



## Abba Hillel Silver Collection Digitization Project

Featuring collections from the Western Reserve Historical Society and  
The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives

### **MS-4787: Abba Hillel Silver Papers, 1902-1989.**

Series IV: Sermons, 1914-1963, undated.

---

Reel  
159

Box  
56

Folder  
602

Turning to Lincoln, 1940.

WRHS  
TURNING TO LINCOLN



The personality of the Great Emancipator and the Civil War as reflected in recent novels and plays: "Abe Lincoln in Illinois," Sandburg's "Abraham Lincoln", and "Gone With the Wind".

By  
Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver

At  
The Temple

On  
Sunday morning, February 11, 1940



In the last few years the American people have been turning to Abraham Lincoln with increasing interest, fondness and admiration, if art and literature are any criterion. Increasingly, the theme of the life of Abraham Lincoln has become a favorite one among authors and artists. In biography, novel, play, and on the screen, the personality of Lincoln looms larger and larger. Recently the eminent American poet and writer, Carl Sandburg completed his epochal biography of Abraham Lincoln in four volumes called "Abraham Lincoln: The War Years", supplementing the earlier volume of his called "The Prairie Years". Robert Sherwood's play, "Abe Lincoln in Illinois", which scored a great success on the stage is now being screened. Some very interesting volumes have appeared from the pen of Emanuel Hertz. One is called the "Hidden Lincoln", and one is called "Lincoln Talks". And many other volumes have appeared in recent years.

This is not accidental. As a rule interest in a person diminishes as he recedes in time unless there is something timeless in that person, unless there is a persistent relevancy about the epic of that person's life, something that echoes like a refrain through all the successive generations of men.

There is, evidently, something very timeless and relevant about the life of Lincoln. Decidedly his story is very appropriate today. In fact nothing is more concordant with the stormy age in which the world crisis finds itself today than the stormy age in which Abraham Lincoln found himself, and nothing is more germane to the struggle for freedom and the rights of man in our day than the colossal struggle for human freedom and emancipation which rent our country in twain in which Abraham Lincoln occupied the center of the stage.

Men, therefore, are turning to Lincoln today as they did then, for guidance, for leadership, for confidence, for assurance, for the light that was in his heart and in his mind.



At the cross-roads of destiny, in 1860, the American people turned to Abraham Lincoln, and instinctively today, at another cross-road in our history, our people have turned again to the Lincoln of legend and tradition, seeking strength and illumination from the story of his life, and from the words which he uttered and wrote.

There seemed to be moments in the life of Abraham Lincoln, three conjunctions in the saga of Lincoln which have continued to make unfailing appeal in the life of people. Of these three, I should like to speak briefly. First, there was the story of Abraham Lincoln, his discouraging background, his manifold handicaps and his rise from obscurity to immortality; in other words, the struggle of Lincoln with his environment. In that story, in the record of that struggle, men have continued to read about the triumph of democratic principles. They see in it the vindication of the principle of human liberty which gives the opportunity to whatever genuine greatness there may be in a common man, a chance to express itself. Lincoln is the supreme destiny, the supreme proof that greatness and genius and rare ability are limited to no caste in society, to no class in society. Greatness is not a prerogative of wealth or of education or of heredity, or of liesure. Greatness can be found - so reads the legend of Lincoln's life - greatness may be found in the backwoods of civilization, on the hard frontiers of life, among the poor and the lowly and the ignorant. That is an immortal and an impressionable story which the masses of mankind like to treasure, and out of it they draw inspiration, challenge.

And the second is this. It is the story of Lincoln's struggle with himself, the amazing inner drama of this complicated soul so beset and so heavily burdened. We are accustomed to think of Abraham Lincoln as a simple



person easily understood and easily classified. And yet, that is far from the truth. There were many dark spirits within himself with which he had to battle constantly. He was being roiled in the fiery furnace all through his life. So writes the man who knew him best - his law partner for many years. He was being roiled in the fiery furnace constantly. Though he was popular with men and given to joking with people and telling stories, he was nevertheless afraid of men and much of a misanthrope, and his nature, judging by the testimony of his friends, was sometimes very terrible.

