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Thoughts on the Coming Election, 1940.

WRHS
THOUGHTS ON THE COMING ELECTION



By
Dr. Abba Hillel Silver

At
The Temple

On
Sunday morning, October 27, 1940

There has been considerable bitterness and heat engendered in the political campaign this year. Some of it, of course, is the customary synthetic emotionalism incidental to every national campaign. Some of it, however, is unusual. I suppose that is due to the tension and stress of war abroad, the war preparation at home, and the sudden speeding up of our defense work. Conscription has much to do with putting the nerves, so to speak, of the American people somewhat on edge. I believe too that the various nationality groups in the country who were vigorously approving of the president's foreign policy affecting their original homeland, or vigorously disapproving of it - that has something to do with the passions which are aroused. Then, too, there have been certain permanent disgruntled individuals who have personal aces to grind, former friends of the administration, and now its bitterest enemies, who have contributed to what might be called the verbal blitzkreig - of the type of Hugh Johnson, Al Smith, Raymond Moley and John L. Lewis.

If one were to listen to all the high pitched and frenzied voices on the air, in the press and on the platform, one could come to think of the American people today as being confronted with the dread choice of one or two alternatives of disaster. If you vote for Mr. Roosevelt, you vote for disaster. That is the Republican opinion. If you vote for Willkie, you vote for disaster. That is Democratic opinion. If you vote for Mr. Roosevelt, you vote for a man who has already ruined the United States - that is the Republican version. If you vote for Mr. Willkie, you vote for a man who will ruin the United States - that is the Democratic version. Roosevelt and his backers, according to the super-heated political campaign - those who believe in him are Reds and war-mongers. On the other hand, Willkie and his backers are Fascists and appeasers. Partizanship has run riot in this campaign, more than is customary in political campaigns. Many people have become exceedingly intolerant, have lost their own sense of proportion and perspective. That, my good friends, is not wholesome in times such as these. Clear thinking and deliberate sound judgment are more necessary than at

any time before. And it is not a pleasant spectacle for friends of democracy to witness. I am afraid that the American press has not contributed much to moderation, temperateness, in the discussion of the political issues of the day. That holds true of course of our Cleveland newspapers as well.

People have somehow persuaded themselves that the issues in this campaign are of important moment, that there exist vast, colossal and irreconcilable differences between parties, platforms and candidates, that no campaign in the last fifty or seventy-five years or a hundred years has been so critical and so momentous. They have somehow talked themselves into, or permitted others to talk them into believing that American destiny is at stake, that the American way of life is in the balance.

Permit me to say, friends, in all modesty and in all reverence, that all this is "shtuss" and nonsense. It is either pure political auto-intoxication or the resultant frenzy of clever and calculated propaganda. I don't know of any campaign in recent years in which there was less involved of decisive significance between the two major parties than this one. I can't recall a campaign where there has been more agreement on major issues, and greater similarity as to program and platform as in this campaign. I would like to get excited about this campaign, but I don't know how, and I don't know what about.

Both parties and platforms and candidates are in substantial agreement with reference to American foreign policy. Both believe in maximum aid to the Allies. Both have approved of the exchange of destroyers for the leasing of naval bases. Both are opposed to appeasement. Both believe in keeping America out of war if possible. Both are opposed to the sending of American soldiers across the sea to fight in foreign wars. Both parties, both platforms, both candidates are for maximum national defense. Both want America to be armed fully on land, on sea, and in the air. Both favored conscription.

As far as domestic issues are concerned, I don't recall a campaign where there was less difference on domestic issues than in this campaign. The Republican candidate has accepted and has approved many of the measures of the so called "New Deal" of the last administration, though he condemned, for some unaccountable reason, the New Deal program in toto, while approving of many of the measures. He has pledged his party to continue all the social and labor advances which have been made in recent years. He feels, of course, that he can do it better, more economically. But there has been no oppositional program announced to excite the people, no threat to dismantle the New Deal, or the gains which have been made, or have been proved valuable and serviceable by other American people. No contradictory political philosophy has been announced.

What, then, is all the excitement about? I am inclined to believe, good friends, that an outsider who is not acquainted with American political tradition, on listening to statesmen, statements and speeches of candidates and spokesmen of parties, would come to the conclusion that both President Roosevelt and Mr. Willkie would make excellent running-mates on the same ticket.

Of course, there are varying nuances. Of course there are unequal emphases, accents, stresses. Naturally! But in most cases, I must confess that the distinctions which have been made are distinctions without differences. Thus, for example, while both candidates and parties are opposed to war and in favor of maximum aid to the allies, Republican spokesmen, including Mr. Willkie, have criticized the President of the United States for having been too provocative in his attitude toward the dictators, or too eager to oppose them, and they maintain that this is courting war. At the same time, and in the same breath, they charge him with being a collaborator, as it were, in the Munich appeasement arrangement. That is being too anxious for peace. The fact of the matter is, my dear friends, that the President's denunciations of the dictators will have nothing to do with the ultimate fact of whether we will have peace or war.

Hitler invaded Norway, Belgium, Holland whose statesmen and political leaders did not antagonize him by all too-spoken words of denunciation. They raised not a whisper in criticism of his policy of brutal aggression. They were docile. When Hitler decided it was to his advantage and timely to make war, he proceeded to do it. He needs no provocation. He provokes. When and if Hitler decides that he is in a position that is profitable to him to attack these United States, he will not have to search long for an excuse for doing it. It is strange, my friends, that the very people who urge the sending of planes, munitions, destroyers to Great Britain with which to fight Hitler, regard those acts as less provocative than the President's calling a halt to some act of a dictator which is particularly and unspeakably a dirty act.

Whoever is president of the United States will have to be very clear in his own mind where he stands, whether he wants peace, is for building up a national defense, and for aiding Great Britain to defend herself from a man who is destroying Europe, whether he is for appeasement in one form or another - appeasement which can only be the prelude to greater disaster. And there can be no straddling on this issue. No candidate in a campaign should say anything that can be interpreted as meaning one thing to one man and another thing to another man. Times are too serious.

