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Reel  
161

Box  
57

Folder  
717

Taking stock of 1944, 1944.

648  
TAKING STOCK OF 1944

In keeping with his practice of many years, Rabbi Silver will review the historic events of the past year as they transpired on the American, the World, and the Jewish scene.

By  
Dr. Abba Hillel Silver

At  
The Temple

On  
Sunday morning, December 31, 1944



This has been a year, my friends which no words quite as appropriately express what is in the hearts of men in so beautiful words as the words of the great poet, Tennyson. We find in them made articulate the thoughts that are in our minds, that are in our souls at the end of the year on the threshold of the new year, more especially at the end of a war year and on the threshold of another year of war.

Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky,  
The flying cloud, the frosty light:  
The year is dying in the night;  
Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

Ring out the old, ring in the new,  
Ring, happy bells across the snow:  
The year is going, let him go;  
Ring out the false, ring in the true.

Ring out the grief that saps the mind,  
For those that here we see no more;  
Ring out the feud of rich and poor,  
Ring in redress to all mankind.

Ring out a slowly dying cause,  
And ancient forms of party strife;  
Ring in the nobler modes of life,  
With sweeter manners, purer laws.

Ring out the want, the care, the sin,  
The faithless coldness of the times;  
Ring out, ring out my mournful rhymes,  
But ring the fuller minstrel in.

Ring out false pride in place and blood,  
The civic slander and the spite;  
Ring in the love of truth and right,  
Ring in the common love of good.

Ring out old shapes of foul disease;  
Ring out the narrowing lust of gold;  
Ring out the thousand wars of old,  
Ring in the thousand years of peace.

The poem was wrntten many many years ago, Yet how timely and how relevant to our day and concerns and problems and faiths, sorrows, hopes and longings.

This past, year, dear friends, has been a year of victories on the Allied front, but not a year of victory. There have been so many victories during the past year, so many great and breath-taking victories that all of us, the best informed and the





least informed were led to believe that the second world war, as far as Europe, at least, was concerned, would be over by the fall of this year.

But the new year finds our armies on the Western Front fighting desperately. An almost successful German counter-offensive, which if not stopped by the heroism of our armies might have endangered the entire front of the Allied nations in Europe. For a time it looked very black. <sup>looks</sup> It ~~is~~ better and brighter at the moment. But it is clear that the war will not be over in 1944. We fear that the war will last much longer. It is clear that there is hard and bitter fighting ahead. There are many costly battles that will have to be waged...

But the year 1944 did demonstrate that the defeat, the ultimate defeat of the Nazis is inevitable. The German armies can never recover from the terrible losses which they sustained. 1944 saw the ring draw closer and closer, the noose, if you will, draw tighter and tighter around the neck of the enemy. The enemy is fighting today like a desperate corner beast, knowing that they are doomed, knowing that doom is inevitable and inescapable.

The year 1944 saw Italy out of the war although still fighting in some sections. 1944 saw Roumania out of the war, and Bulgaria and Greece complete liberated. The year 1944 saw Hungary invaded and Budapest in the hands of the Russian army. This past year saw the enemy completely driven from Russian soil, advancing into Poland. They are not at the gates of Warsaw. These are the major disasters which the German forces has suffered and from which they are not likely to recover.

The greatest event, of course, was D-Day on June 6, that date which witnessed and military achievement an almost unprecedented event/in the war for the Allies -- an amphibious invasion of Europe. In a few short days or weeks more than a million men embarked on the beaches of Normandy, tanks, ammunition and supplies - a miracle of military prowess the like of which the world has never seen which established finally a second front which finally doomed the Nazis. This was in June.



In July the world witnessed the amazing sweep of our armies in France, the liberation of Paris, the remarkable forward thrust of our armies in Belgium Luxembourg into the borders of Germany. The Fall drive was slowed up because of the rapidity of this sweep and the necessity of bringing up supplies to catch up with the drive. And although the last drive saw the vicious counter-thrust of Von Runstedt, nevertheless it is clear that our armies are there to stay, to advance, and sooner or later the last stronghold will be broken through and the Allied armies will march into Berlin.

This has been a year of victories but not yet of victory, which is still in the offing. These victories have been costly ones for us, and not easy. We had to pay a high price for them. This is war. And war demands a frightful toll of human life, human resources.

