



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
163

Box
59

Folder
863

Some things I do not believe in, 1952.

786
SOME THINGS I DO NOT BELIEVE IN

February 3, 1952

The things you believe in or the things you do not believe in determine your action and conduct, if you are logical and consequential. To believe one thing and to act contrari-wise is to involve yourself in a maze of contradictions which may impede your progress and ultimately defeat you. You may be proved wrong in your beliefs. That is the calculated risk which a man must take in this uncertain world of ours where there are so many factors which are variable and unpredictable and where omniscience is denied even to the wisest of men. That is why men should be cautious and make such provisions as they can on the possibility that their basic assumptions may be proved false. This is to hedge oneself about with a certain degree of security in case our calculations miscarry. To be dogmatic to the point of complete abandon of all precautions is, of course, foolhardy.

But, on the other hand, to believe one thing and to act another is disastrous. And this is especially true in national and international life. Here contradiction between belief and action leads to stultification, to blind and wasteful expenditure of substance and energy, to the sacrifice of the very values which a people is most anxious to preserve, and ultimately, to defeat. I want to speak of two of these beliefs which should lead to a certain kind of action on the part of our people and our government, but which seemingly do not.

The dominant issue in our world today, the issue which eclipses all others, is the issue between the East and the West, between the Free World and the Communist World. On this issue our people and our government may take one or another position. Having taken a position, our people and our government should logically and consequentially follow through with corresponding action and conduct. Thus, if we believe - really believe - that war with the Communist

world is inevitable and inescapable and it is only a question of time - this year or next year or in five years - and we shall have war with the Communist world, a war which of necessity will be vast and global and prolonged and of incalculable destructiveness, then it is clear, logically and consequentially, that we must go "all out" in swift and thorough-going preparation for such a war. Our industry should at once be reconverted to defense purposes. Civilian needs should be pushed aside and in all cases priority should be given to military requirements. Military budgets should not be pared, except in clear cases of waste, and taxes should be raised to finance complete rearmament in order to insure victory. If this is our belief, that war is inevitable, then we must seek allies all over the world, even among our former enemies, among the Francos and the Titos and the unregenerate Nazis, and equip them and finance them in the hope that they will fight side by side with us against our enemy. If that is our belief, then we must accept not only the military draft which we now have, but also Universal Military Training, which is now before Congress, and all other measures which our military may deem necessary for the safety of our country. If that is our belief, then the inevitable rising inflation which is already upon us, the lowering of our standard of living, ~~in~~ the return of rationing, the coming of austerities, should be faced by us without complaint and without flinching.

But if we believe that war with the Communist world is not inevitable, not inescapable, and our public officials from the President of the United States and the Secretary of State down reassuringly tell us over and over again that such a war is not inevitable, and as all the political heads of our allies in Europe tell us - in other words, if we are not on the eve of war, then many of the things which we have been doing/^{and} are planning to do seem to be rather illogical, seem not to flow from our sincere belief, seem rather to be dictated by contrary belief. Then many of the burdens which we are assuming, which we

are asked to assume, which we are asking our allies to assume, seem unnecessarily heavy.

Take, for example, the matter of Universal Military Training, legislation of which is before Congress. When we plunged into the Korean War, we suddenly found ourselves unprepared. Why we were unprepared, no one seems to know. No one is willing to assume responsibility for this unpreparedness. It is always easy to blame the American people for everything that goes wrong. The military, of course, cannot be blamed. They are always blameless and beyond reproach, and the Administration can always unload its responsibility upon the opposition party, so there is no one to blame but the American people. But the American people gave our government in the four years between 1947 to 1950 over 56 thousand millions of dollars for direct military outlay to keep us prepared. That money was spent - 56 billions of dollars. Why then did we bog down so disastrously in a small-scale war, as the President called the police action.

