika Mann

Ladies an gentlemen,-

there was a time,- not long ago,- when it actually seemd to most of us /that democracy was doomed,- that it was on the verge of ~~abdicating~~ ^{to its deadly enemy} without as much as ~~of yielding~~ ^{to} a struggle. ~~HH~~ And although America dād not seem do be involved either actively or passively in the events of those days, it did not seem very likely that American Democracy could possibly survive,- as long as the European democracies had been abandoned by their own democratic leaders. ~~HHHH~~ ^{had become} Our world ~~HH~~ small and ~~HHHH~~ either ~~HHHH~~ ^{would} it progress into a better and juster order for all its inhabitants,- or relapse into the dark ages of tyranny ~~HHH~~ lawlessnes, and ~~the~~ ^{accept the} dictatorship of dull, brute force.

It is he days of "Munich" I am talking about,- when a shameful deal, concluded at the expense of a helpless but brave little democracy, was meant to bring peace in our time to those who had ~~HHHH~~ refused ~~HHHH HHHHHHHH~~ to defend ~~this~~ peace and to merit its blessing.

~~I happened to be in Prague at that time and went on to the Sudetencountries after the deal had been announced. And the sight of the strong, beautifully equipped czeck army, - ^{re} ~~tertreati~~ng before the enemy, silently with lowered foreheads, tears in their yes, - ~~HHH~~ ~~HHHHHHH~~ is burned ^{forever} in my memory, - as a ~~HHHHHHHH~~ symbol for democacies most shameful hour.~~

~~HHHH~~ ~~HHH~~ Nothing that ~~HHHHHHHHH~~ has happened since/ could have happened without "Munich", while, on the other hand, Munich could ^{scarcely} have happened without Vienna and Vienna not without the Rhineland .

A series of democratic defeats, of democratic betrayals ^{had been expected} spread before our eyes and we were ^{certainly} very well justified in doubting the power or even the will of survival of what we called the democratic way of life.

Even after the outbreak of the war, - when the European democracies had declared themselves ready to fight for the rights of free men all over the world and to liberate humanity from evil, - even then our confidence was not yet fully restored. Too much ^{moral} prestige had been lost, - too many crimes of omission had been committed.

Besides this war seemed to be ^a "phony war", - not real fighting occurred, - save the massacre of helpless Poland by the enemy. Worse than that, it was an "imperialistic war", - a war for the preservation of the British

Empire and fought in the interest of the ^{British} ruling classes. So we were told by many wellmeaning people ^{only that these wellmeaning people} who, it is true, repeated what other people ^{on their part} and not ^{who were} ~~not~~ quite as wellmeaning had been ^{ed} preaching to them. For ~~HH~~ was

~~HHHHH~~ both the Nazi-Sympathizers and the communist fellowtravelers ^{extremely} had been busy to get these ^{stopping} opinions across, ^{which} and they worked right into the enemies pockets.

By ~~HHH~~ April and May it became clear enough that the war had left its "phony" stage and had become terrifyingly real. ^{and although there was nothing pleasant in this reality we started hoping and hoped that was since the fight had actually started} But then the new blow arrived. France collapsed. It honest democrates all over the world were confronted with the question whether it was ^{itself} ^{proof} democracy that had failed, - whether ~~HH~~ had been ^{established} ~~HHHHH~~ that democracy was simply unable to meet the assault, - whether democracy was doomed. ^{democracy would be it always following}

Fascist sympathizers and communist fellowe-travellers (not to speak of real Nazis and communists) had a few lovely highly promising ^{long} months! Hitler will win! screamed the Nazis everywhere and we shall be masters of the world. Hitler will win, - shouted the communists, - ^{everywhere} but then chaos is bound to break loose, we shall take advantage of this fruitful chaos and shall ~~be~~ emerge as masters of the world.

~~But~~ Hitler did not win quite as speedily as expected and the summer passed ~~by~~ without bringing about democracy's doomsday, - but also without ^{proving} indicating or even ^{proving} proving democracy's definite survival.

