



## 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  
165

Box  
60

Folder  
939

Taking stock of 1954, 1955.



TAKING STOCK OF 1954

January 2, 1955

The year 1954, dear friends, has been a relatively good year for the world - almost a whole year of peace. The ancient Romans had a God by the name of Janus - our month of January is named after him. Janus had a bronze Temple in the Roman Forum which faced both east and west. This Temple was open in time of war and closed in time of peace, and tradition had it that this temple was shot only four times in some 800 years, so many were the wars which Rome waged. In our age also, a whole year or almost a whole year without a war somewhere in the world has become a rarity. But fortunately, the year 1954 has been almost such a year. Actually, it was not a full year of peace. The Indo-China War did not come to a close much before the middle of 1954. Nor was it a tranquil year. Throughout the year there were tumults and tensions and rumors of war, the Cold War was intensified as well as military preparations and armaments. There was no progress made during the year in the direction of disarmament, and none of the fundamental issues between the East and the West were settled - they will be with us in 1955. But actual fighting ceased during the year, and that is a great and grateful gain. And the leaders of the world seemed to feel that the danger of a general war receded during 1954.

The year closed, as you will recall, with the approval by the French National Assembly of the treaty creating the Western European Union which is to include a sovereign Western Germany and a German army of twelve divisions - 500,000 men. This was a victory for Premier Mendes-France, although it was a victory by a very narrow margin and it followed by a week, just a little over a week, an earlier rejection of the Treaty by the French Assembly. Thus, France has most reluctantly consented to the rearmament of Western Germany, and its inclusion in NATO. Earlier,



in August, you will recall, France had voted down the European Defense Community Plan which called for a United European Army with Germany in it. After the defeat of this plan, a new compromise plan was devised principally with the help of Sir Anthony Eden, whereby Great Britain made more specific commitments with regards to the presence of British troops on the continent of Europe and Western Germany made concessions on the matter of the Saar. This plan, too, was violently resisted by the French but has now been finally approved, at least as far as the French National Assembly is concerned. The French Upper House is still to act upon it, but the likelihood is that it too will approve of it.

This if this plan is finally ratified by all the nations involved, including Western Germany, Germany will be rearmed after having<sup>been</sup> disarmed, as a bulwark against Russia, and with the approval of the nation which has most to fear from it. The political leaders of the Western free world are pleased with the prospect and express their gratification. They are all hoping that Germany will not go militaristic again, that it will abide by its pledges, that it will not in the future exceed the quota of military personnel, or the arms - the number, size, and types which have been allowed to her under the treaty. The world's past experience with German rearmament is thus ignored. It is assumed that there will be no secret rearmament again in the future on the part of Germany. The lessons of the past two wars are discounted. All will be different now. The Nazis or their successors in ideology will not come into power again in Germany. The German General Staff will not take over. Germany, rearmed with the aid, consent of the free world will, when it grows strong again, it is hoped, remain a docile and trustworthy member of the European community and will never again break out to conquer Europe and will never again raise the cry, "Deutschland uber alles."

I sincerely hope that these political leaders and statesmen are right. I have my serious doubts. Only the future will tell the story. I have expressed my



belief time and again before now, that only a demilitarized, only a neutralized and a united Germany, as was envisaged in the Potsdam agreement will help keep the peace of Europe. We are now to have a militarized Germany, a non-neutral Germany, and a dis-united Germany. And I fear that it is on this rock of a divided Germany, a Germany divided between east and west, one zone under the influence of the Western powers and another under the influence of the Soviets, that it is on the rock of a divided Germany that all of our plans are likely to flounder. The problem of the reunification of Germany remains not only unsolved but aggravated by what is now taking place.

The threat of Soviet Russia was skillfully exploited by Hitler and the Nazis and Mussolini and the Fascists in their rights to power. The western world stood by indulgent when it did not actively assist in their rise to power. The Spanish Republic was destroyed with the connivance of Great Britain and other Western powers and led to the Fascist-Franco victory, and this was the prelude to the 2nd World War.