Lincoln was afraid of life, afraid to face the driving forces of life. He was able to inspire confidence most readily in other people, and yet he lacked confidence in himself. He lacked self-confidence. He was melancholy. He was morose. Some called him a hypochondriach. In some of his early crises in his life, after the death of Anne Rutledge, the woman he loved, and during the engagement with Mary Todd, when he broke it off and then resumed it again - during some of these personal crises of his life, and I am quoting, "he was crazy as a loon". Abraham Lincoln more than once thought of suicide. He was a fatalist. He was over-whelmed with a foreboding doom of death which he could not shake off. He had little or no ambition. Up to the age of fifty, he was to all intents and purposes, if not a failure - he was not that, never that - but certainly not a successful man as we measure success today, or in his day. He was not successful as a business man. He was not successful as a politician. He was not successful in love, and he was not successful as the head of his own house.. This was at fifty. At the age of fifty-six he was dead. And yet, when destiny finally took hold of him, almost at the very end of his life, and placed him, an inexperienced man in the most exalted and the most difficult and the most



desperate position a <sup>mortal</sup>/man ever occupied - in the position of the President of the United States - at a time when this country was on the verge of being rent by a bloody civil war, when he was called upon to assume tasks as he himself puts it "heavier than that put on the Founder of this country". I say, when destiny finally took hold of him, Abraham Lincoln was not found wanting. He had surmounted physical and psychic impediments. He was able to cut away the incumbrances which weighted him down. His purposes were sure. He knew what he wanted to do. He prosecuted his purposes undeterred in the face of the most bitter opposition, in the face of the most outrageous criticism and misrepresentation, not only in the South, but in the North, in the midst of the members of his own Cabinet. He found within himself the spiritual resources with which to carry on and he was able to persist and lead a nation through four tragic years of war, destruction, terrorism adamant, until the war was won, the Union preserved and slaves emancipated. That is an amazing story of a man who triumphed over himself, this story of the inner emancipation of a human being, and has had and has today a tremendous appeal to men of this day, and will continue to have as long as men continue to live on earth. That is the second element - the story of the life of Lincoln which is brilliant and fresh to human beings.

Then, of course, the third element is the American dream as it shines through the teachings of the truest American of them all - Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln believed implicitly in America as a nation of free men, men free and equal. He believed implicitly in the dogma of human freedom and human equality. He was not only opposed to slavery. He was opposed to all forms of human oppression. He hated the exploitation of labor. He was opposed to all forms of tyranny. He denounced all forms of bigotry and intolerance whether based on race or creed. There was no Jewish problem in the days of Abraham Lincoln, but there was a



German problem, and an Irish problem, and a Catholic problem. There was a powerful anti-foreign movement, an anti-Catholic, anti-Irish movement which had taken on the form of the "Know Nothing" party, and that party and its intolerance was sweeping through the country in the days of Abraham Lincoln like wild fire. Then it was the Irish who were being accused of being a menace to America, and the Germans and the Catholic Church. And Abraham Lincoln more than once in a decisive moment spoke the true, courageous shattering word against all these forms of intolerance, just as he spoke up against the myth of race-superiority and race inferiority, which the slaver owners of the South were exploiting in order to justify and rationalize the iniquitous institution of slavery.

Abraham Lincoln said in an address in Chicago, in 1858: "Let us discard all this quibbling about this man and the other man, this race and that race and the other race being inferior, and therefore they must be placed in an inferior position. Let us discard all these things, and unite as one people throughout this land, until we shall once more stand up declaring that all men are created equal."

And again in 1861 to the Germans at Cincinnati: "In regard to the Germans and foreigners, I esteem them no better than other people, nor any worse. It is not nature, when I see a people borne down by the weight of their shackles - the oppression of tyranny - to make their life more bitter by heaping upon them greater burdens; but rather would I do all in my power to raise the yoke than to add anything that would tend to crush them."

In Springfield, Ill, in 1857, he said: "The assertion that 'all men are created equal' was of no practical use in effecting our separation from Great Britain; and it was placed in the Declaration not for that, but for future use. Its authors meant it to be - as, thank God, it is now proving itself - a stumbling-block to all those who in after times might seek to turn a free people back into



the hateful paths of despotism. They knew the proneness of prosperity to breed tyrants, and they meant when such should reappear in this fair land and commence their vocation, they should find left for them at least one hard nut to crack."