In the Pacific we also scored significant victories in Japan, none of them quite as decisive as those in the West. We scored successful campaigns in the Marshalls, the Marianas. We have inflicted serious losses on the Japanese Navy and shipping. We brought the war to the Japan mainland by our B-29 bombings in Tokyo and other important industrial centers in Japan. The outstanding event of the war in the East of course was the successful invasion of the Philippines, the invasion of Leyte. We took the offensive in the Pacific on land, sea and in the air.

One of our Allies, however, suffered defeat during the year. The Chinese military situation has deteriorated. During the year there were important Japanese gains on the mainland of China. So that from a military point of view, and as a layman sees it, the year 1944 suggests that we are in the final stages, as far as Europe is concerned, and midway in the war as far as the East is concerned.

This is clear, that throughout 1945, this coming year, the United States will be a nation at war. It behooves us to take full cognizance of this fact and gird our loins for it. We must remain on the alert. We must not relax, we on the home front. We have seen ~~many~~ during the last weeks many dangerous surprises we we must not relax our efforts until the war is definitely over. We shall have



to submit ourselves graciously to the same restrictions which war time forces on a people, which I must say, has as far as the American people is concerned, been rather light. Rationing, as far as civilian goods is concerned, unpleasant rationing of one kind or another - that is little enough for a people to pay in defense of life and security and peace.

Because the year 1944 witnessed many significant victories for our cause, important consideration and thought was given to post-war problems, the plans of rebuilding the world after the war and how to make the recurrence of war impossible in the future. Quite a number of international conferences were held relating to the post-war world. The most significant of them was the Dumbarton Oaks Conference which you will recall began in August and concluded its deliberations on October 7 of this year, a conference between the United States, the United Kingdom the Soviet Union and China looking to the creation of an international organization for the maintenance of peace and stability. Everybody has come to understand now finally that there must be such an international organization and that there must be collective action if the world is to have international peace.

When Prime Minister Churchill, when Austria was invaded by the Nazis -- at that time he was not Prime Minister -- I say when he pleaded with his country to join the other nations in collective action against the aggressor, he was laughed at in the House of Commons. He said: "What is there ridiculous about collective security? The only thing that is ridiculous about it is that we have not got it. What is there ridiculous then in the 20th century with all that we have learned in the last war and of the break down of rights, and the balance of power?..The ridiculous thing is that in 1944 we still have no organization effectively organized for collective security. The Dumbarton Oaks Conference clearly recorded the conviction, which by now has taken hold of most of the people throughout the world that there must be a strongly implemented organization to insure ~~world~~ peace in the world.



One of the most promising things about the "Dumbarton Oaks Conference was that it accepted the principle that such an international organization must be backed by adequate force to back up its decisions. I think it was Oscar Wilde who said: "There is only one thing worse than injustice -- that is justice without her sword in her hand." That comes from England. If justice cannot enforce its just decisions, that it is worse than injustice. For it creates the illusion of security when actually there is no security. The tentative conclusions arrived at at Dumbarton Oaks Conference holds within them much promise for the future.

There are also many serious flaws and deficiencies in it which if not corrected, will defeat a new world organization as the old League of Nations was defeated.. There is inherent in the set-up a preferred status of the big three or big four nations. There is inherent in the set-up the principle that none of big four can never be declared the aggressor, and because any one of these three or four big powers have veto power, therefore the force of the security council of this new organization can never be brought to bear against three or four big principle nations in the world. There is a double standard of international law, which seemingly removes these nations from the operation of law. This is a fundamental weakness which must be frankly faced at the outset before the system can be built up.

1944 or the closing months of it also saw the recurrence of power politics, of which I spoke last week, an attempt on the part of Great Britain, the Soviet Union to force through their preferences as far as boundaries are concerned before the end of the war so that the new organization which will then be set up will only have to sanction what they accomplished while the war was going on. A secret agreement was reached at Teheran between the Soviet Union and Great Britain for a ~~xxx~~ division of influence, especially in Eastern Europe. Attempts are now being made in Poland, Greece, Italy and ~~elsewhere~~ elsewhere to enforce the agreements of these two powers even against the will of the people. This has led to civil war, bloodshed, to the sad spectacle of the people having been liberated



being shot down in the streets by the liberators. The last few weeks, unfortunately seem to have given the impression of a debacle of idealism in the world. The year closes on utter diplomatic confusion, and the hearts of men are seriously troubled. Will old world standards come back again, or are we fighting for a new world order. The policy of our own government has not been crystal clear as it should be in such times.

