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THE NEW YEAR AND A NEW EPOCH

By F. Folke, Danish Civil Engineer

Ye shall toil no more, ye maids of the mill,
Nor rise with the early sun,
Though the cock should crow, ye may slumber still,
Heedless of work undone.

For the Naiads hasten at Deo's call
To lighten the tasks ye do,
And the nymphs of fountain and waterfall
Are turning the mill for you.

So the ponderous wheel goes round and round
As they dance in the water's flow,
And the hollow stones where the corn is ground
Turn to their touch below.

For the life of old has returned again,
'Tis the golden age of yore,
And the goddess' work shall be free from pain,
And ye shall be tired no more.

ANTIPATER.¹

THE TWO THOUSAND-YEAR-OLD Greek lyric on the invention of the water mill makes a strong appeal to the engineers of our day. Who among us will not concede he has dreamed such dreams and that he has a feeling of pride in his profession for the place it has taken in the triumphal march of progress which has conquered the whole world and fashioned our life to-day? In this modern age, which began only 150 years ago with James Watt's invention of the steam engine—before that, technically speaking, all time belonged to antiquity—mankind has freed itself from the bonds of heavy toil; we have gained mastery over matter so that it is given to all partners in our civilization to live as they feel disposed as free men and women; a freedom we are all striving to attain. Never before was it easier for a man to support himself and his, with a simple spade: but now we know that one man with a tractor can dig more ground than 1,000 men with spades, and that Denmark's annual harvest output has risen since as late as the year 1875 from 20 million to 1,000 million crop units. How then can there be any talk of drudgery, not to speak of want?

These examples of the way in which man has subdued the land and has learned to take advantage of its forces and capacities could be multiplied without limit and added to in still more overwhelming number especially from the industrial field. Taken together, they establish the fact for every one who can and will think that physical labour plays an ever decreasing role in production. It is by the co-operation of mind and intellect in our social economy that modern production is sustained. Therefore a community which has surrendered its right to the results of this co-operation, for the advantage of some few who "own" nature's goods, has reverted back in a technological sense to the primitive age. Either

such a social state or material progress itself must go to pieces. There are signs that both may happen. It is no coincidence that in this year of superabundance (written 1939) and of "over-production," the highways of the world which have echoed the weary tramp of crowds without means of existence now begin to resound with the measured tread of marching troops.

We engineers must bow our heads and acknowledge that the much lauded progress, in which our profession has had the honour to take the lead, has been progress merely in human power and not in human happiness. Whether it was for good or for ill did not lie in our hands. Only this was certain, that it boded a danger. Perhaps we will have to bow our heads lower still and acknowledge that in no wise were we in the van of progress but it was progress that was in advance of us.

Was it in truth James Watt who ushered in the modern age? Was it not rather another and a much greater inventor, the 30-years' older Benjamin Franklin, he of whom it was said *Eripuit coelo fulmen sceptrumque tyrannis*, he tore the lightning from the sky and the sceptre from the hands of tyrants? You read his signature to the Declaration of Rights, the document sacred to every American, which is exhibited in the splendid Library of Congress in Washington. Here the visitor can stand immediately over it and read in a fine and firm hand: "We hold these truths to be self-evident—that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit

¹ Antipater of Sidon "The Water Mill" versified by J. A. Pott in his *Greek Love Songs and Epigrams* (Kegan Paul) 2nd Series; but in Vol. III No. 418 of the *Greek Anthology* translated by W. R. Paton in the Loeb Classical Library, this lyric is attributed to Antipater of Thessalonica.

of happiness." These were the ideas, the ideas of the rights of man, that blazed the path for the modern age and thereby for progress—not the opposite.

It was the idea of justice that laid the foundation on which scientific and technical progress has built its Tower of Babel. It is this strange instinctive call for justice which marks the godlike in mankind and is at the root of all cultural advance; it is the indispensable condition of men's ability to set up and maintain an association capable of development. The animals also form association, but that of the ants and the bees is the same to-day as it has ever been. Such is not the case with human society, which is why it can rise and fall.

But to-day when justice is mentioned it is not only the slim politicians who shrug their shoulders but so often also the ordinary man. Everyone has been schooled by his "organisation" (whether employers' federation or trade union) that it is only power that counts. But when the will to justice sinks, then the ground slips from beneath us and our Tower of Babel totters. And war continues, the war that was begun in 1914 and was not ended in 1918, because mankind in spite of all could not agree to put right before might. Therefore also our world encompasses its fate obedient to its belief that force constitutes the highest court of appeal. In fine, as thy faith is so shall it befall thee.

What the outcome shall be none of us can foresee. Certain it is that we stand at the end of an era: the year we now leave behind will be long remembered in history. Riding above all the conflict in the world there is universal agreement on one point, namely that as things have been hitherto they cannot henceforth continue.

