



Abba Hillel Silver Collection Digitization Project

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

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

Series IV: Sermons, 1914-1963, undated.

Reel
162

Box
58

Folder
786

Taking Stock of 1948, 1949.

WRHS



TAKING STOCK OF 1948

Dr. Abba Hillel Silver

Sunday, January 2, 1949

History, my dear friends, is not measured in 12-month periods. The process of the life of mankind is an endless flow, but for the sake of the record, we are accustomed to cast events into the mold of time periods so that at the close of each year we take stock of what happened during that year between the first of January and the last of December, and we appraise and evaluate the events during that relatively brief period as best as we can, passing tentative judgments on the part of the fragments of a process - an unending process - a process which is never completed.

And so we look back over the year which has now ended, the year 1948, and we study the events of that year and the trends of that year, and we try to draw certain inferences and certain conclusions and a measure of guidance for the future.

The year 1948 was another post-war year, a year of uncertain convalescence for mankind. It was not a very happy year, nor was it a disastrous year. I believe that it will be remembered principally as the year of the Cold War, the year which inaugurated the Cold War. The term, "cold war", is a very appropriate term for a condition of affairs wherein the principals involved are not actually fighting at the core, but where considerable fighting is going on on the periphery, as it were - fighting guided and financed by the principals at the center, and at the center among the principal parties concerned, everything short of actual fighting, every form of hostility short of that goes on at terrific pace - propaganda, denunciation, plotting, espionage, name-calling, economic pressures. The year 1948 was a year of Cold War "par excellence". Never were East and West further apart. And during the year 1948 East and West were engaged in building up their military strength with an eye possibly for the grand showdown - for the third world war. The Soviet Union consolidated its

political strength in all the neighboring countries. It saw to it that governments friendly to it or directly under its control were guiding the affairs of all the countries on its borders - the Baltic states, Poland, Rumania, Hungary, Bulgaria. In February of this year the Soviet sphere of influence received a tremendous succession of strength by the fact that Czechoslovakia went communist in government. On the other side the Western Allies early in 1948 signed the Brussels military pact looking towards the military cooperation of these 5 states in the event of war, and talks have since been going on, with the approval of the United States Senate, between these five and the United States and Canada, looking towards a North Atlantic security pact, a major military alliance against the party of opposition, the Soviet bloc, with the United States; of course, as the designated arsenal and the ex-chequer for such a military alliance. Discussion is now going on very actively for a vast new program of lend-lease on the part of our country to prepare militarily and equip militarily this new grand military alliance which is in the making.

In our own country the year 1948 saw the enactment of the first peace-time draft in our history. And it is possible that in the year 1949 we may be witnessing the enactment of legislation of universal military training. It is now proposed that in our next budget our government set aside the stupendous sum of \$15,000,000,000 for our armed forces.

Now, of course, it is very difficult to determine who is responsible for launching this Cold War. Each side points the accusing finger upon the other. And probably neither side is entirely responsible, as is the case in all such instances. Our own country certainly did not help matters much when, in 1947, it stepped suddenly into the Greek Civil War on the occasion when Great Britain announced that she felt it necessary to discontinue financial aid and military

supplies to the Greek government. We then stepped in and proclaimed at that time a new foreign policy which came to be known as the Truman Doctrine, and this new foreign policy was designed to contain everywhere the Soviet Union and to check the spread of communism. Now the civil war is still raging in Greece. The guerillas who, last year when the Greek-Turkish aid bill was enacted which set the number at 13,000, are now numbering some 21,000 in spite of the last victory of the government forces over these guerillas in the Pindus Mountains. Against these 20 odd thousand revolutionists, the Greek government has been compelled to keep mobilizing an army of a quarter of a million with the United States paying the bill. Last year we poured into Greece \$338,000,000 and after more than a year of our official intervention in an area of the world where we had never interfered before, the civil war is still going on, the British are still there, and there is neither peace nor stability nor security there.