Well, we were unprepared after the Korean War, and so, to get ourselves prepared, we reactivated the draft for four more years. We are putting millions of our people in uniform again and Congress has been asked this year to appropriate a sum of money for our military almost equal to what was spent in the last four years. That may all be necessary. That may all be necessary even if you believe that war is not inevitable. Caution would point to the necessity of keeping ourselves armed and strong in this uncertain world on the chance that our calculations may prove false. We have no quarrel with reasonable preparedness. But why Universal Military Training? How would a six-month military training of 18-year-olds and a subsequent $7\frac{1}{2}$ years in reserve - how would that increase our military power? Such training will not give us a single adequately trained soldier for combat duty. They will not be available for immediate service in case of war. They will have to be retrained from the

very beginning before they can be sent into combat duty. How will Universal Military Training, which is of course peace-time conscription - peace-time conscription of teen-agers - how will that help us in the present emergency? Is it intended to frighten the Communist world? Is it intended to show the number of people we have under arms, to over-awe Russia?

Dr. Homer Rice Rainey, who had been very active among the youth of our country, who is now President of Stevens College, makes this apt observation:

If Russia is not frightened by the greatest navy in the world, by the greatest air force, by production capacity ten times greater than her own, and a huge pile of atom bombs, is it possible that she is going to be frightened by a million boys drilling and marching around in camps? For every boy we can put into a training camp, Russia can put three or four, simply because she has that many more youths between 16 and 25 years of age than we have.

Does peace-time conscription ever prevent war? Europe has had an experience with peace-time conscription for quite a number of generations, and Europe has never escaped war. Is peace-time conscription essential for victory to a people in case of war? Great Britain and the United States never had peace-time conscription and they emerged victorious from the wars which they fought. Why should high school boys be taken from their homes, their normal environments, their schooling, and thrown into an environment of an army camp? Will this improve their citizenship or their morals? Is that the best place for boys of 18 years old? It is interesting to note that all the organized religious bodies of America - Catholic, Protestant and Jewish alike - have been violently opposed to the placing of our teen-agers in army camps. Archbishop Cushing of the Catholic Church said, "Does anybody seriously think that the army is the best place for the physical, religious and moral training of Catholic or any other American youth?" That is a strange doctrine for America. It is a new idea for America, but it is not a new idea in the world. This idea

was tried in Italy. Mussolini said that Universal Military Training would give the youth of Italy the stamp of nobility. I ask if our young people should envy the fate of Italian youth. Hitler said that compulsory military training would give each man a ground for pride in his citizenship. I ask you what grounds for pride are left to the cheated youth of Germany."

The former president of the University of Chicago, Dr. Robert M. Hutchins, says this about the prospect of the possibility of educating our youth in army camps. He said:

I was in the army from the age of 18 to the age of 20 and cannot recommend it as a school of responsible citizenship. I came out lazier and more negligent than when I went in. I became an expert at cutting the corners and at the elaborate kind of cheating to which privates devote most of their time. The essence of this is learning to look as though you are working when you are not, appearing to be obedient when you are not, and thinking up and putting over pretexts for avoiding any disagreeable task. In addition I acquired a large vocabulary of improper words.

I admit that I had led a sheltered life, so that my military experiences came as a greater shock to me than might have been the case if I had not been the son of a Presbyterian minister who had become a professor.

But I think it stands to reason that, though free and independent citizens make the best army, the army is not the best place to make free and independent citizens. The place for that is the educational system. If the system is not doing its job, let us reform it. Let us not delude ourselves into thinking that universal military training can do what the educational system ought to do.

And what would be the cost of this universal military training, according to the estimates of its proponents - some four billion dollars the first year, some two billion dollars every year thereafter - two thousand million dollars a year. We could finance the education of two million American boys in school, in college, a year at a cost of \$1,000 each.

One suspects that behind the effort to rush through Congress at this time in this period of crisis, under the plea of national emergency, a measure which has nothing to do with our national emergency, which cannot help us in our national emergency, but which will inflict and pin down permanent peacetime conscription upon the youth of America, that this measure is intended to serve the interests of those groups and forces in America which would like to regiment American thought and militarize American life, a condition which is alien and abhorrent to the American spirit and to American tradition. It is intended to serve the interests of a vast and of a frightfully expanding military bureaucracy whose representatives are becoming increasingly prominent and influential in all the departments of our government - in the Cabinet and the diplomatic service, and in other critical civilian areas of our national life. This is part of a tendency, conscious or unconscious, to militarize America.

And so, among the things I do not believe in is Universal Military Training. And if you do not believe in it as I do not believe in it, this is the time to make your belief and your opinion heard by your Congressman and your Senator, by government authorities so that the voice of the American people may be heard in the legislative halls of Congress.