"What is our position definitely? Voices are heard from abroad that we have agreed to certain arrangements, that we would stand by and permit this forcible arrangement of ~~x~~ boundaries without any interference on our part. We have not given any clear indication either for or against. It was even suggested to us that the Atlantic Charter is a scrap of paper...

1945 must clear up this very muddled diplomatic situation which has brought great menace.

1944 witnessed a national election in our country, the re-election of President Roosevelt for a fourth term. This was a hotly contested and in many ways a bitter election. Certain facts emerged, some clarifying facts, some distinctive facts -- the utter defeat of isolationism and isolationists. The American people seemed to have turned back finally upon a political program of neutrality, of non-cooperation with the rest of the world, in the securing and maintenance of peace unfortunately contributed in a large measure to the wrecking of the League of Nations and which brought on this war. The American people is now committed to a program of international responsibility, of assuming the load of such responsibility with all other nations.

During this election organized labor emerged as a political force and alligned itself with one party. The consequences of this move on the part of organized labor are yet to be seen. Whether it is wise for an organization such as organized labor to allign itself with one political party or another....But undoubtedly the Political Actions Committee was a powerful factor in the Victory of the Democratic Party and the re-election of President Roosevelt. There was much bitterness in the



the campaign and the outcropping of much prejudice and anti-Semitism behind the "clear with Sidney" slogan. The New Deal was side-tracked during the campaign. Vice-President Wallace was thrown over board. Whether that is a fixed policy from here on only the future can tell. Certainly the conversion of the State Department into a sort of millionaires club is not a triumph for the New Deal. It would be a great mistake if great economic and social problems which face our people after the war would be met by a spirit of economic reaction, of utter conservatism. There is no salvation in that kind of a program. We shall have to push forward..

President Roosevelt carries on his shoulders a terrific load. He is one of two, three or four men who will be most influential in the great decisions which will affect the destinies of mankind for generations to come. We pray that he will be granted the strength and wisdom for this awfully onerous and difficult task. We pray that he will assert his spirit of independence, the real spirit of American leadership not to be a follower either of Churchill or of Stalin, but to be a leader moving forward in the noblest inspiration of those ideals which are basically American. We have ~~no~~ empire to defend. We have no territories that we are eager to annex. We are seeking no material gain in this war. We are sacrificing the lives of our youth to achieve -- what? The end of imperialism, the end of aggression, the end of that kind of a world which brought on two global wars in one generation. It is for ideals basically American that we are in the war. It is these ideals our President should keep constantly before him -- not to involve himself in the red tape of the old world. He will be out-maneuvered and outplayed at every turn once he agrees to the kind of of which give and take/the old world are past masters.

We have a line to follow defined in the Atlantic Charter, in the Four Freedoms in the name of which we sent our youth into the war. These are the things we shall insist on clamorously in the world today. The people in the



world will listen to us. There has been too much of secret conferences between the three or four great leaders. There should be more of an appeal to the great masses of the world who are paying the bloody price of this war, an appeal to the heart and conscience of mankind for a new world order. That our great President has within his power to do if he so will to do it.

The year 1944 saw the condition of the Jews in Europe in as tragic a state if not more tragic than in the previous year. The last large community of Jews in Hungary was annihilated. How many Jews are there left in Europe today? Nobody knows. The hand of death has reached out to almost every Jewish community in Central and Western Europe and only a few have escaped. It should be said to the credit of the American Jews during the past year and during previous years who have poured out their substance and generosity -- the American Jew has not turned a deaf to the cries of his brothers across the sea. This is very heartening and encouraging a though to have with us.

In Palestine in the past year the Jewish community has continued to develop, to establish new colonies, to increase its numbers, to contribute to the war effort, to dig its roots deeper and deeper in the sacred soil of its national home. It is not clear what the future holds for that significant and heroic Jewish community Palestine. It is difficult at the moment to see what the future holds for many of the smaller nations of Europe. It will depend on the decisions which /will be made at the conferences which take place. It is clear that a community cannot be ignored of Jews now of 600,000.....will not be ignored/in any decisions reached regarding it...We can help that community realize its legitimate rights after the war if we demand them without timidity, without appeasement...This is one of the objectives to which I have been dedicating myself. That is the line which I have been following. That is the line which I hope to follow in the future.

And so, good friends, as we face the coming year, the new year, what resolutions can we make? You and I can't make resolutions for the world. We



can make resolutions for ourselves. And each one of us is important. Each one of us should resolve as we stand now on the threshold of the new year to do our duty during the coming year, fully, as Americans, as human beings, as Jews, to do our duties, fully, to carry our burdens uncomplainingly. Some of you have had heavy burdens to carry, some more severe than others. There will not be many who will be spared. It is the mark of the man made in the image of God to bear one's burdens with a minimum of complaint, with a maximum of fortitude.