It is also very difficult to determine who is responsible for the Cold War over Berlin, who first initiated it. Impartial observers have stated that the Soviet blockade of Berlin was traceable to the act of the allied nations in blocking an independent federal government for Western Germany which excluded the Soviet from any voice in the disposition of the Ruhr region of Germany. In retaliation the Soviet Union clamped down a blockade. Completely surrounded by Soviet dominated territory although it was to have been made up of the four great powers. As a result, whether this is the reason or whether the reason is the fact that the Allies did not make good on an agreement regarding Soviet currency, whatever the reason may be - Berlin is blockaded today and the Allies, especially the United States, have to supply more than 2,000,000 in the city of Berlin exclusively but where, to the great delight of the Germans, in the Western part of

Berlin are all for democracy and in the Eastern part of the same city are all for communism. The Germans are again at the old game, which they know so well, of playing off one group of nations against the other under the slogan of fighting communism which helps them to rebuild German might for the next major attempt to conquer Europe.

The Germans have already succeeded in getting the allied nations to work for them - finance their recovery and to call for the restoration of German industrial power to its former level. And everywhere you hear today voices, and especially American voices, demanding a rebuilding of industrial Germany as the necessary first step for a prosperous Europe. It is maintained that the economic restoration of Germany is the key to the rehabilitation of Europe. It was only yesterday that we were demanding the dismantlement of Germany industrially because German industry was responsible for building up the Nazi war machine. Instead, therefore, of seeking to build up the economic life of neighboring countries - the victims of Germany - the trend today is to build up again to its former industrial position of priority in Europe this nation - this unrepentant, aggressor nation, and thereby to lay the ground for the next world war. One has been yearning demands in the last few months over the return to German ownership of the Ruhr, that great arsenal of German militarism. Everybody in Europe knows that only the complete internationalization of control and direction of this Pittsburgh of Europe, this industrial heart and core of Europe - only that will insure future peace. Nevertheless important voices among the Allied nations, and especially in the United States, are demanding that the Ruhr be returned to the ownership of Germany, who will undoubtedly use it to prepare for the coming war.

Every objective reporter who has returned from Germany has stated that the de-Nazification of Germany has been an almost total failure, that the German

mentality is still steeped in that emotional which ties in a generation both death and disaster to the war. At the moment these Germans are manageable because they are very weak. But they are waiting for the day and in this desire on the part of allied nations - or statesmen - to build up a front against the Soviet Union. Even a dictator like Franco is being disinfected and feelers have been put out to bring him back to the society of nations to join the great democratic front to fight communism. This is the old process which leads everywhere to the strengthening of reaction, not the safe-guarding of democracy.

Back in 1944 President Roosevelt, in criticizing the inadequacies of a handbook which had been published for the military government of Germany declared:

There exists a school of thought both in London and here which would, in effect, do for Germany what this Government did for its own citizens in 1933 when they were flat on their backs. I see no reason for starting a WPA, PWA or a CCC for Germany when we go in with our Army of Occupation.

Too many people here and in England hold to the view that the German people as a whole are not responsible for what has taken place - that only a few Nazi leaders are responsible. That unfortunately is not based on fact. The German people as a whole must have it driven home to them that the whole nation has been engaged in a lawless conspiracy against the decencies of modern civilization.

Much of this has been forgotten, as we push for a new foreign policy our crusade against the Soviet Union.

This past year saw the first workings of the European Recovery Program. It was enacted in April of 1948. It is, of course, too early to strike a balance as to the effective contribution which this very costly program has achieved. It is being said that it is contributing materially to economic improvement in Western Europe. Some have questioned that. It has been said that it is being credited with the checking the spread of Communism in Europe. That, too, has

has been questioned. It should be borne in mind that the victory of the Christian Democrats in Italy took place last April before the E.R.P. got into operation. It should also be borne in mind that the principal beneficiary of this vast program is England where there was no threat of communism at any time. The plan is being ~~suggested~~ subjected to very serious investigation, to some very severe criticism, but it is too early to draw conclusions. Certainly it has accelerated the sharp division of Europe and compelled the smaller nations to choose on which side of the line to go.

As far as China is concerned, China saw not a cold war but a very hot war, a civil war in which we again backed the wrong side. Instead of remaining the impartial, helpful friend of the Chinese people and seeking through every form of mediation and compromise to bring about some coalition government in that unsettled country, knowing how much of justice there was in the demands of these so-called communists, knowing how much of justice there was in the demands for ~~agrarian~~ agrarian reform in China, we lined again with one side - the reactionary side, the side destined to lose because it did not represent the real wishes of the hundreds of millions of the masses of China, and so we poured billions into the coffers of Chiang Kai Shek, but the power of these communists kept on increasing until today they control practically all of China north of the Yangtse River. And now Chiang Kai Shek has had to acknowledge practically defeat and to suggest his own retirement.