And just as I do not believe in universal military training, I do not believe that it is necessary for the security of our country, which is not on the eve of war, and war is not inevitable, inescapable - I do not believe that it is necessary to remilitarize Germany. I do not believe that Germany will save our democratic civilization or that it will fight to defend freedom in the world or that it will willingly make the Fatherland the battleground for the conflict between the East and West.

I believe that our rearmament of Germany is a colossal blunder of the first magnitude and can only serve either as a provocation to war with Russia, and if we want peace why should we provoke war, or it will lead to the reestablishment of Germany as the future arbiter of the Western world, certainly of Western Europe, a role which Germany has always coveted.

Symner Welles, the former United States Undersecretary of State, and one of the keenest minds and one of the wisest heads in recent decades in government, wrote in his book, which I believe many of you have read, "Seven Decisions that Shaped History", the following:

If we are to be realistic, given the acute tension now existing in our relations with the Soviet Union, how can we fail to admit that any Russian government, even a government more pacific and conciliatory, must inevitably regard as a threat to Russian security our rearmament of the country that in 1917 forced them to accept the shameful peace of Brest-Litovsky and in 1941 invaded and ravaged their homeland?

Germany, when strong - and we'll be making it strong - it will be Germany and not the United States and not the North Atlantic Treaty Organizations which will decide where Germany wants to fight, when Germany wants to fight, and against whom Germany wants to fight. The formula which has been devised by us whereby German divisions will be absorbed within a European army and will fight under NATO orders, is a very naive formula. The German militarists will see to that, and the German militarists are coming back into power and we are helping them to come back into power. Germany has twice provoked war in our generation and ravaged the world. It would be a major contribution to the peace of Europe and the peace of the world if Germany were kept permanently demilitarized and neutral and united. It is impossible to continue indefinitely the artificial separation of Germany between the East and the West. This was our original and sound conviction after the second World War. Secretary of State James F. Byrnes declared at Stuttgart in 1946: "It is not in the interest of the German

people or in the interest of world peace that Germany should become a pawn or a partner in a military struggle for power between the East and the West." That is correct, but our military leaders, under the belief that war with the Soviet Union is inevitable although officially proclaiming that war with the Soviet Union is not inevitable, is escapable - our military leaders have now persuaded us that German soldiers are indispensable for the defense of Western Europe, that we need them. We told that to the German people - that we need them - and this is giving Germany rare, extraordinarily rare bargaining power, and they are demanding and receiving from us concessions today, even when the German army is still on paper, still in the blue-print stage. They have already raised the question of the Saar again; they are already talking about the restoration of their lost provinces in the East. Now, we shall rebuild Germany; we shall rearm Germany; we shall pay the cost of the rearmament, and when the time comes, then we will need Germany, and the German government with the Wehrmacht again in the saddle will re-discover that popular German national refrain, "Deutschland uber alles". They will fight for Germany! They will fight to recover lost territory or lost prestige! They will not fight to establish freedom and democracy in the world, and the unreconstructed Nazis among them, many of them who have already returned to key positions in Germany - they are now waiting and biding their time, and we are playing their game.

We have tried to persuade ourselves and the rest of the world that all this is made necessary by the imminence of the Russian threat, which we say is not inevitable, and that this threat can be overcome only by the threat of an overwhelming force on our part, and until such time as we can confront Russia with this overwhelming force, all attempts at a settlement diplomatically are futile.

I do not believe it! I regard it as a fatal policy because such a point where we can confront the Soviet world with overwhelming force can never be reached, and somehow along the way this policy will blow up in our face.

The American Friends Service Committee, the Quakers, in the report which it prepared on the United States foreign policy recently, called "Steps to Peace", makes this pertinent observation:

Indeed, we have reached a point in our international thinking where any suggestion that we should sit down with other parties to a dispute and discuss the basis for settlement is certain to be branded by large sections of the press and public as a scheme to sell out American interests. There is nothing wrong with compromise as long as it is honorable. Indeed, it often materially advances a nation's long-term interests.