Another resolution, perhaps which we can make -- many disillusion -- if we have faith, it is only if we retain faith in spite of the buffeting and disillusion, if within our sphere of influence, and no one is without influence, if we retain our faith in these ideals -- to the end of war and of aggression and of exploitation of peace, the right of man to live fully and freely wherever he is born, the right of men to enjoy the privileges of free people and achieve a measure of happiness for themselves and their families in spite of race, color or creed -- only if we retain our faith in ultimate goodness and justness..... - only if we do that may we hope, not for ourselves, for we may be the generation that is lost, that will not see peace and tranquility in the world -- but our children. But it is a good resolution to make as we enter the year 1945....



1/ A year of victories - rest of Victory.

So many - so great + breath-taking. all too - hastily V. was just around corner. Predicted - by Fall - by Christmas.

But Ch. finds us fighting hittlerly - a <sup>vicious</sup> ~~vicious~~ S. counter-attacks - looked very black - but later now thanks - much longer Hard + bitter fighting - costly battles.

But 1944 - end of Y. - incredible - never recover from losses sustained - ring drawing closer - covered breast.

Italy is out, the war! the fighting

Rumania " " " "

Bulgaria " " " "

Greece is completely liberated Russian soil. Enemy completely driven from its capital in R. hands Warsaw! So is Poland, and the R. armies are in outskirts of Warsaw!

Greatest event of year - D. day - June 6 - amphibious invasion of Normandy - Second Front - an astonishing unprecedented military achievement - A million landed - tanks

and in July - swept thru France - liberation of Paris

Then Belgium + Luxembourg - into German territory -

Sept - D-Day went into low gear - slowed down - advanced too serious cost - these successive victories win the

final victory in the West.

2/ In the Pacific - against Japan - the new sig. moves - the war, such new character as in the West



Successful campaigns in the Marshall & the Marianas -  
Inflicted serious losses on J. Navy & Shipping  
We lost the war to J. mainland, by <sup>3.24</sup> air-bombing & Tokyo etc.

Outstanding - the invasion, the Philippines - Lyte -  
Taken the offensive - land-sea-air  
- Determination & fighting strength, China - & advances J.

3). 1944 suggests to the layman that we are in the final  
stages, the war in Europe - and winning in the war in the East  
- and that <sup>however</sup> 1945 <sup>will</sup> still <sup>be</sup> at <sup>the</sup> war -

It behooves us to guard our loins - on the alert - not to  
relax - Dangerous surprises - civilian goods rationing  
- little enough -

4). Serious that still during 1944 - to post-war world  
conferences held - meeting - aviation - world organization  
Dumbarton Oaks - delegates, U.S. - United Kingdom, Soviet  
Union - & China - Aug. 21 - completed Oct. 7 - 1944

For the "creation of an inter. org. for the maintenance of inter.

Churchill peace & security"  
Previously discussed - Holst promise - serious plans  
in the Security Council  
Prig 3 - preferred status - cannot be declared oppressor

5). Power politics - A debacle of idealism  
Poland - Greece - Italy - Spheres of influence - Freeze  
East  
Against will of peoples concerned - secret agreements -  
Axis foreign policy - not defend - grave moral crisis  
Year classes on inter diplo. confusion of and hunts  
men seriously troubled - old world - will 1945 - Vision  
Att. Charter - never signed -



6/ 1944- Election - 4<sup>th</sup> Term - smallest pop. vote margin (3)

since 1916. -

Emergency (reg. labor as a prot. force - on the side of Pol. Party)

Consequences - - Defeat of Isolationists -

B. H. H. "Clean it with fire" - antisemitism infected -

New Deal rather effectively buried - Wallace -

- Mich'el's Club at State Dept. - left-wing tendencies

- from Resolutions on R. - (To act)

7/ Jews - annihilation - how many left? - ~~Report on R.~~ Relief in U.S.

Palestine -

8/ What Resolutions?

- ① To do our duty fully
- ② To bear our burdens uncomplainingly
- ③ To retain our faith unflinchingly





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Ring in the thousand years of peace.



Force - There is only thing worse > injustice  
& that is justice without the sword  
in her hand

Churchill - 'What is there ridiculous abt  
collective security? The only thing that  
is ridiculous abt it is that we have  
not got it