In its new improvised foreign policy our country has been forced to back up reactionary governments in Greece and China to work for the menace of the revived industrial power in Germany, and is being drawn into a pact to arm half the world against the other half. I maintain as a humble citizen that this appears to me a dangerous policy and a bankrupt policy. It seems to me and to others - and we are not Communists - that it would be wiser by far if our government dropped this crusading role which was wished on it by Great Britain. We

are strong enough to come to an understanding with the next greatest power on earth which is here to stay. Nothing more disastrous can happen to mankind, nothing worse can happen to the world than the struggle between these two titans of the earth, whether in a cold war or in a hot war. It will tear our world apart. An understanding must be reached sooner or later, but it will never be reached as long as professional soldiers and the representatives of big business in Washington dominate our foreign relations. Our foreign policy should be returned to the hands of civilians and to those who know international relations. I believe that President Truman has some idea that this is the way to go, that some understanding must be reached between the United States and the Soviet Union. Just before his election, he tried to reach an understanding, and he was howled down. He wished to send the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court to Moscow and, of course, you remember with what a gail of criticism this was met. Truman was right then; I hope he makes the attempt again and this time sees it through.

The year 1948 saw the United Nations a toppling and crumbling organization. These are hard words to use, but I find it difficult to find a more accurate description. It failed in everything which involved action - in Greece, in the Balkans, in Indonesia, in South Africa, in disarmament, in bring about an agreement on international atomic control. No progress was made under our Article 43 of the Charter to bring about an agreement between the member states of the United Nations to make available to the Security Council armed forces in order to implement its decisions. Now, its intentions are noble and whenever action is not involved, its decisions are fine. In the last few months the Assembly of the U.N. voted for a genocide court, issued a declaration on the subject to bring to justice men and rulers who work for the destruction of whole nationalities or groups or races. Genocide is declared to be an international crime,

punishable, but punishable by whom. The U.N. published the first of a series of three declarations on human rights which places the seal of international approval upon fundamental right everywhere in any country - rights which cannot be interfered with by nations or by governments. But there is no way to enforce them. At the moment they are very appealing paper declarations. The fault is not that of the U.N. The fault is with the tearing apart of the world into two hostile camps so that if one says yes, the other says no. Until there is an understanding, a working understanding, between the United States and the Soviet Union, the United Nations remains a helpless institution.

The year 1948 saw the establishment of the state of Israel. I have spoken often about it so that I need not dwell too long about it this morning. It is the greatest event of 2,000 years of Jewish history. The year 1948 in Jewish history remains as the red letter year in two millenia. The United Nations, in 1948, played no role at all in the establishment of the state of Israel or in its defense. The decision was reached in 1947. During 1948 efforts were made in the UN to liquidate that decision or to make it impossible of implementation. Accordingly, the record of 1948 in the U.N. in relation to Israel is one of much confusion and vacillation to which our own country contributed its full share. Having approved of partition in November 1947, our country appeared in the U.N. in March of 1948 and demanded a reversal of the decision, asked for the convocation of the Special Assembly to push aside the decision of partition and to substitute a new trusteeship over Palestine. And for two months no one knew where we stood on the subject of Israel, but in May of 1948 the Jewish community of Palestine took its destiny into its own hands and proclaimed the establishment of a sovereign and independent state, and within five minutes of the proclamation, the United States recognized the state. And then Palestine was invaded by 5 or 6 armies, and the U.N. did nothing because it could not -

it had no power to drive out these invading armies. Discussions took place about truce. And then again the Jews had to take their destiny in their own hands and keep these 5 armies out of the state, which they did. Then the head of the Truce Commission appeared before the U.N. after the Jews had done the job with a new proposal. -- We have to recognize the state of Israel but maybe we can cut that state in half again. -- And again the United States government gave its whole-hearted approval to this plan of dismembering this small state of Israel. That was in October, but in November President Truman said, nothing doing. But the dismemberment of the state of Israel did not take place because President Truman did not approve of it - but because the army of the state of Israel did not approve of it. And so they proceeded to beat up the Egyptian army, and now the state of Israel waiting for an armistice and for peace negotiations. I am of the opinion that the armistice will come soon, and the peace negotiations will begin soon, and that ultimately peace will come to this valiant new republic which has been established by the labor and the sacrifices of the Jewish people.