Because I do not believe that war is inevitable, because I do not believe that the issues between the East and the West - the real, the concrete, the specific, the definite issues, the ideological issues which can never be solved - because I believe that the issues between the East and the West are not irreconcilable, because I do not believe that the two cannot live together in the same world, because if they do not learn how to live in the same world, there will be no world for any of us to live in: I deplore the excess in our concentration on strength, military strength, physical strength, and the minimum of our concentration on diplomacy and statesmanship. I deplore that the Voice of America is becoming the voice of hysterical propaganda and not the voice of reason and reasonableness, of confidence and not of fear and panic. I deplore that we are resorting to unnecessary measures to regiment and to militarize American life. I deplore our blind efforts to rearm potentially the most dangerous foe to the peace in Europe, a re-militarized Germany. I deplore our efforts to assist with our resources dictators of the Right and of the Left in Europe and in Asia, foes of our basic American way of life, in the fond hope that they will come to our aid when we have a showdown between the East and the West.

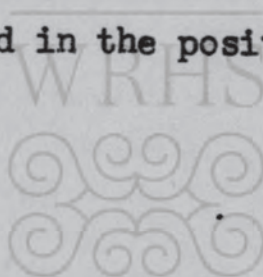
There are better and surer ways to save freedom and democracy in the world. The best and surest ways are not the ways of arms or reliance on the atomic bomb, for we ought to remember that Russian Communism has made its great progress in recent years in the world without war and without arms. That's the frightening thing about it all. The best and surest way - I use the terms "best and surest" - they are absolutists, no guarantees, there are no certainties in this situation - you have a belief and you try to follow through logically, taking calculated risks in the pursuit of your conviction. The best and surest way to ease up the tensions in the world today is to initiate, first and foremost, a program for disarmament. Two efforts were made at the United Nations during the last sessions in Paris. The program was proposed by the United States and the Western powers, a program for progressive disarmament. Another program was proposed by the Soviet Union. The basic idea underlying both of these proposals is the sound idea that if the world is ever to have peace, it must begin to disarm immediately because this desperate race for rearmament will ultimately explode into the third World War! It's bound to explode because this pace cannot be kept up indefinitely, either by us or by them! So far, nothing has come of these proposals. I am afraid that the spirit in which these proposals were made by both groups was not of the friendliest kind, conducive to sitting down and talking things over reasonably. But a commission is to be appointed, further to study these proposals. Herein lies the first constructive, positive move in the direction of the pacification of the world.

To give it a chance of success, we ought to surround it in a climate of good will, and not of hostility and suspicion and hatred. We ought to hope for it and pray for it and build for it and propagandize for it, and not to sneer at these proposals - they at ours and we at theirs.

And the second constructive way to ease up the tensions of the world and ultimately to defeat Communism - ultimately, not tomorrow or the next decade or the next generation - we ~~kk~~ have to think here in terms of cycles rather than of years or decades - the best and surest way ultimately to defeat Communism is to remove those conditions which give the Communist propaganda in the world the prospect of success - remove as far as we can, that misery, that poverty, that hopelessness, that degradation which exists among more than two-thirds of mankind today - the masses of the earth which have nothing to lose but something to gain through Communism. If we can ~~think~~ help them with our material and economic aid, by our technological know-how, by the personal service which leaders of our great democracy in every walk of life can give to those peoples in an effort to raise their standard of living, to improve their health conditions, to stamp out illiteracy, to give the rising generation among them who know there is something going on in the world, something is happening - to give them a chance that doors will open for them to new prospects and to brighter prospects, not by the hand of Stalin and Moscow, but by the hands of the free peoples of the earth! We are not interested in exploiting them but in helping them.

This is the second way constructively in which we can help to achieve what we most wish to achieve; namely, a free and stable world society. But that is all predicated - these constructive measures and others - are all predicated on the idea, on the belief that war is not inevitable, that war is not inescapable, that we are not on the eve of war, that there is time calmly, deliberately, constructively to work through these difficult problems to some kind of a satisfactory solution. If on the other hand, we permit ourselves to be panicked into the belief that we are on the eve of war, that it will come in six months or in twelve months, then these considerations are pointless. Then everything our militarists tell us to do, we should do, however distasteful they are.