It is, of course, clear that Mr. Willkie, if elected, will have a harder time in maintaining a consistent and firm attitude on the subject than will Mr. Roosevelt. Round Mr. Willkie have rallied, not at his request to be sure, all the forces of appeasement, and all the pro-Nazi and pro-Fascist forces in the country, not out of love for Mr. Willkie, but of course out of hatred of Mr. Roosevelt. I believe, however, that Mr. Willkie's spiritual and factual integrity, reinforced by the overwhelming sentiment of the American people and the people in his own party will enable him, if elected, to resist that pressure from those forces which have rallied round him.

In this connection I should like to say that both Mr. Willkie and Mr. Roosevelt are rendering a disservice to the cause which is dear to both of their hearts in repeating and repeating again, as if engaged in some game of competitive emphasis that they will never lead the American people into war. That is likely to strengthen the hands of the aggressor dictators at this time. Rome and Berlin and Moscow and Tokyo and Vichy may be misled by such statements unless qualified and defined. You may recall in the election of 1916, the slogan of that day was that President Wilson "kept us out of war". The Kaiser misunderstood that slogan. He assumed that meant that our country regardless of what provocation, would not go to war and he intensified his military campaign. In less than six months after the election, America was in the war. It doesn't take two nations to make a war. It takes one nation. I am afraid that this competition between the two candidates as to who is more for peace might lead in these critical moments when so many decisions affecting human life - that it might mislead those who need no provocation to believe that America will reach for the sword. That would be a sad and a grievous mistake.

Both Mr. Roosevelt and Mr. Willkie and the Congress of the United States can be trusted to do their utmost to keep America out of war without sacrificing any of those vital interests of our national life without which war would be preferable to peace. People ought to remember in the excitement of this campaign that wars can occur in a republican administration just as in a democratic administration.

As far as domestic issues are concerned, after you brush aside all the surface issues, specious fault-finding and the sniping of one party or the other, after you brush aside all the misstatements and the over-statements and political malice, what remains? What remains is just the traditional and quite ~~legit~~ legitimate tug of war ~~of~~ which has been going on in national

life between what you might call economic conservatism and progressive liberalism, all truth and all justice not altogether on one side or the other.

The Republican Party in 1940 is still the party of business, industry, capital, by and large a conservative party which will attract to it all those elements working in these fields - mostly people of the middle and upper register of economic life - as well as certain rural sections of our population traditionally Republican. Now economic conservatism, my friends, is not a crime and does not necessarily mean Fascism, just as economic liberalism does not mean Communism. And it is highly desirable in a democracy that there be a strong party representing the slower tempo as a corrective to any excessive adventuresomeness in the opposing party.

Only a blind partisanship will maintain that in the democratic administration of the last seven or eight years there has been nothing to criticise, that it has been a perfect administration without faults and without blunders. The fact does remain that after seven or eight years, there are still millions of unemployed, there are still millions in large sections of our country in want, and suffering privations. The fact remains that there are millions who are still insufficiently housed. The fact remains that there has mounted up a large national budgetary deficit, that some of the measures passed during this administration are economically unsound and some have been proved unconstitutional. The Republican Party has a legitimate place both in the economic and political life of America.

The Democratic Party again represents, in 1940, what it had represented in recent years - the trend towards economic liberalism. And it will attract this year as in previous years, by and large, the working men, the men in the more modest circumstances, in the lower registers of our economic life; also the liberal and progressive, the white collar classes, and large sections of our country which are historically democratic. And only a blind partisan will seek to poo-poo the achievements of the last administration, try to discredit the real contribution

to the social progress of America. Only a blind partisan will seek to reduce the stature of President Roosevelt. President Roosevelt has been a great president - one of the greatest in the history of America. And the measures which he succeeded in enacting for the improvement of the rights and conditions of labor, for the defense of the rights of labor, for the relief of the unemployed, for the protection of our youth, and our civil conservation corps, and the youth administration, and the home owners who were threatened with the loss of their homes, with the rehabilitation of the farmer, for social security, for slum clearance, for sounder banking system, for the regulation of the securities market - I say, all these measures will remain as land-marks in the progress of America. They are here to stay - all those measures. Many will have to be revised, improved and enriched. There is no return, except to chaos.

Mr. Willkie himself has understood that this unqualified talk about "free enterprise" is worse than meaningless today. So, as far as the ultimate issues are concerned, I can not see that there is this vast chasm separating the two parties that people need to get so terrifically stirred up about.

As for myself, perhaps a word ought to be said on that subject, too. Being an economic liberal, and were the Third Term issue not involved in this campaign, I should be voting for President Roosevelt again as I did in the past. I know that some people feel that this ^{issue} is not of sufficient importance to warrant a change of administration. I respect their point of view. I have no quarrel with them. I just happen to be different. I am not crusading for my point of view and I refuse to ^{take} ~~be a part of~~ part of any ~~political~~ political campaign this year as in previous years. I did not expect that my point of view would be paraded on the backs of elephants. When I was asked by a representative organ of public opinion in our city, of our newspapers, last August, whether I was still of the same opinion with reference to the Thurd Term, which I expressed in this pulpit as long ago as last March and which was widely reported in the local press, I

could not say anything but what was a fact - that nothing happened between March when I expressed that opinion, and in August when I was still of that opinion, to change my opinion. I believed then, and I believe now, that the tradition of rotation in office, the restricted tenure of office is a sound one, that the strength of democracy does not reside in any one man, however splendidly equipped, but in the constitution, law, in the people's capacity to produce adequate leadership even in times of emergency. I believed then, and I believe now that granted a limitation on the tenure of office of the chief executive, it is possible in times of crisis to create for that chief executive great and even extreme power, and that if limitation is non-existent, it becomes rather dangerous.

I furthermore believed then, and I believe now that a president of the United States contemplating the possibility of unlimited tenure in office may see to it that no competitor in office ever arise to supplant him. In other words, instead of building up a competent successor, the tendency might be to eliminate some promising important figure for fear of competition. The important consideration about this issue of the Third Term is not that it is a tradition. Traditions may outlive their usefulness. The important thing in this tradition is that it is more imperative today than at any time in the past and it would not to be set aside by a great democrat, a lover of democracy like Roosevelt. At a time when free governments are collapsing all over the world, when the trend is for unlimited power for men ~~in~~ of destiny, it would have been a great service to democracy all over the world for the head of the greatest free government in the world to re-affirm his faith in the democratic processes, by relinquishing his office at the end of the second term.

