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1941 - the year of crisis and indecision; 1942 - the prelude to
victory, 1942.

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1941 -- THE YEAR OF CRISIS AND INDECISION
1942 -- THE PRELUDE TO VICTORY

By
Dr. Abba Hillel Silver

At
The Temple

On
Sunday morning, January 4, 1942

Last year I concluded my summary at the end of the year by saying: "This is how the year 1941 dawns upon the world. There is fear in our hearts. But there is also in the hearts of all freedom-loving men a growing trust and confidence. There is a growing confidence that perhaps we have already seen the darkest hour and that perhaps before long we may be privileged to see the first glimmer of hope. So we are going to steel our hearts and our wills and our souls for whatever will happen. We are going to resolve in our hearts that it is better to die as free men than to live as slaves and to do our utmost to see that the axis shall not win this war."

In 1941, dear friends, we were privileged to see more than a glimmer. During this past year we witnessed the first disastrous defeat of the heretofore invincible armies of Hitler in Russia. In 1941 we witnessed the entrance of our own country into the war with all out belligerence against Hitler. These are the two outstanding and important events of 1941 and they are more than a glimmer of hope. They will probably be written down in history as marking the decisive turning point in the Second World War.

The entrance of Japan into this war in the closing days of this year will undoubtedly prolong the struggle, but it can not change the odds against an Axis victory. Japan, just like Italy in 1940, thought that the war was over, that the Nazis were near enough to turn spy-glasses on Moscow, and Japan entered the war just as Italy entered in the hope of sharing loot, but like Italy, Japan gambled and lost. Japan proved a formidable foe - like the Nazis, hard and treacherous, as well armed and well prepared. But the growing might of the United States and of Great Britain and of China, and of the Netherlands, and later on perhaps also the Russians, will wear it down into utter exhaustion and defeat.

The odds are increasingly against an Axis victory. A billion people, controlling thirty million square miles of territory are pitting their strength against a population representing less than one-fourth of the globe and less than

The continental members of the Axis -- Germany, Italy -- are effectively blockaded and their resources are diminishing month by month. Their fighting manpower is decreasing. Their military machine is running down month by month. Japan, too, will find herself, after the first flush of victory, hemmed in and encircled, its economy sadly shattered and its resources cut off.

The Allied nations have the world's resources to draw from. The British Commonwealths are vastly increasing day by day their military out-put, and the great giant United States of America is just beginning to get into stride. So that we have on the one side cumulative strength and on the other side steady deterioration.

The enemy, of course, is far from being crushed. He will score many more victories, and notable victories. But he can not win the war. That was determined when America first resolved in the early days of 1941 to give all out aid to Great Britain and to the nations fighting the Axis when it passed the Lease-Lend measure. That the Axis can not win the war was demonstrated when the Russians, a month ago, began their amazing counter-offensive on Moscow at Rostov and since then have driven the invincible armies of Hitler back across the snow plains of Russia in bitter defeat, after strewing these plains with more than a million Nazi dead. They demonstrated that the Nazis can not win the war. For the first time Hitler's time-table did not click. For the first time he was compelled to abandon the campaign which the Russians, by the way, would not permit him to abandon. For the first time he had to swallow his boasting. The Russian campaign baffled him. It was incomprehensible that the Russians did not collapse according to schedule. He raved in impotent rage. He called them inhuman beasts who don't know when they are licked -- these Jewish Bolsheviks -- but to no avail. These god-like "Aryans" are now on their way back with their frozen tails behind them.

He had to dismiss his supreme commander and take over himself. He will now conduct the war by intuition. But they are not likely to be impressed by the military intuition of the sign-painter, Hitler.

The British, too, in Lybia, demonstrated that the Nazis can not win the war. They, too, have punctured holes in the Nazi invincibility. The British started the year well in Northern Africa by shattering those other invincible armies -- those of Mussolini -- they fled so fast, these black-shirts before the soldiers of the decadent democracies that the latter couldn't keep up with them -- even on motorcycles. Then came the demand, the urgent, pressing demand for re-inforcement in Greece -- that valiant little country which defied the might of Italy and Germany for so long, and General Wavel you will recall drastically depleted his African armies in order to send re-inforcement to Greece. The strong German force was waiting for him south of Bengazi and struck at Greece. Its greatly reduced and outnumbered Army, in April was forced to retreat to Egypt. But by November the British had rebuilt their forces in Egypt, and aided by American tanks and American planes, they attacked again and smashed the armies of General Rommel and cleaned them out of Lybia a second time and are now deep in Tripolitania. The Allied armies demonstrated, in 1941, that given armies, given tanks, given plans, they are more than a match for the Nazi invincibles -- Blitzkrieg is ausgespilt!