I read recently the account of the Former Ambassador to Spain, Claude G. Bowers, called "My Mission to Spain," "Watching the Rehearsal for World War II." This book was published a few months ago. It is an amazing book of startling revelation, of facts which should be known to all people, was not known to all people, and has been forgotten by many who knew of these facts. Ambassador Bowers, who was six years U. S. Ambassador to Spain at the time of the war on the Spanish Republic, sums up his position and the position which he tried to convey to Washington all through the years of his Ambassadorship in the following words: "My opinions were as follows:

(1) That after the first days of considerable confusion, it was plainly shown to be a war of the Fascists and the Axis powers against the democratic institutions of Spain.

(2) That the Spanish war was the beginning of a perfectly thought-out plan



for the extermination of democracy in Europe, and the beginning of a Second World War with that as the intent.

(3) That the Nonintervention Committee was a shameless sham, cynically dishonest, in that Germany and Italy were constantly sending soldiers, planes, tanks, artillery, and ammunition into Spain without an interference or real protest from the signatories of the pact.

(4) That Germany and Italy were using Spanish towns and people for experimental purposes in trying out their new methods of destruction and their new technique of terrorism .

(5) That the Axis, in preparation for the continental struggle, was using Spain to see how far it could go with the silent acquiescence of the great democracies and to test their spirit, courage, and will to fight in defense of their ideals.

That while the Axis powers poured in armies, planes, tanks, artillery, technicians, and engineers for Franco, the Nonintervention Committee of the European democracies and our own embargo were making a powerful contribution to the triumph of the Axis over democracy in Spain."

I am afraid that the same technique is being used to rebuild German military might today which twice brought disaster upon the world, and that we are being victimized by the same wishful thinking, the same short-sighted so-called "realistic" thinking which collapses like a house of cards when the truly realistic facts of life take over. Well, only the future can tell. What is clearly indicated in my mind now that this treaty is about to be consummated and Germany is about to be rearmed, what is clearly indicated is a meeting of the top leadership of the four great powers to confront frankly and realistically the situation in Europe today. To see whether a "modus vivendi" cannot be worked out between the East and the West. ¶ During the year some significant events took place which may be said to contribute to a lessening of tensions in many parts of the world: the settlement



of the Iran oil controversy; the long-standing controversy over the Suez Canal; the problem of Trieste seem to have been amicably, or as amicably as possible, adjusted, and as a result three of the trouble centers of the world have, for the time being, been eliminated from the area of tension.

. Gratifying progress has also been registered in the direction of the Eisenhower Plan for using atomic energy for peaceful purposes. The subject was actively discussed in the U. N. and there seems to have been, for the first time, an agreement between all the great powers of the world, to explore as rapidly as possible the possibilities of utilizing this marvelous new reservoir of untapped energy, not for destruction, but for the advancement of human life and the peaceful purposes of civilization.

Domestically, two news stories claimed the headlines for a good part of 1954: the McCarthy-Army hearings and the censure vote in the Senate, and the Sheppard Murder trial. The latter was for weeks on end spread across the front pages of the newspapers of America. One would think that the matter was a tremendous concern to the American people and to the future of mankind. Actually, this Sheppard murder case and trial was of absolutely no significance to the life of our community or our state or our country, and the publicity which attended the case and the trial and the avidity with which millions of our people read every detail of it are simply indications that most of us like crime, and mystery and gossip, and that newspapers, which reflect popular taste, are not averse to capitalize upon these facts.

The McCarthy-Army hearings over television and radio demonstrated how imperfect are the methods of procedure of our legislative investigations hearings, how easily an unscrupulous politician can exploit them for publicity and personal aggrandizement, and how demagogues and would-be dictators operate.



The good which may result from these protracted hearings may be the adoption of a new code of procedure which will give Congressional Investigation Committees what they are entitled to have, and at the same time protect the rights of witnesses and the constitutional guarantees of American citizens.

The threat of Senator McCarthy as an individual may have waned during the year, but the menace of what has been called McCarthyism in our free democracy is always present. An American citizen must always be on the alert to guard himself against it. Had the times been more desperate, had there been a wide-spread economic depression in our midst, this episode of McCarthy may have been far more dangerous to our country and to its institutions.