But though I regard this issue ^{as} very serious, serious enough to determine my vote, I can not become hysterical even at the possibility of its being set aside in the forthcoming election. It would be a great loss, but certainly not a calamity.

To sum up these thoughts of mind on the coming election: I am perhaps one of the few in the United States who believes that America will have occasion to congratulate itself on November 6 regardless of who is elected. Both men are fine and sturdy types of American citizenry. Both are pledged to a vigorous foreign policy. Both are committed to maximum aid to Great Britain. Both are foes of appeasement. Both President Roosevelt and Mr. Willkie have given evidence in act and in word of their earnest effort to maintain unity of American life and to resist all those disruptive forces which are out to disintegrate the spiritual integrity of America and to kindle racial and religious hatred. The record of Mr. Roosevelt is an open book and an illustrious record. Mr. Willkie fought the Ku Klux Klan, in this very state, long before he had any thought of running for the presidency of the United States. In his forthright and spirited utterances during his campaign in which he rejected specifically and by name all proffer of support from individuals and groups poisoned with racial and religious bigotry are what we have the right to expect from the standard bearer of the great party whose founder was Abraham Lincoln - and we have not been disappointed.

This brings me to my last words: There is no Jewish issue involved in this campaign. And there is no Jewish vote going as a bloc to one candidate or another. Jewish citizens will vote on November 6 their convictions and preferences just as all other citizens. The Jewish vote will be divided along social and economic lines exactly as the general vote. Among the upper and middle classes there will be a general trend towards Willkie, and among the working classes, towards Roosevelt. That will be true all over the country. To be sure, President Roosevelt's championing of the American way of life against the totalitarian will influence a ~~xx~~ substantial number of Jewish citizens to vote for him this year who might have voted for the Republican ~~candidate~~ candidate. That is their privilege. That is their right. I am sure that that will hold

true of a great number of other nationality groups in the United States - of the Poles, the Czechs and all other groups who have a particular interest in crushing Nazism overseas.

Those super-heated Republicans who raise the "Jew for Roosevelt" cry forget to raise, at the same time, the "German for Willkie" cry, and the "Italian for Willkie" cry. Generally this argument is a form of intimidation which should be spurned. The Jew should vote not on the basis of how his vote might be interpreted by somebody else. He should vote his basic convictions, his basic loyalties to basic American principles.

I often hear Republicans say: "Why do all Jews vote for Roosevelt?" as if the Jewish vote will be motivated by other than American considerations, as if all the bankers in Wall Street will vote for the Republican ticket out of sheer altruism.

Most of the Jews in the United States voted for Mr. Roosevelt in 1936. But so did most other American citizens. How else could he have won in forty-six out of forty states? The Jews are centered in large urban centers which are largely democratic. And if Mr. Roosevelt is re-elected in 1940, I assure you it will not be on the strength of the Jewish vote, which at best represents about three percent of the total vote which will be cast in the United States. It is amazing that the very people - most of them are anti-Semitic - who now make the charge "Jews for Roosevelt" have been making the charge that Jews also control the press of the United States. And the press today is ninety percent for Mr. Willkie.

And so my own conclusions about this campaign, dear friends, is that it is just another major election in which two parties whose platforms are basically ~~and~~ remarkably alike, one aspiring to remain in power, and the other to get into power. And whichever party wins, America will survive.

D. Bitterness - Heat - Some Synthetic - Pre-Elect. Pyrotechnics - Unpleasant
Tension + stress of war abroad + prepar. for war at home. Sudden
Speed-up Defence program - Conscription - on edge.

Nationality groups - viciously oppress - homelands - Violently oppose
Certain disgruntled individuals - personal grudge - former
friends - vindictive - Verbal Blitzkrieg - Smith - Wiley - Johnson
Lewis.

If one were to listen - high-pitched, frenzied voices - alternatives
If you vote - disaster - already ruined.

R. + his backers - Reds - war mergers
W. " " - Fascists - opponents.

APP White - APP Black

Partisanship - run not - many people - intolerant - lost sense
Not wholesome in times - clear thinking - deliberate judgment
Not pleasant spoils - friends -
The Amer. press - not contributed much - moderation and
temperatures in discussion.

2) Men have persuaded us - issues - epochal moment -
There exist irreconcilable differences - vast, colossal diff.
No campaign - 50-75 or 100 years - so critical - momentous
The entire future of Amer. - hangs upon outcome.
Amer. Destiny is at Stake! - Amer. Way of life is in Balance!

3) Permit me to say, in all modesty & reverence - regard all this
sheer Pop. auto-intoxication - or resistant frenzy of chaos
and calculated propaganda - It is rich and non-sense

I know of no campaigns - recent years - less involved of decision.
Significance. Cannot recall - more agreement - more
greater similarity - platform
I'd like to get excited about this campaign -

4/ Both parties & leaders - Substantial agreement - Am. Foreign Policy
Maximism - Destroyers - Keep Am. out, War - Sending soldiers
Appearance

Nat. Defense - Fully armed - Conscription.

Domestic issues - Refut. candidate has approved - measures
in detail - Pledged to continue - social, labor
He feels, of course - But no oppositional program,
no threat to dismantle - No contradictory Policies.

What, then, is all the excitement about? An outsider
both R. & W. - Excellent running mates on same ticket.

5/ Varying nuances - Unequal emphases - diff. accents -
In most cases, I must confess, Distasteful without I prove

(c) War - Pres. too provocative - too eager to oppose them - courting
at same time charge him - Unwise! - Too anxious
to preserve peace...