The Swedish author Sven Lönborg in his delightful book *Dike and Eros*¹, reflecting on conditions in ancient Athens, quotes passages from a speech by Pericles² at the beginning of the Peloponnesian War in which he shows the contrast between democracy in Athens and oligarchy in Sparta.

"We live under a form of government which does not emulate the institutions of our neighbours; on the contrary, we are a model which some follow rather than the imitators of other peoples. It is true that our Government is called a democracy, because its administration is in the hands, not of the few, but of the many; yet while as regards the law all men are on an equality for the settlement of their private disputes, as regards the value set on them it is as each man is in any way distinguished that he is preferred to public honours, not because he belongs to a particular class, but because of personal merits; nor again on the ground of poverty is a man barred from a public career by obscurity of rank if he but has it in him to do the state a service. And not only in our public life are we liberal, but also as regards our freedom from suspicion of one another in the pursuits of every-day life; for we do not ourselves feel resentment at our neighbour if he does as he likes, nor yet do we put on sour looks which, though harmless, are painful to behold. But while we thus avoid giving offence in our private intercourse, in our public life we are restrained from lawlessness chiefly through reverent fear, for we render obedience to those in authority and to the laws, and especially to those laws which are ordained for the succour of the oppressed and those

which, though unwritten, bring upon the transgressor a disgrace which all men recognize. . . . And our city is so great that all the products of the earth flow in upon us, and ours is the happy lot to gather in the good fruits of our own soil with no more home-felt security of enjoyment than we do those of other lands.

"We are also superior to our opponents in our system of training for warfare. In the first place, we throw our city open to all the world and we never by exclusion acts debar anyone from learning or seeing anything which an enemy might profit by observing if it were not kept from his sight; for we place our dependence, not so much on prearranged devices to deceive, as upon the courage which springs from our own souls when we are called to action. And again, in the matter of education, whereas they from early childhood by a laborious discipline make pursuit of manly courage, we with our unrestricted mode of life are none the less ready to meet any equality of hazard."

Such was the situation at the commencement of the war. As to the effects after several years of warfare (it lasted 27 years) the historian Thucydides writes:

"In peace and prosperity both states and individuals have gentler feelings because men are not then forced to face conditions of dire necessity; but war, which robs men of the easy supply of their daily wants, is a rough schoolmaster and creates in most people a temper that matches their condition.

"And so the cities began to be disturbed by revolutions and those that fell into this state later, on hearing of what had been done before, carried to still more extravagant lengths the invention of new devices, both by the extreme ingenuity of their attacks and the monstrousness of their revenges.

"The cause of all these evils was the desire to rule which greed and ambition inspire, and also, springing from them, that party spirit which belongs to men who once have become engaged in factious rivalry. For those who emerged as party leaders in the several cities, by assuming on either side a fair-sounding name, the one using as its catch-word 'political equality for the masses under the law,' the other 'temperate aristocracy' while they pretended to be devoted to the common weal, in reality made it their prize; striving in every way to get the better of each other they dared the most awful deeds, and sought revenges still more awful, not pursuing these within the bounds of justice and public weal, but limiting them, both parties alike, only by the moment's caprice. . . . Citizens who belonged to neither party were continually destroyed by both, either because they would not make common cause with them or through mere jealousy that they should survive.

"So it was that every form of depravity showed itself in Hellas in consequence of its revolutions; and that simplicity, which is the chief element of a noble nature, was laughed to scorn and disappeared, while mutual antagonism of feeling, combined with mistrust, prevailed far and wide. For there was no assurance binding enough, no oath terrible enough, to reconcile men; but always, leaning in calculation to considering that security was hopeless, they rather took precautions against being wronged than able to trust others."

Athens fell. The glory of Greece sank in ruins. Shall that also be the fate of Europe?

The democracy of Athens proved it did not correspond in practice to the ideals of Pericles. Does ours of to-day? The signs of decline to which Thucydides pointed we ourselves can recognize only too well. Europe has long been living at war—outside as well as inside.

¹ Dike was in Greek mythology the tutelary Goddess of Justice; Eros the God of Love.

² The famous Funeral Oration in Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War*.

We know of course that the democracy of Athens was built upon sand. Of its 400,000 inhabitants, 250,000 were slaves and of the 150,000 free citizens there were only a small number who attended the Ecclesia, the popular assembly. But even if to-day there are still many within the democracies of Europe who live under slave conditions, this is something that can be put right if we but have the will for it. In these 2,400 years that have passed since the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War many exalted thoughts have found expression and many noble lives have been devoted to the cause of humanity. Christ has lived and suffered. We have something to build upon and something to fight for. The front does not lie between the belligerent nations. It goes *through* all countries, *through* all towns and every single parish. Every day the clash between freedom and force, between right and wrong

is quickened. May it be for us to face this great change of our times, this new epoch, with the same dauntless spirit that made Pericles the tribune of his people, and to build every one at his post for a social state based upon liberty, truth and justice.