I prefer to cling to my belief. I hope you do, too. I hope the American people, which is the one people that can save the world today, will continue to believe that the situation is not desperate, not hopeless, that there is the possibility of working out a more or less satisfactory solution which will not be altogether free from tensions, but nevertheless, would enable the world to continue to rebuild its shattered life since the second World War, and to bring some kind of security and tranquility, hope, into the lives of our children, growing up in a desperate world, in a frightful world, where they cannot think of tomorrow or plan for tomorrow, where they sort of feel that they ought to prepare themselves as cannon fodder. These are the things we ought not to accept, we ought not to believe in. Rather, we ought to believe in the constructive and in the positive, in the hopeful things of the world.



1/ Things I believe in - or don't believe in - determine your actions and conduct - if you are logical and consequential.

To believe one thing and ^{to act} contradictorily is to involve yourself in a maze of contradictions which will ~~impair~~ ^{ultimately} your progress and ultimately defeat you.

You may be ~~wrong~~ ^{proven} wrong in your beliefs - that is the calculated risk which a man must take in our uncertain world - when so many factors are variable and unpredictable - and omniscience is denied ^{even} to the wisest men.

This is why men should be cautious and make such provisions ~~as~~ ^{on the possibility that} as they can, their basic assumptions may be proved false. - This is to hedge one self about with a certain ^{degree} ~~insurance~~ of security in one's calculations and carry. To be dogmatic to the point of excepting absolutely of all possibilities, is fool-hardy.

But to believe one way - and to act another - is disastrous.

2/ This is especially true in national and international life. - Confusion or contradiction bet. belief and action leads to self-destruction, - to blind and useless expenditure of substance and energies - the merit of ^{the values} ~~the~~ values which a people is most anxious to preserve - and, ultimately to defeat.

The dominant issue before our world to-day - which eclipses all others - is the issue bet. the East & the West - bet. the Free World and the Communist world.

~~slowly~~ he freed without complaint.

④ But if we believe that war with the Com. and is not inevitable - as our public officials from the President and the Secy of State down reassurance tell us over and over again - and as the great heads of many of our allies tell us - if we are not as the case of war - then many of the things which we have been doing and are planning to do - seem to be illogical - seem not to plan from our belief, seem rather to be dictated by a contrary belief. Then many of the burdens which we are assuming and ask our allies to assume are unnecessarily heavy.

heavy.
3/1. Take for example the matter / U.M.T. - When we plunged into the Korean war - we suddenly found ourselves unprepared - why we were unprepared no one seems to know and no one seems to ~~be willing to~~ assume the responsibility for such unpreparedness. It is always easy to blame the Amer. people - the history of our is always blamed and by and by approach - and the administration is can always avoid responsibility when the offensive party. But the un-people gave us just as the war bet. 1947-1950 - it is to for direct military outage - to keep us prepared - that money was spent. Why did our one boy down so disastrously in a small scale - war, in which Pres. T. called a public - action?

(2) So, in order to get ourselves prepared, we reactivated the draft ~~for~~ⁱⁿ further with as was in various ways - and Congress has been asked to appropriate this year \$56 for our military needs - Perhaps all that is necessary.

Even if we believe that arm is not inevitable, caution
would ~~support~~ point to the necessity of keeping numbers
around and strong - ~~should perhaps~~ ^{on the chance that} an escalation
from false...

(b) But why V.I.T.? How would ~~the~~ ^{an} 100x. month military
framing of 18 p. ~~increase~~ ^{and a subsequent 7% increase in reserve} an military panel?

Such framing will not put us a right-adequately framed
soldier for combat duty. They will not be a valuable for
us under service in case, war. They will have to be retrained from the top.
How will this process time consumption of 100x. month consuming even
it will not pay after Russia. (Dr. House) Does peak time consuming even
us in present emergency for generation - the S.S. U.S.

Why should high school boys be taken away from their schooling and
homes - their normal environment - their scholarship and
thrown into a government army camp? Will
that uplift their citizenship - their morals? Is that the
best place for them. - God that Rel. free (Archbishop Archbishop) Lord
(r) Prof. Robert M. Hutchins - (Drake)

(d) And the cost - 1/2 b. the first 11 - 2 b. thereafter -
(we could finance 2 m. boys in school a year at a cost of
\$1000 each).