Fact, matter - Pres! denunciation - nothing to do -
Hitler attacked Norway - When, as and if Hitler

It is strange - shipment of munitions - destroyers
less provocative

Whoever is president - next 4 years - Very clear
whether he wants Peace - Strong Nat. Defense - Anti-5th

PALESTINE EMERGENCY COMMITTEE

41 EAST 42nd STREET
ROOM 1111
NEW YORK CITY
MURRAY HILL 2-3754

October 28th, 1940

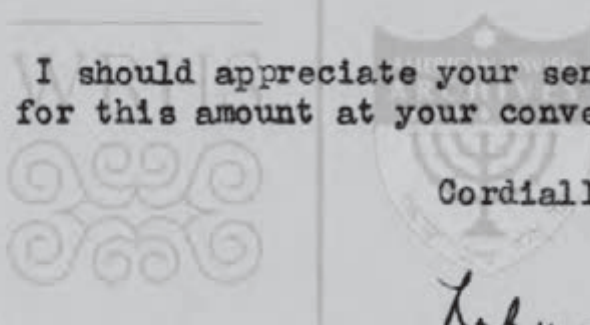
Dr. Abba Hillel Silver
The Temple
Cleveland, Ohio

Dear Dr. Silver:

In connection with my visit to Cleveland
will you please note that I expended the sum of
\$55.

I should appreciate your sending me a
check for this amount at your convenience.

Cordially yours,



Nahum Goldmann

Nahum Goldmann

NG. SB

or Appeasement - prelude to a later war - no shading!

No candidate should say any thing -

Mr. W. stated - opposed to appeasement - should abandon
called them - unspeakably dirty work.

Mr. W. will have harder time - maintain consistent
no has right to believe - his own integrity -

(h) Whether Mr. W. or R. - should keep on repeating -
game of competition emphasis - "Want to go to war!"
strengthen hands of aggressors - more daring - Brussels
Berlin - Rome - Tokyo - Moscow - Vichy - Mis-Bel -
Kaiser - Wilson - "Right v. art, war"
It does not take 2 nations to make war!
Both R. & W. Corporations - can be trusted
without sacrifice -
Wars, ~~but~~ like panics, can occur in Republ. as
well as Democr. administrations.

6) As far as Domestic - after brushed aside - surface - specious
fact-finding - sniping, "facts" of "mis." misstatements
statements - incident - Traction, quite legitimate
TUG-9-war - "Econ. Conserv. v. Econ. liberalism" - and
all Truth - Justices not altogether on an even - other.

Rep. Party - still - Business - Industry - Capital - attract
Conservatives not crime - not fascism - liberal
experimentation - can be done

Highly deniable in a denunc. strong pol. party representing (9)
"slow tempo" - correction to excessive adventuresomeness
Also deniable - criticize - blind partisan - Unlabeled
Still unemployed - Turnoff. fed, heard - Public debt
Measures. econ. unrounded.

7/. Dem. Party again represent - trend - attract - blind
partisan - discredit historic achievements.
Pres. great pres - measures which he succeeded in having
in movement - Relief of unemployed - for Youth - for home
owners - rehabilitation, Farmers - social security - shun
charities - sounder Banking System - Regulation Security
Market - Land-anchors
Here to stay - enjoyed upon - chaos
W. W. W. - unqualified talk - "Free Enterprise"

8/. Being an econ. liberal - were 3rd Term not involved
- would vote - many will feel - Report
D

8/ The Dem. party will again represent this year, by and large, the ~~the~~ continued trend towards ~~greater~~ econ. liberalism, and ~~will~~ will attract to it this year, as in previous years, the ~~unhappy~~ mass in the lower economic levels, the ~~large~~ ^{large} sections of the farming community and the ~~proprietors~~ ^{the} ~~among~~ the white-collar classes. And only a blind Rep. partisan will fail to acknowledge ^{the true achievement} that the Dem. ~~party~~ ^{administration} under R. Roosevelt has achieved great and and will wish to discredit his historic administration. Pres. R. has been a great Pr.-on, the protect. The measure which he succeeded in having enacted into law for the improvement of the life and the constitution, labor with ^{and the definition of its rights} the ~~coercion~~ ^{relief of the} ~~for~~ the unemployed, for the ~~young~~ ^{young} ~~men~~ ^{men} in the Civilian Conservation Camps & then the Nat. Youth Administration, for the ~~protection~~ ^{protection} of ~~home~~ ^{home} ~~owners~~ ^{owners} threatened with the loss of their homes for the ~~foreclosure~~ ^{rehabilitation} of the ~~farmers~~ ^{farmers} for rural electrification ~~slower clearance~~ ^{slower clearance} of the ~~banking~~ ^{banking} system, for the ~~regulation~~ ^{regulation} of the ~~that~~ ^{that} ~~exchange~~ ^{exchange} security market, and many other measures by which there are land marks in the social progress of America. They are ~~regarding~~ ^{regarding} ~~what~~ ^{what} ~~part~~ ^{part} ~~will~~ ^{will} ~~come~~ ^{come} ~~just~~ ^{just} ~~forward~~ ^{forward} ~~enlarged upon~~ ^{enlarged upon} ~~increased~~ ^{increased} and improved. There can be no going back except to chaos. W. Bennett realizes that ~~unwisdom~~ ^{unwisdom} talk to-day about "Free enterprise" is worse than ~~unwisdom~~ ^{unwisdom}

9/ Being an econ liberal and over the third term issue not involved I should vote for the re-election of P. R. — Many will feel that the Third Term issue is not of important importance to warrant a change of administration. I respect their opinion.

I think differently. I am not crusading for my point of view; and I have refused to involve myself in an active political campaign. But ~~we~~ ^{we} ~~should speak~~ ^{should speak} when asked by a responsible ~~public figure~~ ^{public figure} in our city whether great and inspired leader in these troubled and desperate times.

The tradition of rotation in office and restricted tenure in office is a sound one. It implies that the strength of democracy does not reside in any one man however splendidly equipped, ~~but~~ ^{as} but in the system of representative government, in the people's basic constitution, its laws, and its free institutions and in the people's capacity to produce adequate leadership even in times of emergency. Granted a limitation upon tenure in office, it is possible, ^{and proper} in times of crisis ^{with as the} to place great and even extreme power in the hands of the chief executive. Under a system ^{where} where the tenure of office is indefinite, such a practice is highly dangerous. A president ^{may} ~~may come to~~ contemplate the possibility of unlimited tenure of office and see to it that no competition ^{or shall} will arise ~~in his party~~ to supplant him. Instead of building up competent successors in office the tendency will be to ^{and proper} eliminate them as they arise.