EDITOR'S POSTSCRIPT. The foregoing is translation slightly abridged of the article as it appeared in the Danish *City and Harbour Engineer* of January, 1940, the manuscript having been in our hands before that but no earlier opportunity was afforded for publication in our columns. For avoiding the distortions certain to result from turning Greek into English by a circuitous Swedish-Danish route we have used the English translation of Thucydides (Book II xxxvii-xxxix and Book III lxxxii-lxxxiii) by Charles Foster Smith, Loeb Classical Library, in respect of the passages quoted. So also we have made direct use of J. A. Pott's version of "The Water Mill." Although a year has passed, Mr Folke's message and exhortation for 1940 applies with equal fervour to the duties that 1941 makes incumbent upon us.

MR CHARLES CHAPLIN ON LIBERTY AND PEACE

The Speech of the Great Dictator

HANNEN SWAFFER in his *Daily Herald* columns, 16th December, quotes verbatim the speech which Charlie Chaplin (himself becoming dictator by mistaken identity) delivers in the film *The Great Dictator*, now the talk of the world except in those countries where it dare not be shown. These are the words:—

"I'm sorry, but I don't want to be an emperor. That's not my business. I don't want to rule or conquer anyone. I should like to help everyone—if possible—Jew, Gentile—black man—white. We all want to help one another. Human beings are like that. We want to live by each other's happiness—not by each other's misery. We don't want to hate and despise one another.

"In this world there is room for everyone. And the good earth is rich and can provide for everyone. The way of life can be free and beautiful, but we have lost the way. Greed has poisoned men's souls—has barricaded the world with hate—has goosestepped us into misery and bloodshed. We have developed speed, but we have shut ourselves in. Machinery that gives abundance has left us in want. Our knowledge has made us cynical. Our cleverness, hard and unkind.

"We think too much and feel too little. More than machinery we need humanity. More than cleverness we need kindness and gentleness. Without these qualities, life will be violent and all will be lost. . . .

"The aeroplane and the radio have brought us closer together. The very nature of these inventions cries out for the goodness in man—cries out for universal brotherhood—for the unity of us all.

"Even now my voice is reaching millions throughout the world—millions of despairing men, women and little children—victims of a system that makes men torture and imprison innocent people.

"To those who can hear me, I say—do not despair. The misery that has come upon us is but the passing of greed—the bitterness of men who fear the way of human progress. The hate of men will pass, and dictators die, and the power they took from the people will return to the people. And so long as men die, liberty will never perish.

"Soldiers! Don't give yourselves to these brutes—men who despise you—enslave you—regiment your lives—tell you what to do—what to think and what to feel! Who drill you—diet you—treat you like cattle and use you as cannon fodder. Don't give yourself to these unnatural men—machine men with machine minds and machine hearts! You have the love of

humanity in your hearts!—don't hate! Only the unloved hate—the unloved and the unnatural! Soldiers! Don't fight for slavery! Fight for liberty!

"In the 17th Chapter of St Luke, it is written: 'The Kingdom of God is within you,' not in one man nor a group of men, but in all men! In you! You, the people, have the power—the power to create machines. The power to create happiness! You, the people, have the power to make this life free and beautiful—to make this life a wonderful adventure. Then—in the name of democracy—let us use that power—let us all unite.

"Let us fight for a new world—a decent world that will give men a chance to work—that will give youth a future and old age security.

"By the promise of these things, brutes have risen to power. But they lied! They do not fulfil that promise. They never will! Dictators freed themselves but they enslaved the people!

"Now let us fight to fulfil that promise! Let us fight to free the world—to do away with national barriers—to do away with greed, with hate and intolerance. Let us fight for a world of reason—a world where science—where progress will lead to the happiness of us all. Soldiers! In the name of democracy, let us unite!

"Can you hear me? Wherever you are, look up! Look up! The clouds are lifting! The sun is breaking through! We are coming out of the darkness into the light! We are coming into a new world—a kindlier world, where men will rise above their greed, their hate and their brutality.

"Look up! The soul of man has been given wings and at last he is beginning to fly. He is flying into the rainbow—into the light of hope—into the future—the glorious future that belongs to you—to me—and to all of us! Look up! Look up!"

"One of the first acts of the National Government was to abandon Free Trade for 'Protection.' Now we have the whole of the Continent closed as a market except for high explosives. These can pass in and out without toll or Custom House, exports being paid for by imports. The idle textile workers can find work on ammunitions, shelters and such like. Now the 'Shopping Tax' is likely to kill our home trade. As our rulers pull their right foot out of the mud, their left foot sinks deeper."—In a letter from a correspondent.