Over and over again Abraham Lincoln called attention to the unmistakable meaning implication of the Declaration of Independence - that "all men are created equal - that they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Abraham Lincoln believed that we were united by what he called the "electric chord" of memories, of human ideals, of common devotion to basic human principles and a common destiny. Those were the things which were to unite all America. And his words on Democracy are as simple, as classic and as monumental as the words of the Bible on God!

In a letter from the White House he wrote: "The strongest bond of human sympathy, outside of the family relation, should be one uniting all working people, of all nations, and tongues, and kindreds."

There were Fascists, there were Nazis in Lincoln's day although they were known by other names. There were Southern slaver-holders and their Northern Sympathizers who would resort to rebellion and destroy the American form of Government rather than set limits to their slave-holding interests. And these became the domestic foes of America. They brought on the Civil War. They were the people who were responsible for the first break-down of the democratic procedure, the democratic apparatus in the United States. Lincoln came to understand the full significance of the irrespressible conflicts as developed in his day - the conflict between an expansionist slave-holding aristocracy which was seeking to extend the slave empire throughout the newly formed states and the remaining territories as far West as the Pacific Coast; the struggle,



in other words, between this imperialist slave-holding interest and that of the rest of the nation not to permit itself to be engulfed by the ever increasing slave section in these United States. Abraham Lincoln came to understand the full import of a house divided against itself, that a country half free and half slave cannot last, just as it is taking a long time for men and women today to realize that a world half free and half slave cannot long endure.

And though Abraham Lincoln abhorred war, and especially a civil war, he did not flinch from the ordeal once he was forced to face it to serve the Union and to serve a free nation.

In his First Message to Congress, after Fort Sumter had been fired upon, Abraham Lincoln wrote: "This issue embraces more than the fate of these United States. It presents to the whole family of man the question whether a constitutional republic or democracy - a government of the people by the same people can or cannot maintain its territorial integrity against its own domestic foes."

And if Lincoln were alive today he would by his words and his actions, by the spirit which emanated from him arouse this nation and summon it today to defend itself against its domestic foes who to protect their own special economic privileges would encourage subversive, treasonable movements among our people, and who create frontiers, so to speak, against democracy, against freedom and against the rights of men and against the Constitution and against the principles of the Declaration of Independence.

In these days of storm and stress men turn to Lincoln, to those other days when the same issues in another guise were being fought over on the bloody fields of Bull Run and Gettysburg, and men will learn again the inescapable lessons of blood and suffering of eight decades ago in these United States. Perhaps not all of them would like to forget the Civil War.

Recently, I saw upon the screen the play, "Gone With the Wind", based on



the book. I did not read the book. Life is too short. But I did see the play - and that was a little too long. I will not discuss the play. It is a very artistic production and the acting is very splendid. But the play presumed to be a chapter of American history, the most important chapter in American History, for that matter, next to the First Revolution. And that chapter was re-written on the screen, and presumably also in the book which I did not read, that most important chapter in American history was re-written so as to make the life and the mission of Lincoln utterly meaningless, and the whole Civil War just an unpardonable intrusion of some northern barbarians upon a charming, almost idyllic chivalrous civilization below the Mason and Dixon line and these northern barbarians succeeded in destroying that civilization for no earthly reason and to no good purpose. That is the impression I got from the picture.

This is not a Hollywood adulteration of history which frequently takes place to give greater screen appeal, to make the hero more heroic, and the heroine more charming, and the plot more interesting. But this is a perversion, this is an unpardonable falsification of history which makes a mockery of the heroic sacrifices of hundreds of thousands of men who fought and died for an ideal, for the deliverance of a whole nation, and the martyrdom of the great emancipator, Abraham Lincoln.

Of course, viewed as entertainment, and most people, I am sure, will view it as that, *Gone With the Wind* is an appealing story, an intriguing story very successfully told. Hollywood out did itself in the lavish preparation of that story on the screen, but this story was told upon the background, not of fiction, but of history - the history of the Civil War - and one ought not to take such liberties ~~with~~ with the recorded text of one of the greatest moments in the history of the world.



