

SECRET SOCIETIES

An Indian's View of Their Utility in Revolutionary Movements.

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No student of revolutionary history, however obtuse he may be, can ever miss the importance of the prominent part that has been played by secret societies in the development of a struggle for national independence. In spite of all the rancorous accusations that have been brought from time to time against secret organizations by the interested tyrants in spite of all that has been said by credulous and the fools as to the lack of honesty in this step history has paid a brilliant tribute to the marvelous capacity of these organizations in doing good to mankind either by defending the helpless right or by defeating the powerful wrong. It is absurd to talk about the immorality of secret societies as if they contain an inherent germ of sin. Like all other instruments, secret societies are neither good nor bad in themselves but their virtues copies in proportion to the justice of the cause they are made to serve. A sword, when wielded by the hand of a cut-throat, stands condemned by humanity; but when it is unsheathed by a Hofer or Washington then it assumes a sacredness and a purity that angels in heaven might envy. If actions are judged by the motives they imply, instruments are judged by the causes they serve. When open advocacy of truth is considered a crime, when principles are silenced by bayonets and when the roar of threatening tyrants renders the voice of justice inaudible to the world then the only means to get rid of this diabolical pressure is to gather all latent energies together, to organize their forces and to burst forth into a volcanic suddenness and strength. Here it is that the paramount utility of secret societies is most telling.

Liars know it very well that for the victory of a truth it must be constantly preached and wildly circulated among mankind. When staggered at the sudden emanation of the truth, those interested in the existing lie try their level best to arrest the progress of the truth by closing the

platform and by breaking the pen. No flash of light is allowed to reach the bewildered people who formed to grope in the dark and any voice that dares to demand a ray of the sun is stilled by gag. Neither liberty of speech nor liberty of press is allowed to exist. A few brave souls rise up to defy this brutal force by a bold utterance of their faith, but such attempts are more calculated to bring martyrdom which, indeed, is never barren. It does purify its faith by the oblation of blood. But by, itself, it is not competent to achieve success for even martyrdom depends upon the propagation of the truth it seeks to promote. When no way remains open to one in a just cause, when tyranny stretches so far as to deny the right of expressing in any manner whatsoever what one conceives to be the truth and when to defy this tyranny by an open stand defeats its own purpose by wasting the blood of the best among the oppressed, then, in the name of eternal justice, form secret societies to propagate the truth that warms your bosom. Secret societies means working on the line of least resistance. If the public platform, guarded by the bayonet of the tyrant, is closed, then march off to the dense forests, to the mountain caves, to the catacombs of heroes, to the cellars of houses! For the enemy cannot be omni-percipient. They may stifle what they hear but they cannot smother what they do not hear. Try to crush the growing spirit of national independence in Italy, but she could not put any obstacles in the way of "Young Italy." The flame spread like a wild fire from man to man who became ready to assert their birth right, by freeing Italy from the foreign yoke; and this sowing the seeds of liberty could be performed with least resistance from the Austrian tyrant who stood ambling and powerless as soon as the great Italian patriot founded his mighty secret society. These societies help to propagate truth even when the lie rules absolute. In nations that groan under slavery none can with impunity, ask his brothers to rise in an open call to arms. If the leaders insinuate the people to drive away the devils, the masses prove too ignorant to read between the lines. While any open preaching calls forth a revenge so terrible as to shatter the new spirit by demoralizing the whole nation through brutal force. In such a state as this, secret societies enable the prophets to preach their sacred mission in unmistakable terms and yet without rousing the slumbering tyrant too early.

But they do not help only in the propagation of truth but even in defeating the cunning ----- of the enemy. It has been often seen that even the most oppressive of tyrants allow to a certain limit open agitation of the people whom they rule. In Ireland, as well as in India, where the evil of slavery stalks along with all its venomous malignity, tolerated. Why for? Because the

oppressors are kept informed of the temper of the oppressed. But when secret organizations begin to work their way the tyrants find themselves puzzled. The temper of the people remains unknown, their plans unrevealed, their power unmeasured. A lull is spread over the whole situation that hides a storm within.

But, above all, secret organizations render a significant service to the cause of justice and truth, by enabling the precursors of a new faith to gather and organize their forces. It is not sufficient only to tell the people where they ought to go, but it is essentially necessary to let them know how they ought to proceed. The ideal, as well as the means to its realization must be clearly preached and practiced. This can never be done in any open way without running the risk of—the tyrants know when and how to nip the new spirit in the bud. Nations who want to break off the chains of slavery and degradation ought to form themselves into secret associations. The tyrants are forming their alliances to perpetuate oppressions. Let those who are pent up in darkness and dependence multiply their individual strength by secret organizations. Mazzini says : “Cowardly to how the head before brutal violence upholding injustice when the arms that God has given you suffice for its overthrow is to degrade yourself to the passive condition of the animal to betray the cause of truth and of God. When you tell us that our secret associations are illegal. I answer that the right of association for good is legal and that the exercise of this right becomes illegal from ----- association is permitted.”

Without indulging in useless open vituperations, is it not better to work in secretly organizing all available forces in a glorious struggle for liberty and freedom. All should remember that a volcano never sends a public notice of its eruption.