At home the year 1948 was a year of prosperity, large-scale employment, which, however, was overcast by the fear of inflation. At the moment that fear is not so active, but the danger of inflation is still there, and perhaps if that is not checked, the danger of a sudden deflation. The past year saw the election of President Truman which came as a surprise to some of us. I think the American people is general satisfied with the election, even those who voted against him. I think the common people wanted President Truman. They found in him someone who spoke their language, who understood them. President Truman - his administration during the next few years will probably be a left-from-the-center New Deal administration, and it will make an effort to enact and to legislate the things he spoke about before the election -

social legislation, revision or repeal of the Taft-Hartley law, raising of minimum wage levels, larger social insurance, better housing and an effort to direct at least part of his civil rights program.

There are two things in my judgment which face our great country during the coming year or years. Both things are within our control if we exercise courage and faith and skill. There is hardly anything that can defeat America except stupidity, and I do not think the American people is a stupid people. We have an intelligent electorate, skilled - resources are here. What we need is leadership that will reflect our traditions, this ability, this skill. There are two things which we must be doing and to which we ought to direct our major energies. First, to put an end to this Cold War. We have to disencumber ourselves of this holy crusade - "holy" in quotation marks - that was wished on us. I do not believe that we have the resources for it - the economic wherewithal - to arm the whole bloc against another great bloc, to finance and equip them, at the same time to keep up our own military establishment and simultaneously maintain a high standard of living of our own. I do not think it is here, and I think that if we proceed to pour out our resources with such reckless abandon, ultimately something here will crack. We need in Washington in our State Department a new leadership in foreign affairs.

And the second great task is to avert inflation - the dangers of inflation - so that our people can stay at work, be employed, and pay for what they need with the wages which they get. These are the supreme tasks for the coming year, and we pray to our Father, who has been good to our people, that the kind providence will continue to guide and execute their own leadership and our statesmen and our people in the ways of justice, in the ways of freedom, and in the ways of peace.

bluntly, but very gleefully admits that the funds "amount to reverse reparations. . . ." Then in a more solemn tone, the Times also concedes that one billion dollars of reversed reparations is vitally needed to make Germany "a going concern." As a climax to this auspicious event, we have the authoritative word of Mr. Bevin himself who states that the plan raises the whole level of German industry, and that it would be a great thing for Europe, because low living standards for Germany would bring down the living standards of all western Europe.

Apparently Mr. Bevin is not troubled about France, Poland and Czechoslovakia. But more illuminating is the fact that Mr. Bevin, poor diplomat that he is, has actually let the cat out of the bag. The Potsdam decisions clearly state that Germany's average living standards shall not exceed "the average of the standards of living of European countries," excluding the United Kingdom and the USSR. Now, according to Mr. Bevin, the procedure will be reversed. Europe will not have to tail along with the vicissitudes of Germany's industrial might.

Actually, this plan has been put into practice with the embargo of German coal deliveries to France and other European countries. This is the way Messrs. Bevin and Byrnes have worked out the German three-year plan, which incidentally, was originally conceived of, and drafted by German officials! This is the way our Allies will enjoy the fruits of victory gained through blood, sweat and tears. How can it be explained that some of our leading advocates of unplanned economy are so anxious to impose regimentation in Germany? Perhaps Mr. Allen W. Dulles, director of the American Schroeder bank (see article page 17 in this issue), and a brother of John Foster Dulles, a chief political advisor to Secretary Byrnes, can provide the answer. In a recent speech before the National Foreign Trade convention, Dulles said: "European economy can never get on a sound basis if Germany remains in an industrial vacuum." Dulles then went on to say that it was necessary to work out a plan whereby Germany can develop the ability to pay for essential imports. It seems that Messrs. Bevin and Byrnes have obliged.

In other words, we now have a plan to preserve American investments in Germany's industrial war potential.

But, the American people under Franklin Delano Roosevelt, never contemplated planned economy for Germany. They never contemplated a program that would place the chief responsibility of rehabilitating German economy on the American people. They never contemplated the resurgence of German war potential and the withholding of reparations which are and justly needed by our German-devastated neighbors. Nor was such a plan envisaged at Yalta, Potsdam or our own directive, J. C. S. 1067.