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There was one other great Nazi failure in 1941 -- as significant in

a sense, as the failure in the Russian campaign -- that is, their failure to win the battle of the Atlantic, their failure to blockade the British Isles upon which Hitler counted so much, and on the basis of which he promised so much to the German people. He failed in 1940 to invade the British Isles and he failed in 1941 to blockade it. In 1941 that little island is better protected than at any time before.

These set-backs have aroused great hopes among the subjugated peoples of Europe. The smoldering spirit of revolt is not only being kept alive, but victories over the axis forces have frequently flared out in sabotage, active resistance -- in the case of Yugoslavia, Norway, Poland -- have made Hitler realize that Europe will refuse to be pacified by Hitler's terror and discipline and docilely to accept his new order.

Hitler is worried as he has never been worried before. You can see it in his speeches. There is a new note. He talks much less now about conquest and victory and even much less about destroying Bolshevism in the world. He now talks about saving Germany. And he is hoping to hold his people in line no more by the prospect of brilliant victories, but by the fear of what will happen to them if he is defeated.

In all this there is more than a glimmer of hope for mankind.

For America, the year 1941 began as a year of great indecision of great confusion, of furious debate. The isolationists confused our people and retarded preparedness. Every measure proposed by the Administration strengthen~~ing~~ the forces fighting Hitler in anticipation of the approaching day when America would be catapulted into war, the Lease-Lend, arming our merchant ships, the extension of the draft -- were furiously opposed by men inside and outside Congress, by the Lindbergh's, the Wheelers, the America Firsters and by Nazi and Fascist sympathizers who tried to tell America that

it need fear no attack from the Axis and that it ought to do nothing to provoke them. All who endorsed the foreign policy of the Administration were branded as war-mongers.

But December 7, Pearl Harbor, fully quieted all of them, exposed either their naivete, or their ignorance, or their mendacity in to silence. And many of these spurious peace-mongers are fast becoming the most fiery war whoopers-up in the country, now trying to outdistance the Administration.

Fortunately for our country, we had a keen, wise and courageous leadership in the White House, a man who kept warning his people, prodding his country, a man who read clearly the signs of the times from the very beginning of the rise of Hitler to this this day, a man who interpreted clearly the sinking of the Robin Moor, the Greer, the Kearny, , a man who knew that these military desperadoes are out to conquer the world -- that the United States would not escape.

So, in spite of the isolationists and their loud shouting, in spite of denunciations from various sources, President Roosevelt and the men of his Administration kept on doing what had to be done and what could be done, stimulating the industrial output, expanding plants, building new ones, coordinated American industry for large-scale production of tanks and planes putting and munitions ~~ex~~ the hundreds of thousands of men into military camps, establishing necessary outposts in Iceland, Greenland and elsewhere so that when America was catapulted into the war in the Month of December, our country was not altogether unprepared.

The closing days of 1941 found our country for the first time since the last world war a united people, a patriotically-aroused people, a people ready to make whatever sacrifice it may be called upon to make willingly, to save America. All forms of bigotry, intolerance have gone underground for the duration. Anti-semitism has gone underground for the duration. The American

people understand clearly now what it should have understood -- that anti-semitism is a form of Nazi attack, part of the total war program, a branch of fifty column activity of Nazi origin. We are a united people today. But we are girding ourselves today for the great struggle ahead.

Not only was our country prepared for the war in a military sense. It was also prepared for it in a spiritual sense. President Roosevelt understood as did Churchill that it was necessary to set clearly before the fighting forces of free men the objectives of war. What are they fighting for? What can they look forward to at the end of the war -- a charter which men would underwrite with blood, if necessary. So you will recall that dramatic meeting in mid-Atlantic which resulted in the drafting of the eight point statement of peace in the Atlantic. We are fighting for a free world, for free men. We are fighting to make possible the basic freedom for human beings -- freedom of speech, freedom of worship. freedom of thought, freedom of press, We are fighting to put an end to unbridled brutality, to international anarchy, to the suppression of racial minorities or religious minorities. We are fighting to create the kind of a world in which every individual belongs and has certain rights and which rights will not be abrogated by dictators and tyrants. We are fighting for a world of peace, international justice.

While the war itself will not achieve it, while the armistice itself will not automatically bring about that kind of a world, the defeat of Hitler and what he stands for -- that recrudescence of barbarism, that twentieth century barbarism, that racialism and chauvinism -- will be destroyed, and the ground will be cleared for another earnest effort to build a world in which free men will live in dignity and security.

It is good that we have now a united ^{friendly} ~~free~~ world fighting this desperate foe. It is good that we have agreed not to make a separate peace with any or

all defeated peoples. It is good to know that a billion people are today banded together to put an end to that which has afflicted the world now for all too long.

We we enter the year 1942 with no fear in our hearts, but with high hope and confidence. We are entering a year which we believe will be the prelude to victory and peace. But also the months which will follow will call forth from each of us the maximum contribution which he can make in his sphere, his world, in his job, to total victory which is sure to come -- a hard year, but a year in which we can see beyond the horizon -- victory.