^{The unfair comparison is not that of a} ~~It isn't that~~ a negative attitude to a Third Term is a tradition in American life and that great presidents and statesmen in the past were opposed to it. Traditions which have ~~outlived~~ ^{outlived} their usefulness do more harm than good. It is because this tradition is more imperative today than at any time in the past that it ^{has been set aside by} ~~should not be~~ ignored. ^{in my judgment} ~~When popular governments are succeeding~~ all over the earth, when the trend is ^{are collapsing} ~~definitely~~ in the direction of dictatorship, the ^{have been a great success to democracy} ~~greatest~~ concentration of political power in the hands of men of destiny, it would be ^{highly} ~~highly~~ ^{highly} ~~destrable~~ for the President of the greatest ^{free} nation on the free earth to re-affirm his position of the democratic processes by relinquishing a Third Term. ^{his office at the end of the second term.}

But though I regard this issue as very serious, serious enough to determine my vote, I cannot be ~~look upon its eclipse~~ ^{look upon its eclipse} ~~come hysterical~~ ^{come hysterical} even ~~about~~ ^{at} the prospect, it being set aside. ~~But~~ It would be a distinct loss to the strength of the Am. democ. traditions - not a calamity.

N/ To Sum up

I am of the opinion that America will have occasion to congratulate itself on November 6th regardless of who is elected. Both men are fine and sturdy types of American citizenry, both devoted to the fundamental principles of American democracy, both pledged to a vigorous foreign policy, both committed to a program of maximum aid to Great Britain, the last bulwark of human liberties in the Old World, both the foes of appeasement. Both President Roosevelt and Mr. Willkie have given evidence in act and in word of their broad tolerance and of their earnest desire to maintain unity in American life to resist all those disruptive forces whose principles are to disintegrate the spiritual integrity of America and to kindle racial and religious hatred in

Mr. Willkie fought the Ku Klux Klan long before he thought of running for the presidency of the United States. In his forthright and spirited utterances during his campaign in which he rejected specifically and by name all proffer of support from individuals and groups poisoned with racial and religious bigotry are what we have a right to expect from the standard bearer of a great political party whose founder Lincoln - and we have not been disappointed.

1/ This brings me to my last point in the coming election. There is no Jewish issue involved in it and there is no Jewish vote going as a bloc to one candidate or another.

~~There is no Jewish vote.~~ Jewish citizens will vote their convictions and preferences just as all other citizens. The Jewish vote will be divided along social and economic lines exactly as the general vote. Among the upper and middle classes there will be a trend towards Mr. Willkie, and among those of lesser income and the working classes, there will be a trend towards Mr. Roosevelt.

To be sure, President Roosevelt's courageous championing of the democratic way of life as against the totalitarian will influence a substantial number of Jewish citizens to vote for him who might otherwise have voted the Republican Ticket. But

that, I am sure, will hold true of other groups, ~~such as~~ Poles and Czechs who likewise approve of his vigorous foreign policy. ^{those who raise the Jews for R. cry should} ~~It is also true that opposition to the~~ ^{remember that we can also raise the Germans & Italians for W. cry.} President's policy will influence a great number of Italian and German citizens who might otherwise have voted for him ~~to vote for Mr. Willkie.~~ That is their right and privilege. ~~It doesn't necessarily imply a lack of sincerity on the part of these voters or a lack of Americanism.~~ ^{A form of intimidation!}

Surely not all the bankers and Wall Street brokers who will vote for Mr. Willkie will do so out of pure altruism...

Most Jews of the United States voted for President Roosevelt in 1936. So did most of the other American citizens. Else Mr. Roosevelt could not have won in 46 out of the 48 states. If President Roosevelt is re-elected in 1940, it will ^{again} be because most of the American voters and not merely ^{were} of the Jewish voters preferred him.

Same people - Jews for Roosevelt - Jews control Press! - And now, behold, 90% of them is for W.



ABSTRACT OF ADDRESS DELIBERED BY DR. ABBA HILLEL SILVER AT THE TEMPLE,
ANSEL ROAD AND EAST 105TH STREET ON SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 27, 1940.

THOUGHTS ON THE COMING ELECTION

Partisanship has run riot in this campaign and many people have lost their sense of proportion and perspective. This is not very wholesome in times such as these which call for clear thinking and deliberate judgment. ~~(The American press, I am afraid, has not contributed much to bring about moderation and temperateness in our political discussions.)~~

Men have been persuaded to believe that the issues in this campaign are of epochal moment, that the entire future of America hangs upon its outcome, and that there are vast and irreconcilable differences between the two major parties.

Permit me to say in all modesty and reverence that all this is either sheer political auto-intoxication, or the resultant frenzy of clever and calculated propaganda.

I know of no campaign in recent years in which there was less involved of decisive significance between the two parties. I can not recall a political campaign in which there was more agreement on major issues and greater similarity as to political platform than in this campaign. Frankly, I do not know what people are getting excited about.

Both parties and candidates are in substantial agreement on our foreign policy, *and on domestic issues.* ~~Both favor maximum aid to Great Britain. Both are against appeasement. Both are for keeping America out of war, and against sending our soldiers overseas. Both are for maximum national defense. Both candidates favored conscription.)~~

As far as domestic issues are concerned, the Republican candidate has accepted and approved many of the measures of the New Deal. He has pledged himself and his party to continue nearly all the social progressive measures of the last administration. He ~~x~~ feels, of course, that he could do it better or more economically. But he has offered no oppositional program, no contradictory philosophy, and no threat to dismantle what has been achieved heretofore.

I am persuaded that an outsider who is not acquainted with American political campaigns would be inclined to suggest that President Roosevelt and Mr. Willkie would make excellent running-mates on the same ticket.

✓ There are, of course, varying nuances and different accents and emphases, but in most instances, I must confess that the distinctions are without differences. If one brushes aside the surface issues, the specious fault-finding, the sniping, the mis-statements and over-statements incidental to all campaigns, what remains is the traditional and quite legitimate tug of war between economic conservatism and economic liberalism, and all truth and justice are not altogether on one side or the other.