This is something new and foreign to the ideals that motivated us in the fight to destroy the German plan. The plan deserves the sharpest protests from Americans who are more concerned with security and preservation of friendship with our Allies, than the sentiment of a few.

F.D.R. ON GERMANY

We have been deeply disturbed by recent press reports to the effect that high government officials, including Senator Tom Connally favor the industrial rebirth of Germany as necessary for a prosperous Europe. The implication is quite obvious, namely that it is our responsibility to rehabilitate Germany, as a first condition for the revival of prosperity in Europe.

It is our considered judgment that this approach to the German problem does not correspond with the spirit or the letter of the decisions taken at Potsdam by the Allies and if it were carried out would necessarily retard the rebuilding of those areas devastated by the German war machine. That war machine was the creation and product of Germany's industrial might.

After World War I the treatment of Germany was predicated on the false premise that German industry was the sine qua non for the revival of European prosperity. Consequently Uncle Sam found himself in a strange position of contributing enormous sums to the German economy so that Germany's obligations on reparations became practically non-existent. Mr. Edwin Pauley in a recent article gives clear confirmation to this truth:

"In 1918 we won a war. We said we would make sure that there would never be war again. But we made a fatal blunder. We decided that Germany should pay reparations in money. It didn't seem to dawn on us that in order to pay reparations in money, Germany would have to build up its industry in order to get the money to pay."

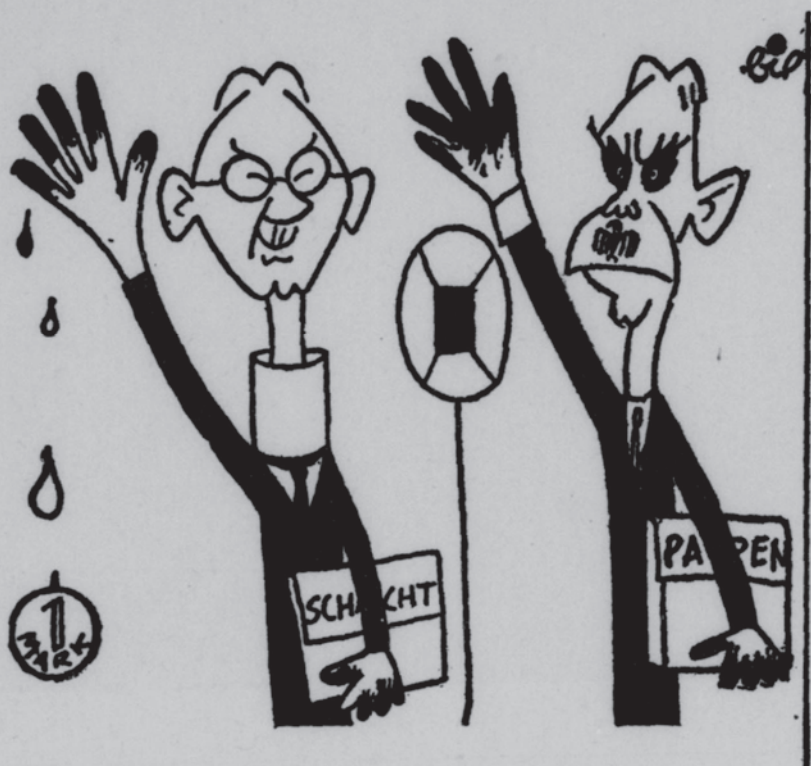
"So—with Uncle Sam lending the money and never getting it back—Germany was able to develop the great steel, chemical, aircraft and other plants which equipped the hordes of Hitler for conquest."

"We saw the error too late. But we vowed we would never make that same mistake again. This time we said, we would disarm and de-industrialize Germany so she could not again become an aggressor."

It was precisely this terrible blunder described by Mr. Pauley which prompted the Allies at Potsdam to take a more realistic approach to the elimination of German war potential. The Allies agreed that only when Germany's neighbors are economically strong can there be genuine prosperity and security in Europe. This necessitates the full application and implementation of the reparation terms agreed upon at Potsdam, and it also places upon the United States, the strongest power in the world today, the moral obligation of aiding our Allies first, in the tasks of rebuilding their broken homes and lives.

For generations, the myth that German industry was the generator of peace and prosperity in Europe was accepted without question by many well-intentioned people, but this was a carefully built up fraud, cultivated by German apologists. One must distinguish between a highly industrialized state, as our nation, and a Germany which has always used industrial power to subjugate other nations and launch wars of aggression. Commercial intercourse to the German mind was only an incidental by-product in its lust for power and conquest.