When I left lovely California for England on August 20th ~~nothing~~ nothing, - nothing at all had yet been decided. The Nazi 'Blitz-krieg', announced for August 15th at the latest, had not yet started, - but ^{it not} it could start at any moment and as many promises as Mr. Hitler had broken in the past, - his predictions as for the dates of his victorious ^{entries to} arrival in the capitals of conquered countries had been pretty correct, - so far. "What is this" asked my friends when told about my impending visit to London, - "a race between you and the 'Fuehrer'?"

^{Mr} Although I am neither a soldier, - nor a war-correspondent, - and although I had never lived in England for any length of time, - I most ardently desired to go there for two reasons. First I wanted to talk to the Germans. They must be told the truth about the essence and nature of this war, - which was not, - as they possibly thought, a war like any other, - but which was the defensive war of civilized humanity ~~against~~ against the evil, the wicked, the anti-humane, - the wholly ^{barbarian} barbarian, - the ~~it~~ it was the struggle of the better against the utterly bad.

Did they wish to continue and fight and die for the utterly bad against the better? ^{This} I must ask the Germans, - I must tell them why ^{in this war} Hitler represented the utterly bad and England represented the better.

I did not, of course flatter myself that I could possibly convince ^{the Germans} and win them over to the better by a series of radio-speeches. Still I desired to do my share by at least shedding some tiny ray of light into the total blackout to which Mr. Hitler had condemned the country of my birth, - seven and a half years ago.

Second I longed for some more "light" myself. ^{about} The total blackout ^{into the} ~~produced~~ in my mind and heart ^{left a black-out me in a black-out} by the collapse of France had not yet ~~been~~ been removed. England was holding fast, - England was fighting on. But was there any real proof that England would continue to do so, - if things got really bad? And above all, - would it be possible for England to remain a ^{true} real democracy while fighting for her life and national independence. There had been much talk over here about the ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ dangers inherent in any war. Well-meaning people as well as Nazi-sympathizers and communist-fellow-travelers had kept on warning of these dangers. "~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ War is no solution" they cried, - "while fighting fascism you are bound to go fascist yourself. Free om of speech will have to be curtailed, - the freedom of the press, will, of course, have to ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ be abolished, - a dictatorship will have to be introduced, - which will have to rob the people of all of their democratic rights. And in the end nobody will ~~any longer~~ know what he is fighting for."

There was something frighteningly convincing in such warnings. But since they said in so many words that democracy was doomed one way or another I refused to be ^{let them} ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ convinced for ^{even me} ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ one moment. Could I, however, be ^{quite} ~~really~~ ^{convinced to be certain} convinced of the contrary?

I had to know, - I had to find out.

I arrived in England on August 27th. 10 rather quiet, rather peaceful the days between August 27th and September 7th, days were allotted me during which to investigate "democracy at war"

What I found out was the following: there existed an almost incredible amount of freedom. The daily press was of course partly government-controlled and unable to get any important news save from government controlled sources. But even the dailies carried editorials of amazing frankness. All kinds of criticism, warnings, and suggestions were brought forth, - members of the government, even of the war cabinet were vulnerable to attacks, - everybody spoke his mind. I was also strated with the unconcerned frankness displayed by my friends wherever they met, - in restaurant, - in the streets in the airraidshelters. Obviously there was nothing to be afraid of and you could deal with all sorts of controversial problems without ever getting yourself into trouble. No doubt: if freedom of the press and freedom of speech ~~HHHHHHHHHH~~ were at all essential for the maintenance of democracy democratic England was doing well. What else had I wanted to know? How about social progress. How about that bottomless abyss between the upper and the lower classes of which Mr. Hitler was talking such a great deal and which, ~~HH~~ if it actually continued to exist, or even to deepen might very well endanger the outcome of this war?

For you cannot successfully fight a "war of liberation" if your own people are being exploited by your own ruling classes. In particular you cannot successfully fight any modern war, if your own people, - your lower middle-classes, - your industrial workers, your men on the street, do not feel it to be their war, as well as yours. It is not a trained and sworn army who will decide its outcome. It's the civil population of ~~HHH~~ the ~~HHH~~ societies, it every man, woman and child in the country who

lead to
will ~~neither~~ either victory or defeat . They must know what they are
fighting for and the must be convinced that, whatever they are asked to
suffer, it will be worthwhile.

On September 7th, shortly after five o'clock in the afternoon,- the sirens had sounded about half an hour ago,- the Nazis opened their Blitzkrieg on London.