✓ The Republican Party still remains the party of business, industry and capital, and will attract to itself in 1940 all those conservative elements. Economic conservatism is not Fascism just as economic liberalism is not Communism. It is highly desirable in a democracy that there exist a strong political party which represents the slower tempo as a corrective to any excessive adventuresomeness in the opposing party.

Only blind partisanship will maintain that there is nothing to criticize in the past democratic administration. The millions who are still unemployed, the millions who are still insufficiently housed and fed, the staggering public debt, some of the unsound economic measures passed by the administration are legitimate subjects for political criticism. The Democratic Party in 1940 will again represent the trend towards economic liberalism and will attract, by and large, labor, those on the lower economic levels, progressives generally, and sections of our country which are historically democratic. Only blind partisanship will try to discredit the substantial achievements of the past administration, or will try to reduce the stature of President Roosevelt who has been a great President - one of our greatest. The measures which he succeeded in having enacted for the improvement of the life and conditions of labor, and the definition of their rights, for the relief of the

unemployed, for the youth of our nation, for social security, slum clearance, a sounder banking system, and the regulation of the securities market, are landmarks in the progress of America, and are here to stay. To go back is to return to chaos. Mr. Willkie, himself, understands that unqualified talk about "free enterprize" is worse than meaningless.

3rd
Term
Being an economic liberal, and were the Third Term not involved in the present campaign, I should be voting for Mr. Roosevelt again on November 5th. I know there are many people who feel that this issue is not of sufficient importance to warrant a change in administration. I respect their viewpoint. I think differently. The tradition of rotation in office and restricted tenure is a sound one. It implies that the strength of democracy does not reside in any one man however splendidly equipped, but in its system of representative government, in the nation's constitution, laws and free institutions, and in the people's capacity to produce adequate leadership even in times of emergency. Granted a limitation upon tenure in office it is possible, in times of crisis such as this, to place great and even extreme power in the hands of the chief executive. Under a system where the tenure of office is unlimited, such a practise is highly dangerous. Furthermore, a president contemplating the possibility of remaining in office indefinitely, may see to it that no competitor ever arise to challenge his occupancy in office. It is not because it is a tradition, but because the tradition is even more imperative today than in the past that President Roosevelt should not have ignored it. At a time when popular government is collapsing all over the world, and when the trend is so strong in the direction of the concentration of power for an unlimited time in the hands of men of destiny, President Roosevelt would have rendered an historic service to the cause of democracy if he, as President of the greatest free nation on earth, had re-affirmed his faith in the democratic process by relinquishing his office at the end of his second term. But, though I regard the issue as very serious, serious enough to determine my vote, I can not become hysterical even at the possibility of its being set aside in the forthcoming election. It would be a

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I am of the opinion that America will have occasion to congratulate itself on November 6, regardless of who is elected president. Both men are fine and sturdy types of American citizenry, both devoted to the fundamentals of American democracy, both pledged to a vigorous foreign policy. Both President Roosevelt and Mr. Willkie have given evidence in act and in speech of their broad tolerance and of their earnest resolve to maintain the spiritual unity of America by resisting all those disruptive forces who sow religious and racial hatred in our country.

I should also like to make this statement: There is no Jewish issue involved in this campaign, and there is no Jewish vote going as a block to one candidate or another. Jewish citizens will vote their convictions and preferences just as all other citizens. The Jewish vote will be divided along social and economic lines exactly as the general vote. To be sure, there will be a substantial number of Jews who vigorously approving of President Roosevelt's courageous championing of the democratic way of life against the totalitarian, will vote for him this year who might otherwise have voted the Republican Ticket. This will hold true, of course, of other groups as well - English, Poles, & Czechs, etc. - just as there will be a substantial number of German-Americans and Italian-Americans who will vote for Mr. Willkie because of their vigorous disapproval of Mr. Roosevelt's foreign policy.

Most of the Jews of the United States voted for President Roosevelt in 1936. So did most other American citizens, else Mr. Roosevelt could not have won in forty-six out of forty-eight states. And if he is re-elected again in 1940, it will not be as the result of the Jewish vote, which constitutes just three percent of the total vote which will be cast.

Sermon 559

ABSTRACT OF ADDRESS DELIBERED BY DR. ABBA HILLEL SILVER AT THE TEMPLE,
ANSEL ROAD AND EAST 105TH STREET ON SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 27, 1940.

THOUGHTS ON THE COMING ELECTION

Partisanship has run riot in this campaign and many people have lost their sense of proportion and perspective. This is not very wholesome in times such as these which call for clear thinking and deliberate judgment. The American press, I am afraid, has not contributed much to bring about moderation and temperateness in our political discussions.

Men have been persuaded to believe that the issues in this campaign are of epochal moment, that the entire future of America hangs upon its outcome, and that there are vast and irreconcilable differences between the two major parties.

Permit me to say in all modesty and reverence that all this is either sheer political auto-intoxication, or the resultant frenzy of clever and calculated propaganda.

I know of no campaign in recent years in which there was less involved of decisive significance between the two parties. I can not recall a political campaign in which there was more agreement on major issues and greater similarity as to political platform than in this campaign. Frankly, I do not know what people are getting excited about.

Both parties and candidates are in substantial agreement on our foreign policy. Both favor maximum aid to Great Britain. Both are against appeasement. Both are for keeping America out of war, and against sending our soldiers overseas. Both are for maximum national defense. Both candidates favored conscription.

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The Republican Party still remains the party of business, industry and capital, and will attract to itself in 1940 all those conservative elements. Economic conservatism is not Fascism just as economic liberalism is not Communism. It is highly desirable in a democracy that there exist a strong political party which represents the slower tempo as a corrective to any excessive adventuresomeness in the opposing party.