The pre-bellum South is represented almost as an idyllic fairy-land on the screen, a country of courtly, chivalrous gentlemen, and gracious charming ladies, moving about in a world of culture, refinement and opulence. These fine gentlemen were of course slave owners and their entire civilization rested upon the backs of the slaves, but the slaves were loved and cared for. According to this version, they were happy. They sang at their work. In fact, when the war overtook them, and that beautiful land, these slaves remained loyal to their masters and prayed for their victory. The only wicked people in the story are the Northern deserters who attacked and molested the white women, and some Carpet-baggers from the North. Not a scene, not a word in the play to suggest that there was perhaps something wrong with the institution of slavery, not a word to suggest the degradation of the slave system, the spiritual pollution it caused, the horror which it aroused, the slave markets and slave hunts which finally led to the Civil War, and the destruction of that entire iniquitous civilization.

It is the kind of a story that a Royalist would have written about the French Revolution. It is certainly no true interpretation of History and it is certainly no contribution either to the knowledge of history or to the popularization and defence of basic human ideals of freedom and democracy in these perilous times when these ideals are under even greater attack than in the days of Abraham Lincoln.

The great lesson that the Civil War can teach our generation is the lesson that no civilization, however brilliant, however beautiful, can rest on the back of slaves, of people denied, dispossessed.

So I regard the picture, "Gone With the Wind" as good entertainment, but decidedly a bad picture, just a little better and only a little better than



that picture, "The Birth of a Nation"....





1/ In last few years - Am. people has been turning to G.H. with increasing interest, fondness and admiration, if art and literature are any criterion. Increasingly is the theme of G.H. a favorite among authors and artists. In biography, play, novel and on the screen, the personality of G.H. grows larger & larger. Recently Carl Sandburg completed his epochal bio., G.H. - and it is being avidly read. Robert Sherwood's play - "Abe L. in Illinois" - has been a great success on the stage - and <sup>it has</sup> now been screened. <sup>Emmanuel</sup> Hertz' "The Hidden G.H." & <sup>"H. Talbot"</sup> ~~biography~~ - many others -

2/ This is not accidental. As a rule interest in a person diminishes as <sup>he</sup> ~~it~~ makes in time - unless there is some-thing fundamental in that person - a persistent relevancy about the spirit of his <sup>long</sup> life - something that echoes as a refrain <sup>in</sup> the journal, manifest

And there is something very relevant & timely about the story of G.H. in the world to-day. It is absolutely in proprio <sup>to fact</sup> nothing is more concordant with <sup>our</sup> present age <sup>with</sup> the world crises to-day than the crises in his day, and nothing more permanent to the struggle for freedom in our day than the colossal struggle for human freedom and democracy which rent our country in twain in the tragic civil war in which G.H. ~~was~~ occupied the center, the stage.

Then are turning to G.H. today as they did then for guidance and leadership, for reassurance and confidence, for the light that was in his heart and mind.







"He was a shabby, poverty-stricken, even poorer than his average." <sup>unfined confidence</sup>  
He was afraid, life, afraid to face the dizzy faces of life. He <sup>in other and self</sup>  
lacked self-confidence. He was <sup>Melancholy</sup> ~~more~~ some called him a  
hypochondriac. <sup>"Crazy as a loon" - Herndon</sup> <sup>critic</sup> More than once he thought of suicide.  
He was <sup>Fatalist</sup> overwhelmed with a preboding of doom and death. <sup>He had his ambition</sup>  
Up to the age of 50 - he was to all intents and purposes,  
if not a failure, certainly not a successful man - in  
terms of ~~the~~ <sup>a competent</sup> ~~career~~ professional or political  
career, or even as the head of a happy household.  
And yet when destiny took hold, he is, almost at the very end  
of his life, <sup>He was dead at 56</sup> <sup>an ineffectual man</sup> <sup>expelled, the needed</sup> and placed him in the most difficult and the most  
trying <sup>taskmaster</sup> ~~position~~ ever occupied by a mortal man - as Pres. of  
the U.S. - no longer untried but in touch by a bloody Civil  
War - <sup>Heavier tasks</sup> ~~war~~ <sup>was</sup> not found wanting! He had surmounted  
the physical and psychic ~~obstacles~~ <sup>infirmities</sup>; his re-  
vitalized will cut <sup>away</sup> ~~through~~ the ~~incumbrances~~ <sup>incumbrances</sup> which weighed  
him down. His doubts had been resolved. His purposes were  
sure. He knew what he had to do and relentlessly he  
pursued his purpose - undeterred, undishearted, in the face  
most bitter attack and outrageous criticism, and mis-  
representation. He found within himself the sp. resources  
with which to carry on - & had a nation - then of ~~hopes~~ <sup>hopes</sup>  
crushing years of war, death and destruction - <sup>Adamant</sup> <sup>The party</sup> ~~until~~ the  
great purpose had been won - the Union preserved  
and the slavery perished.