The year 1954, the latter part of it, witnessed a lessening of attacks, fortunately, on our civil liberties, which was growing in momentum during 1953. Man everywhere rose in defense of our educational institutions and the freedom of teaching in our schools, in academies and universities - the free world struck back - the free citizens of America struck back against this concerted effort which was made to shackle American free thought in every field - in the church, in the school, and in the press. That has been most gratifying.

One of the most gratifying events of 1954 was the outlawing of school segregation by the Supreme Court of the U. S. This is a milestone in America's steady progress towards the full realization of its own noble ideals of justice and equality. A momentous, a <sup>unani</sup>~~unani~~ unanimous decision was rendered in May of this year on this subject of segregating children in the public schools on the basis of race. Chief Justice Warren, speaking for the unanimous court said, "We come then to the question presented: Does segregation of children in public schools solely on the basis of race, even though the physical facilities and other "tangible" factors may be equal, deprive the children of the minority group of equal educational opportunities? We believe that it does."



Not all the states in the South have accepted this ruling or plan at this moment to abide by it. The racial poison is not yet out of their systems entirely. Some states have recently voted, if necessary, to abolish the whole public school system in their states rather than accept the Supreme Court ruling. It will take time for full compliance, I am sure, but a great road-block has been cleared away. This is the genius of democracy. It accomplishes its purposes, not always immediately - frequently there are setbacks - but if the will of the people is there continuously pressing for a given objective, in the course of time, through a process of education, that objective will be obtained.

During 1954 the American people was employed. There was no runaway inflation, no disastrous deflation. Our nation has been adjusting itself to a peacetime economy rather satisfactorily in spite of the hopes and wishes of the enemies of the free world to see our economy crash down into disaster. The standards of living of our people have been high. Nowhere on God's earth do so many enjoy so much of the goods of the world. Here again it does not mean that there are no poor among us, no slums, no want. What is significant is not that we have approached the millenium but that so many of our people are sharing with what is being produced and are enjoying such a high standard of living unknown in the whole history of mankind, anywhere on the face of the earth. And the trend continues to make more and more share, and share more equably what our amazing technology and skills of our people, the initiative of our people are producing. During the year the American people have shared with others that which it itself has enjoyed. The needs of the peoples abroad have not been overlooked, and America has poured out thousands of millions of dollars to alleviate suffering abroad and to help people by technological guidance and advice, by financial support to improve their own conditions of life. From all indications our expert economic prophets and



prognosticators seem to tell us that the prospects for the coming year are good indeed. So that I believe it is a fair summary to say that 1954 has been a relatively good year for our people and for the world.

For the Jewish people 1954 was a significant year because the Jewish citizens in the United States celebrated during this year the 300th anniversary of the settlement of the first Jews on the soil which is now part of the United States of America. This gave our people an opportunity to review three centuries of living on these gracious shores. We derive strengthening and a measure of pride from the significant contributions which our people made to the total life of America. Our non-Jewish friends join with us throughout the country in the many celebrations which have been held commemorative of this important event. It has given the American Jewish community also an occasion to think through a bit its own position and its prospects for the future - what it has achieved, what it has failed to achieve, what remains to be done to insure its position as a vital and creative religious group in this land of ours.

1954 marked also substantial progress in the consolidation and the development of the State of Israel. Its population has been steadily increasing and will soon reach the figure of two million. Since 1950 the population of Israel has increased by 30% and its national income has increased by 37%. Its exports and re-exports have steadily increased so that the trade deficit has steadily decreased. There still remains, of course, a substantial adverse trade balance, but that, you must remember, is experienced by every pioneering country. The United States of America continued to have an adverse trade balance until the late 1880's. Were it not for the fact that much of its budget has to be diverted into military channels to protect its life, the young State of Israel would be most rapidly approaching a point of economic self-sufficiency. The political troubles with its Arab neighbors did not lessen during 1954. The leaders of the Arab League are still breathing war. The Arab neighbors refuse to make peace,