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Being an economic liberal, and were the Third Term not involved in the present campaign, I should be voting for Mr. Roosevelt again on November 5th. I know there are many people who feel that this issue is not of sufficient importance to warrant a change in administration. I respect their viewpoint. I think differently. The tradition of rotation in office and restricted tenure is a sound one. It implies that the strength of democracy does not reside in any one man however splendidly equipped, but in its system of representative government, in the nation's constitution, laws and free institutions, and in the people's capacity to produce adequate leadership even in times of emergency. Granted a limitation upon tenure in office it is possible, in times of crisis such as this, to place great and even extreme power in the hands of the chief executive. Under a system where the tenure of office is unlimited, such a practice is highly dangerous. Furthermore, a president contemplating the possibility of remaining in office indefinitely, may see to it that no competitor ever arise to challenge his occupancy in office. It is not because it is a tradition, but because the tradition is even more imperative today than in the past that President Roosevelt should not have ignored it. At a time when popular government is collapsing all over the world, and when the trend is so strong in the direction of the concentration of power for an unlimited time in the hands of men of destiny, President Roosevelt would have rendered an historic service to the cause of democracy if he, as President of the greatest free nation on earth, had re-affirmed his faith in the democratic process by relinquishing his office at the end of his second term. But, though I regard the issue as very serious, serious enough to determine my vote, I can not become hysterical even at the possibility of its being set aside in the forthcoming election. It would be a

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WRHS
THOUGHTS ON THE COMING ELECTION



By
Dr. Abba Hillel Silver

At
The Temple

On
Sunday morning, October 27, 1940

MISSING PAGE (S)



Hitler invaded Norway, Belgium, Holland whose statesmen and political leaders did not antagonize him by all too-spoken words of denunciation. They raised not a whisper in criticism of ^{his} policy of brutal aggression. They were docile. When Hitler decided it was to his advantage and timely to make war, he proceeded to do it. He needs no provocation. He provokes. When and if Hitler decides that he is in a position that is profitable to him to attack these United States, he will not have to search long for an excuse for doing it. It is strange, my friends, that the very people who urge the sending of planes, munitions, destroyers to Great Britain with which to fight Hitler, regard those acts as less provocative than the President's calling a halt to some act of a dictator which is particularly and unspeakably a dirty act.

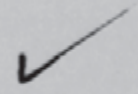
Whoever is president of the United States will have to be very clear in his own mind where he stands, whether he wants peace, is for building up a national defense, and for aiding Great Britain to defend herself from a man who is destroying Europe, whether he is for appeasement in one form or another - appeasement which can only be the prelude to greater disaster. And there can be no straddling on this issue. No candidate in a campaign should say anything that can be interpreted as meaning one thing to one man and another thing to another man. Times are too serious.

It is, of course, clear that Mr. Willkie, if elected, will have a harder time in maintaining a consistent and firm attitude on the subject than will Mr. Roosevelt. Round Mr. Willkie have rallied, not at his request to be sure, all the forces of appeasement, and all the pro-Nazi and pro-Fascist forces in the country, not out of love for Mr. Willkie, but of course out of hatred of Mr. Roosevelt. I believe, however, that Mr. Willkie's spiritual and factual integrity, reinforced by the overwhelming sentiment of the American people and the people in his own party will enable him, if elected, to resist that pressure from those forces which have rallied round him.

In this connection I should like to say that both Mr. Willkie and Mr. Roosevelt are rendering a disservice to the cause which is dear to both of their hearts in repeating and repeating again, as if engaged in some game of competitive emphasis that they will never lead the American people into war. That is likely to strengthen the hands of the aggressor dictators at this time. Rome and Berlin and Moscow and Tokyo and Vichy may be misled by such statements unless qualified and defined. You may recall in the election of 1916, the slogan of that day was that President Wilson "kept us out of war". The Kaiser misunderstood that slogan. He assumed that meant that our country regardless of what provocation, would not go to war and he intensified his military campaign. In less than six months after the election, America was in the war. It doesn't take two nations to make a war. It takes one nation. I am afraid that this competition between the two candidates as to who is more for peace might lead in these critical moments when so many decisions affecting human life - that it might mislead those who need no provocation to believe that America will reach for the sword. That would be a sad and a grievous mistake.

Both Mr. Roosevelt and Mr. Willkie and the Congress of the United States can be trusted to do their utmost to keep America out of war without sacrificing any of those vital interests of our national life without which war would be preferable to peace. People ought to remember in the excitement of this campaign that wars can occur in a republican administration just as in a democratic administration.

As far as domestic issues are concerned, after you brush aside all the surface issues, specious fault-finding and the sniping of one party or the other, after you brush aside all the misstatements and the over-statements and political malice, what remains? What remains is just the traditional and quite ~~legit~~ legitimate tug of war ~~of~~ which has been going on in national



life between what you might call economic conservatism and progressive liberalism, all truth and all justice not altogether on one side or the other.

The Republican Party in 1940 is still the party of business, industry, capital, by and large a conservative party which will attract to it all those elements working in these fields - mostly people of the middle and upper register of economic life - as well as certain rural sections of our population traditionally Republican. Now economic conservatism, my friends, is not a crime and does not necessarily mean Fascism, just as economic liberalism does not mean Communism. And it is highly desirable in a democracy that there be a strong party representing the slower tempo as a corrective to any excessive adventuresomeness in the opposing party.

Only a blind partisanship will maintain that in the democratic administration of the last seven or eight years there has been nothing to criticise, that it has been a perfect administration without faults and without blunders. The fact does remain that after seven or eight years, there are still millions of unemployed, there are still millions in large sections of our country in want, and suffering privations. The fact remains that there are millions who are still insufficiently housed. The fact remains ~~x~~ that there has mounted up a large national budgetary deficit, that some of the measures passed during this administration are economically unsound and some have been proved unconstitutional. The Republican Party has a legitimate place both in the economic and political life of America.