This self mastery, this triumph, man over himself, this  
story of man's emancipation - has had & continues to have  
a tremendous appeal to all men



4 And finally - the American dream - as it shines thru the acts and teachings, the finest men, their all A.H.

I He believed implicitly in the nation of free men - free and equal. He was opposed not only to slavery but to all forms of human oppression. He backed the efforts of labor, and the tyranny of power. He denounced all forms of bigotry and intolerance. <sup>(Urged welcome to foreigners & right to vote)</sup> whether based on race or creed. There was no Jew problem in the days, L - but there was an Irish - a Catholic and a German problem - Invasion - a menace - Know-Nothing Party <sup>of "sweeping over land like wild-fire"</sup> and of course the whole weight of race-discrimination & inferiority - to rationalize econ. exploitation of negro - (Jude)  
✓ "The Electric chord" - common ideals - common destiny.

His words on Denver - as as simple, as clear as the monumental as the words, the Bible on God!

II Not an isolationist - Role in the World - (Jude)

III There were Fascists & Nazis in his day - further slaveholders & their North sympathizers who would <sup>resort to rebellion</sup> destroy the Union. Power, sent, rather than set limits to their slave-holding ambitions. They became the "dovish" side, America - and they led on a Civil War. L. <sup>came to</sup> understood the full implications, a reprehensible conflict - expansionist slave-inspiration seeking to extend the slave empire to throughout the newly joined states and the remaining territories as far West as the <sup>Miss. compromise had failed</sup> California <sup>and had led to the same result</sup> - had a free nation trying to save itself from being completely engulfed in slavery -  
→ make "Slavery Universal and perpetual in this nation"



(5)

He came to understand the full impact of "a house divided against itself cannot stand" -  $\frac{1}{2}$  slave -  $\frac{1}{2}$  free - and, tho he abhorred war - & esp. Civil War - he did not shrink from the ordeal - to save the Union and to preserve a free nation.

In his First Message to Congress: after Fort Sumter had been fired on:

"This issue embraces more than the fate of these U. S. It presents to the whole family of man the question whether a constitutional republic or democracy - a government, the people by the same people - can or cannot maintain its territorial integrity against its own domestic foes."

L. would, were he living today, across the nation and summon it to defend itself against "its own domestic foes" to-day - who to protect their sp. econ. privileges - would encourage subversion, treasonable movement, <sup>"Fascists"</sup> among our people.

5) This is why we turn to L - for <sup>clarity</sup> days, storms & stems - to those other days - when same issue <sup>in</sup> under another guise were being fought over, <sup>which</sup> on bloody fields of Bull Run - Gettysburg - and leaving the inescapable lessons.

Perhaps not all! "Joni with the hammer".

Did not read book - life is too short!

But saw Play - will not discuss its plot - its character - Very elaborate and artistic production - well acted -



But it was <sup>presumed to be</sup> a chapter of Amer. hist - the most important - next  
to Revolutionary Struggle - <sup>and it was</sup> so written so as to mark the  
life & mission, h. <sup>utterly</sup> meaningless & the whole Civil War - an  
unpardonable & brutal intrusion of Northern barbarians upon  
a charming, almost idyllic chivalrous civilization before the  
Worm & Dixon line, which civil. - these barbarians invaded  
succeeded in destroying - for no earthly reason & to no  
purpose - This is not a hazy and adulterated history  
to <sup>simply</sup> ~~make~~ it quite a screen appeal, this is to  
make the hero <sup>& anti-hero</sup> gangers about the heroic war chivalry  
and the plot more interesting. This is a <sup>thorough</sup> thorough penetration  
history on part both <sup>written</sup> ~~another~~ & Keane's version which  
makes a mockery, the heroic menaces, hundreds of  
thousands, men who died for a great ideal, ~~the~~ of the  
suffering travail, a whole nation, of the suffering &  
martyrdom of the great Emancipator.