1/ Book 1940. In 1941 - privileged to see this glimmer of hope.

More & glimmer!

For 1941 - witnessed the first disastrous defeat of the hitherto
invincible armies of Hitler - in Russia.

It also - witnessed the entrance of Am. into the war as an
all out ~~enemy~~ ^{belligerent} of Hitler.

These are the 2 formative & epochal events of the year - which
probably marked the decisive turning-point in the war.

The entrance of Japan into the war - closing days of the year -
will undoubtedly prolong the struggle. It cannot
change the odds against an Axis victory.

Japan, like Italy in 1940, that the war was over, as the
Nazis were was enough to turn their spy-glasses
on Moscow. It entered the war to share in the
loot. But, like Italy, it gambled and lost.

It is a formidable foe - of the Nazi cast, mind-hard
and frankness - well armed and prepared - but the
growing wight of the U.S. front Britain, China and
Holland ~~probably~~ ^{will} ~~bring~~ ^{in turn} ~~it~~ ^{mean} it down into utter exhaustion
and defeat.

2/ The odds are increasingly against an Axis victory. A
billion people, controlling 30 M. sq. miles, territory are
arrayed against a fourth that number controlling 1/30 M. sq.
territory of sq. miles. The Continental peoples of Europe
are effectively blockaded. Their resources are diminishing.
Their fighting man power decreasing. Their military ma-
chine running slowly down. The Japan, too, will find
itself hemmed in, encircled, its economy shattered
and its vital resources cut off.

(3)

must ~~for~~ in force - to assist the valiant freedom in their
fight - German & Hitlers - had for ^{drastically} hand, to deplete him of
as can be seen. A strong German force waiting ^{way} at Beers.
stuck the greatly reduced contaminated Br. force ^{in a} hull and
forced a great retreat to Egypt. But by Nov. they
had rebuilt - planes + tanks - + attached - smashed the
armies of Gen. Rommel - drove them out, helped - and
are now deep in Tripoli tanks.

Given armies - planes - tanks - allied forces are now >
a match for the Nazis invincibles - Black King is
over perished!

3/ The early months of 1941 saw the German armies
unwittingly rolling on on their armies, would confront.
The coming months saw them rolling back.
There was one great failure - 1941. Battle of the
Atlantic not won! The Blockade failed!
Just as the attempt to invade E. in 1940 - failed!

4/ These set-backs - aroused hopes of conquest -
considering Spain, revolt - Jugoslavia - Norway
Iceland - Blitz Salisbury - bloody refusals
warriors -
Europe refuses to be perished by His terror, & dares
to accept his new order!

5/ He is wounded! Steel tanks, conquest - destroying
the J. Breckers in secretly - but was ruined -
defensive - Fate Germany - keep his head in

line by warning them of terrible fate which awaits them if they lose the war. No large hope / victory, but fear of defeat! [4]

6/ For America - Indecision - panic debate - isolationist confused our people - + retarded our total preparedness
Every measure - dear - Lead; creating our merchant ships
extension of draft - was firmly phased
Lindberghs - Whitcomb - Tobys - Am. Flyers - Nazi-Fair - scattered - need for an attack
from Axis - do nothing to provok them - All who
endorsed foreign policy of Adm. - War mongers!

Dec. 7 - put a quicker on all of them. - Exposed their
univale, in their ignorance, in their mendacity.
- Many, their peace - mongers - are fast - becoming the
most free war whisperers - in the country!

Country selected - Fortunately - for an country - a keen, wise, valiant
strong leadership in the White House kept
war warning, breeding of prodding the country necessary
steps were taken - Ind. plants for war - production
were expanded and new war plants built - to
produce planes - tanks - ammunition - ship - building
was speeded up - men by the hundreds, thousands
in all branches were sent into training - And was
 rushed to Alba in increasing volume - German
Island & Dutch Guiana are now under Am. custody
to show them our defence - when finally confronted
with war - not altogether unprepared 1. United

7/ He defined - Chancellor - Atlantic Charter - August
8 pt. statement of peace aims.

8/ United - no separate peace -



TJK. 19.5.28

This is how the year 1941 dawns upon the world. There is fear in our hearts. But there is also in the hearts of all freedom loving men

-9-

There is also ^a growing trust and ~~increasing~~ confidence ~~of those people who all men~~
~~who~~ are fighting for freedom, for human decency, for civilization. ~~They~~ are strong
in their confidence and that confidence is now going to increase week by week,
month by month. There is a growing confidence that perhaps we have already seen
the darkest hour of ~~the past year~~ and that perhaps before long we may be
privileged to see the first glimmer of hope. So we are going to steel our hearts
and our wills ~~and our passions~~ and our ~~prayerful~~ souls for whatever will happen,
~~to come~~. We are going to resolve in our hearts that it is better to die as
free men than to live as slaves and to do our utmost to see that the axis shall not
win this war.



Sermon 591

No. 591

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