The Democratic Party again represents, in 1940, what it had represented in recent years - the trend towards economic liberalism. And it will attract this year as in previous years, by and large, the working men, the men in the more modest circumstances, in the lower registers of our economic life; also the liberal and progressive, the white collar classes, and large sections of our country which are historically democratic. And only a blind partisan will seek to poo-poo the achievements of the last administration, try to discredit the real contribution

to the social progress of America. Only a blind partisan will seek to reduce the stature of President Roosevelt. President Roosevelt has been a great president - one of the greatest in the history of America. And the measures which he succeeded in enacting for the improvement of the rights and conditions of labor, for the defense of the rights of labor, for the relief of the unemployed, for the protection of our youth, and our civil conservation corps, and the youth administration, and the home owners who were threatened with the loss of their homes, with the rehabilitation of the farmer, for social security, for slum clearance, for sounder banking system, for the regulation of the securities market - I say, all these measures will remain as land-marks in the progress of America. They are here to stay - all those measures. Many will have to be revised, improved and enriched. There is no return, except to chaos.

Mr. Willkie himself has understood that this unqualified talk about "free enterprise" is worse than meaningless today. So, as far as the ultimate issues are concerned, I can not see that there is this vast chasm separating the two parties that people need to get so terrifically stirred up about.

As for myself, perhaps a word ought to be said on that subject, too. ✓
Being an economic liberal, and were the Third Term issue not involved in this campaign, I should be voting for President Roosevelt again as I did in the past. I know that some people feel that this issue is not of sufficient importance to warrant a change of administration. I respect their point of view. I have no quarrel with them. I just happen to be different. I am not crusading for my point of view and I refuse to take ~~be a part of~~ any ~~active~~ political campaign this year as in previous years. I did not expect that my point of view would be paraded on the backs of elephants. When I was asked by a representative organ of public opinion in our city, of our newspapers, last August, whether I was still of the same opinion with reference to the Thurd Term, which I expressed in this pulpit as long ago as last March and which was widely reported in the local press, I

could not say anything but what was a fact - that nothing happened between March when I expressed that opinion, and in August when I was still of that opinion, to change my opinion. I believed then, and I believe now, that the tradition of rotation in office, the restricted tenure of office is a sound one, that the strength of democracy does not reside in any one man, however splendidly equipped, but in the constitution, law, in the people's capacity to produce adequate leadership even in times of emergency. I believed then, and I believe now that granted a limitation on the tenure of office of the chief executive, it is possible in times of crisis to create for that chief executive great and even extreme power, and that if limitation is non-existent, it becomes rather dangerous.

I furthermore believed then, and I believe now that a president of the United States contemplating the possibility of unlimited tenure in office may see to it that no competitor in office ever arise to supplant him. In other words, instead of building up a competent successor, the tendency might be to eliminate some promising important figure for fear of competition. The important consideration about this issue of the Third Term is not that it is a tradition. Traditions may outlive their usefulness. The important thing in this tradition is that it is more imperative today than at any time in the past and it would not to be set aside by a great democrat, a lover of democracy like Roosevelt. At a time when free governments are collapsing all over the world, when the trend is for unlimited power for men ~~in~~ of destiny, it would have been a great service to democracy all over the world for the head of the greatest free government in the world to re-affirm his faith in the democratic processes, by relinquishing his office at the end of the second term.

But though I regard this issue ^{as} very serious, serious enough to determine my vote, I can not become hysterical even at the possibility of its being set aside in the forthcoming election. It would be a great loss, but certainly not a calamity.

To sum up these thoughts of mind on the coming election: I am perhaps one of the few in the United States who believes that America will have occasion to congratulate itself on November 6 regardless of who is elected. Both men are fine and sturdy types of American citizenry. Both are pledged to a vigorous foreign policy. Both are committed to maximum aid to Great Britain. Both are foes of appeasement. Both President Roosevelt and Mr. Willkie have given evidence in act and in word of their earnest effort to maintain unity of American life and to resist all those disruptive forces which are out to disintegrate the spiritual integrity of America and to kindle racial and religious hatred. The record of Mr. Roosevelt is an open book and an illustrious record. Mr. Willkie fought the Ku Klux Klan, in this very state, long before he had any thought of running for the presidency of the United States. In his forthright and spirited utterances during his campaign in which he rejected specifically and by name all proffer of support from individuals and groups poisoned with racial and religious bigotry are what we have the right to expect from the standard bearer of the great party whose founder was Abraham Lincoln - and we have not been disappointed.

This brings me to my last words: There is no Jewish issue involved in this campaign. And there is no Jewish vote going as a bloc to one candidate or another. Jewish citizens will vote on November 6 their convictions and preferences just as all other citizens. The Jewish vote will be divided along social and economic lines exactly as the general vote. Among the upper and middle classes there will be a general trend towards Willkie, and among the working classes, towards Roosevelt. That will be true all over the country. To be sure, President Roosevelt's championing of the American way of life against the totalitarian will influence a ~~xx~~ substantial number of Jewish citizens to vote for him this year who might have voted for the Republican ~~xxixix~~ candidate. That is their privilege. That is their right. I am sure that that will hold

true of a great number of other nationality groups in the United States - of the Poles, the Czechs and all other groups who have a particular interest in crushing Nazism overseas.

Those super-heated Republicans who raise the "Jew for Roosevelt" cry forget to raise, at the same time, the "German for Willkie" cry, and the "Italian for Willkie" cry. Generally this argument is a form of intimidation which should be spurned. The Jew should vote not on the basis of how his vote might be interpreted by somebody else. He should vote his basic convictions, his basic loyalties to basic American principles.

I often hear Republicans say: "Why do all Jews vote for Roosevelt?" as if the Jewish vote will be motivated by other than American considerations, as if all the bankers in Wall Street will vote for the Republican ticket out of sheer altruism.

Most of the Jews in the United States voted for Mr. Roosevelt in 1936. But so did most other American citizens. How else could he have won in forty-six out of forty states? The Jews are centered in large urban centers which are largely democratic. And if Mr. Roosevelt is re-elected in 1940, I assure you it will not be on the strength of the Jewish vote, which at best represents about three percent of the total vote which will be cast in the United States. It is amazing that the very people - most of them are anti-Semitic - who now make the charge "Jews for Roosevelt" have been making the charge that Jews also control the press of the United States. And the press today is ninety percent for Mr. Willkie.

And so my own conclusions about this campaign, dear friends, is that it is just another major election in which two parties whose platforms are basically ~~and~~ remarkably alike, one aspiring to remain in power, and the other to get into power. And whichever party wins, America will survive.