- covers <sup>more</sup> viewed as entertainment - <sup>and most people will</sup> - or as the story of  
the "Game with the Wind" has a <sup>strong story</sup> big appeal. It is an intriguing  
story, effectively told, & hazy and entirely itself in its harsh pre-  
sentation - But it is told against a background, supposed what  
is supposed to be history - and fiction - The Civil War -  
and one ought not to talk such business with the recorded  
text, on the great movements in human history.

The pre-bellum South is re-presented - almost as an idyllic  
fair land of courtesy, chivalry gentleness, graciously,  
charming ladies, moving about in splendid world of culture.



refinement and splendor. These fine gentlemen, were 7 - were  
slave <sup>owners</sup> ~~builders~~ and their entire circle. rested upon the backs  
of slaves - but these slaves were locked stand fast - They were  
completely satisfied and devoted to their masters. In  
fact when there had had gangsters from the N. look in  
upon this paradoxical world, the slaves remained loyal  
to their masters, fought for them, <sup>helped</sup> prayed for their victory. The  
cause ~~even~~, the South. Confederacy was, to all intents & purposes, the  
only cause - the only wickedest people in the story  
of the Northern deserters, the Baltimore carpet-baggers, <sup>the further</sup> ~~etc.~~  
and the negroes who are

had a name or a word to suggest the brutality & human  
degradation of the slave system - the sp. pollution it caused.  
The human which it perverted, which finally led to and was  
of the destruction of that entire magnificent civilization.

It is the story, the Fr. Rev. - or the "Action Française"  
would write it. It is certainly no contribution either to  
the knowledge of history - or to the popularization & defense of  
some human ideal of freedom & justice in those particular  
times when these ideas are under even greater attack  
than in the days of A. L. - A bad lesson. <sup>No group can rest on</sup>  
A Bad Picture - just a little less harmful than  
"The South for haters"



refinement & of pleasure.

These fine gentlemen were, of course, slave-masters - rested -  
loved and cared for - happy - devoted - In fact -

The cause of S. Confed. - Holy Cause.

The only wicked people - Yankee - carpet-baggers

Not a scene - word - brutality - degradation -  
whips - manacles - slave-markets - varegnated tort  
cesspool - Honor

It is Story - H. Ruel - royalist - "Acting Treasurer"

Certainly no intrips. of Hist. - a

Defence of - greater attack - Jews -

The Great Lesson - No Civil. can rest - Jews

A Bad Return - "Birth of a Nation"



28  
28

# FOR RACIAL AND RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE



## by George Washington

AS mankind becomes more liberal, they will be more able to allow that those who conduct themselves as worthy members of the community are equally entitled to the protection of civil government. I hope ever to see America among the foremost nations in examples of justice and liberality.—*In a message to Catholics, 1789.*

The liberty enjoyed by the people of these States of worshipping Almighty God, agreeably to their consciences, is not only among the choicest of their blessings, but also of their rights. While men perform their social duties faithfully, they do all that society or the state can with propriety demand or expect and remain responsible to their Maker for the religion or modes of faith which they may prefer or profess.—*In a message to Quakers, 1789.*

The citizens of the United States of America have a right to applaud themselves for having given to mankind examples of an enlarged and liberal policy—a policy worthy of imitation. All possess alike liberty of conscience and immunities of citizenship. It is now no more that toleration is spoken of as if it was by the indulgence of one class of the people that another enjoyed the exercise of their inherent natural rights. For happily the Government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance, requires only that those who live under its protection should demean themselves as good citizens in giving it on all occasions their effectual support.—*To the Jewish Congregation of Newport, 1789.*