4/ One suspects that behind the effort to use these Cyber
in this period of crisis, under the plea of nat. emergency, a
measure which can in no way help in the nat.
emergency but which will inflict permanent plate - man
corruption upon the people of America is intended.

to serve the interests, these groups speak on ~~an~~ ¹⁰
who would like to reg. ment Am. that - and unlike
its life. - a constitution alien and adherent to
Am. Spirit and to Am. Tradition. It is to seek
the interest of a vast ^{expanding} military bureaucracy - ~~which~~
whose representatives are becoming increasingly more prominent
in ~~all~~ ^{and in government} department / post - in cabinet - in diplomatic services
- and in other critical civilian areas, our nat. life

5/ Among the things I do not believe in is UMT - (written copy)
I do not believe that it is necessary for a security
to re-militarize Germany. I do not believe that Gen.
will save an democr. convulsion ~~and~~ ^{as} that I will
fight to defend freedom in the world - or that it
will voluntarily make the fatherland, the batth-ground
for the East-West conflict. (Summer Wells)

I believe that our rearmament ~~is~~ ^{can and}
~~is~~ ^{and if you want peace - why should any power be}
~~is~~ ^{is} provocation to war with Russia and the
~~is~~ ^{is} the future ambition of West.
~~is~~ ^{is} Europe - when it is fully rearmed a role which
I always coveted - When strong ^{made strong} it will be for -
and not the U.S. - or Nato - who will decide where
Gen. wants to fight, where and against whom - the
formula which has been derived which for divisions

or an arm conference between with such overwhelming force. (7)
- all attempts at a settlement of difference are futile.

I do not believe it - I regard it as a fatal policy.
Such a point can never be reached - and somewhere along
the way - it will blow up in our faces.

The American Friends Service Comm. in the report which it
prepared on U.S. Foreign Policy - (Steps to Peace): earnestly
observes: (Excerpt)

- 6/ Because I do not believe - war is inevitable - Issues are
irreconcilable for a way of - so that too caused loss
together in same world - I deplore the excess in
our concentration on "big things" and unconscious of
ambition or diplomacy; I deplore that the voice of
has become an unprincipled voice, and not the voice of reason,
and reasonableness - of compromise and not of fear & shame;
I deplore that we are working to unwittingly means
to experiment unintentionally, unwisely; I deplore our blind
efforts to re-arm the potentially the most dangerous
to peace in Europe - Germany; and to assist
with our renowned dictators, the big and the little
- all in Europe and Asia, in the blind hope of using
them to save freedom and democracy in the world -
- 7/ There are better, surer ways to save them - not thus
arms or share an atomic bomb - Internationalism has

made vast progress without war. Put an end to arms (8
now - for hate prejudice & universal disarmament -
(Professors at Paris). Her effort should be encouraged
- and to help backward peoples to higher standards, high



THE DANGER OF THE
Finally—perhaps the most decisive consequence of all:

. . . if we are to be realistic, given the acute tension now existing in our relations with the Soviet Union, how can we fail to admit that any Russian Government, even a government more pacific and conciliatory, must inevitably regard as a threat to Russian security our rearmament of the country that in 1917 forced them to accept the shameful peace of Brest-Litovsk, and in 1941 invaded and ravaged their homeland?

—Sumner Welles, former U. S. Undersecretary of State, in his book

Seven Decisions that Shaped History (New York, 1951), p. 214

Not only is this policy dangerously provocative. The risks it entails do not offer us the promise of a stable solution in Germany. It leaves unsolved what is to virtually all Germans the No. 1 problem facing them: Unity of the two halves of their country. And this is a problem for us as well, as George C. Marshall said when Secretary of State:

~~... the peace of the world is our~~ government, then, making a continuing and exhaustive effort to find, through negotiation, the basis of agreements which will minimize the tension?

... Indeed, we have reached a point in our international thinking where any suggestion that we should sit down with other parties to a dispute and discuss the basis for settlement is certain to be branded by large sections of the press and the public as a scheme to sell out American interests. . . . There is nothing wrong with compromise as long as it is honorable. Indeed it often materially advances a nation's long term interests.

—*Steps to Peace* (American Friends Service Committee, 1951), p. 31

Along with many authoritative observers and large bodies of public opinion,