It was our misfortune to experience the rapacious ac-



"Germany has lost a battle but not the war."

(French cartoon from 'Ici Paris')

(Continued from page 5)

tivities of German cartelists when our people were going all out in the war effort. It is a matter of public record that many vital industrial processes were seriously impeded because of the strangle-hold exerted by German cartels. We do not believe that the American people ever want to be placed again in the position where our defense and security are jeopardized by German industrial might. Nor do we believe that the American people will consent to pay again for the rehabilitation of German industry.

We sincerely believe that these important considerations must be carefully weighed in the forthcoming conferences among the Allies on the future treatment of Germany. They must be taken into full account by our delegates at the forthcoming meetings of the Council of Foreign Ministers, at which time the future treatment of Germany will be discussed. Certainly, all the industrial plants in Germany are not worth the life of one of our boys and yet, this is the very essence of the problem.

It would be well for our delegation to reacquaint themselves with the views of Franklin Delano Roosevelt regarding the treatment of Germany. On August 26, 1944, President Roosevelt in criticizing the inadequacies of a handbook for the military government of Germany said: "There exists a school of thought both in London and here which would, in effect, do for Germany what this Government did for its own citizens in 1933 when they were flat on their backs. I see no reason for starting a WPA, PWA or a CCC for Germany when we go in with our Army of Occupation."

"Too many people here and in England hold to the view that the German people as a whole are not responsible for what has taken place—that only a few Nazi leaders are responsible. That unfortunately is not based on fact. The German people as a whole must have it driven home to them that the whole nation has been engaged in a lawless conspiracy against the decencies of modern civilization."

For the Record

Unfortunately the American public seems to be paying little attention to the incredible facts presented by the prosecution at the trial of 23 German doctors, scientists and medical administrators. "Their crimes were the inevitable result of the sinister doctrines which they espoused and these same doctrines sealed the fate of Germany, shattered Europe and left the world in ferment," stated Brig. Gen. Telford Taylor, chief of counsel for war crimes at the opening of the trial. Writes Dana Adams Schmidt from Nuremberg to the New York Times: "The defendants were headed by Karl Brandt, Adolf Hitler's physician and Commissioner for Health and Sanitation. . . . General Taylor charged them with practising a 'macabre science' of killing. He described in detail the medical experiments on concentration camp inmates and war prisoners of all nationalities and races, including Germans, involving high-altitude tests, freezing, malaria inoculations, mustard-gas research, seawater potability, poison, epidemic jaundice, sterility and typhus.

Beyond the pale of even the most perverted medicine were the slaughter of Jews for a skeleton collection in Strasbourg, the killing of some 275,000 persons in the guise of euthanasia and the murder of some 35,000 tubercular Poles. 'But this is no mere murder trial,' Gen. Taylor declared. Rather, he said, the 'grave and unusual' obligation of the American court to peoples and races whose suffering could never be redressed is 'to set forth with conspicuous clarity the ideas and motives which moved these defendants to treat their fellow-men as less than beasts,' to 'cut out and expose them' in order to protect civilization against a repetition. The court's special responsibility to the German people, he continued, is to show them that their downfall was caused by the 'insane and malignant doctrines that Nuremberg spewed forth . . . a nation which deliberately infects itself with poison will inevitably sicken and die. These defendants and others turned Germany into an infernal combination of lunatic asylum and charnel house.'

Dr. Andrew C. Ivy, the eminent American scientist, before testifying at the Nuremberg trial of the German doctors, sent an official report to Secretary of War Patterson for whom he conducted a survey of the barbarous crimes committed by German physicians. Writes Dr. Ivy in his report, "There is no evidence . . . indicating that the organized (German) medical profession or the scientific societies voiced a protest . . . it involved German physicians and scientists, ignoring the ethical principles and rules which have been established by custom, social usage and the ethical medical conduct . . . in fact, the doctors . . . human beings with decidedly less consideration for the rule as regards pain and hygiene that is given to animals when they are used as experimental subjects."

"The climax of this tragedy, which surpasses the inhumanities of man to man recorded in history, is the fact that, so far as can be ascertained, no new discoveries were made and that German medicine and surgery made no significant progress during the war."