## by Abraham Lincoln

LET us discard all this quibbling about this man and the other man, this race and that race and the other race being inferior, and therefore they must be placed in an inferior position. Let us discard all these things, and unite as one people throughout this land, until we shall once more stand up by declaring that all men are created equal.—*Address at Chicago, July 10, 1858.*

In regard to the Germans and foreigners, I esteem them no better than other people, nor any worse. It is not nature, when I see a people borne down by the weight of their shackles—the oppression of tyranny—to make their life more bitter by heaping upon them greater burdens; but rather would I do all in my power to raise the yoke than to add anything that would tend to crush them.—*Address to Germans at Cincinnati, February 12, 1861.*

The assertion that "all men are created equal" was of no practical use in effecting our separation from Great Britain; and it was placed in the Declaration not for that, but for future use. Its authors meant it to be—as, thank God, it is now proving itself—a stumbling-block to all those who in after times might seek to turn a free people back into the hateful paths of despotism. They knew the proneness of prosperity to breed tyrants, and they meant when such should reappear in this fair land and commence their vocation, they should find left for them at least one hard nut to crack.—*Address in Springfield, Ill., June 26, 1857.*



# WAR VERSUS CIVIL LIBERTIES

by Judge John Gutknecht

Civil Liberties Are America's Sinews of Life;  
If War Comes, We May Never Enjoy Them Again

THE American people have been firm in their basic attachment to what they understand as civil liberties. Many of them would find it difficult to define them; many would not be able to find them in state and federal constitutions; many would not recognize the full value of some of them when pointed out, because of their wording; but, basically, they believe, and believe rightly, that these civil liberties guarantee:

- Freedom of speech
- Freedom of press
- Freedom of religion
- Free schools, and

Equality before the law, with special privilege to none, and no discrimination on racial, religious, or economic grounds.

## Firm for Neutrality

The American citizen believes firmly in neutrality today. He is inconsistent, as are all humans, and his consistency as to strict neutrality may waver, but he is not in favor of America again going to war in Europe, if practically possible to stay out.

It is not mere selfishness, at least not all. It is not mere pacifism—at least not as to the vast majority. It is not past experience—though that enters into it in a great degree. It is part reason; it is part instinct.

The average American realizes that war means death to the civil liberties of the citizen. He is not radical; in fact, he is afraid of that term. He likes the word "progressive" and the word "liberalism." They both are American words. They describe the American experiment as a protest against the reactionary social and political system of the old world in the centuries of our national beginning. And so he takes pride in that historical tradition, and periodically he will shake off his political inertia and rally to that cry of liberalism—Jefferson, Jackson, Lincoln, Wilson, and the Roosevelts. The mass movements in the history of American politics and government have gone forward under the banner of liberalism.

## Democracy Means Peace

That means to the American citizen the renewal of the struggle to maintain his civil liberties. These civil liberties are not to him mere abstract rights. They are conditions under which he wants to live; they represent to him free expression, free religion, schooling for his children, equality before the law, and a right to protect and to control his government. His ultimate aim, of course, is bread, home, education for his children, social security, and some leisure. He recognizes that only under the protection of his civil rights will he be able to continue to mold his government to conform to his desires. Give him the choice clearly and there will be no hesitation in his response. That is why here in this vast city of Chicago, with hundred of thousands of German-born and descendants of German-born, the Nazi sentiment is negligible. Some timid politicians feared it, but the fears proved groundless. That is why in the vast city of New York, with hundreds of thousands of Italian-born, and despite the suave arts of propagandists, the Fascist influence is limited to certain select circles where the seduction of a court presentation or a bit of official ribbon can overcome traditions of democracy.

## Beware of Hysteria

The attachment of the American citizen to his civil liberties is sound. But the world today is confusing and complex. War abroad brings fear of war at home. The very devotion to the American tradition of civil liberties creates that very tenseness of apprehension that may endanger them. The mother who cherishes her child, in moments of frantic danger has been known to smother it. To protect these sacred rights we may destroy them by the guards we set around them. Prophets may arise—some sincere but unseeing, some false but persuasive—who may, though mouthing the word, destroy the spirit. A Dies committee may be established to ferret out doctrines and