refuse to sit down and discuss peace. The boycotts against Israel and the blockades continue. During the latter part of 1954, you may recall, there was considerable discussion in the Security Council of the United Nations over the fact that an Israeli ship, the Bet Galim, making its way through the Red Sea to pass through the Suez Canal, was stopped and taken over by the Egyptians. Since that time, the Egyptian government has released the crew of the Bet Galim and promised to return the ship, but it has not indicated that it will conform to the decision of the United Nations to permit shipping bound for Israel to pass through the Suez Canal. The Arab intransigence thus continues, and I am afraid that our foreign policy in relation to the Middle East, in relation to these Arab-Israeli problems has not been helpful. The policy which was announced gives the Arab states the impression that the American government will now be advancing their interests at the expense of Israel. The American government, of course, has never taken that position. But in promising to ship arms to these Arab states and in actually shipping arms to the state of Iraq in the last few weeks without at the same time shipping arms to Israel and maintaining the balance military strength in that part of the world, the impression has grown in the United States that the American government is with them and therefore they do not need to come to any understanding with the state of Israel. Perhaps in 1955 the situation will clear up a bit. I am hoping that it will. But it will require a much more positive, less of a wishful thinking, approach on the part of those responsible for Middle East policy in our State Department to bring that desired objective to pass.

And so we enter the year of 1955, dear friends. I believe, more hopefully, but in all realism it should be said that the grave problems which have plagued the world last year and the year before and the year before that have received no fundamental solution. They will be on hand during the coming year, challenging



us and calling for the best kind of statesmanship that our country is able to give and also for a great measure of patience on our part and confidence in ourselves and in our democratic principles if we are to continue to give the world a measure of leadership in these troubled and unsettled times.





1). A <sup>relatively</sup> good year for the world - <sup>almost</sup> a whole year of peace. The Romans had a god - Janus. He had a bronze temple in the Roman Forum which faced both East and West. It was open in times of war, closed in times of peace. It was shut only 4 times <sup>in the centuries</sup> before the Christian era - so many were the wars which were waged.

For an age too a whole year without a war somewhere in the world has become a rarity. The year 1954 has been such a year. <sup>Actually not a full year - Dien Bien Phu - End of war in Indo-China -</sup> Not a triumph for, by any means; there were tumults, tensions and rumors of war. Cold war intensified, and as well as military preparations and armaments <sup>the super powers made for big armaments</sup> none but East-West rivalry. They will all be with us in 1955. But actual fighting ceased - and that is a great gain.

- Danger, a general war needs -

2/. The year closed with the approval of by the F. Nat. Assembly of the treaty creating the Western European Union which is to include a permanent Western European army of 12 divisions. - 500,000 men. This was a victory for Russia - France - altho the victory was by a very narrow margin - and followed by a week or so later rejection of the treaty by the F. Assembly.



The treaty is still to be ~~accepted~~<sup>signed on</sup> by the B. Upper House, when it is expected to be approved.

Fr. has thus most reluctantly consented to the arrangement, W. Germany, and the admission into Natl. League.

Earlier, ~~France~~<sup>in August</sup> had voted down the European Defense Community plan, which called for a United European Army with Germany in it. ~~That was the~~ <sup>a new</sup> ~~plan~~ <sup>championed</sup> plan was devised with the aid of Sir Anthony Eden, which included G. B. in which ~~the~~ <sup>make more specific</sup> government with regard to the presence of British troops on the Continent - and with higher making sense on the Saar. This plan, too, was ~~vigorously~~ <sup>vigorously</sup> resisted by France - but has now finally been approved.

Germany will now be ~~accepted~~ <sup>accepted</sup> as a full member of the Natl. League that has most to fear from it. The basis of the W. plan would ~~say that~~ <sup>is</sup> are pleased with the prospect. They are all hoping that Germany will not go militaristic again, will abide by its pledges - will not exceed the military personnel or ~~weapons~~ <sup>weapons</sup> allowed her under the Treaty. ~~The~~ <sup>the</sup> past experience with Germany ~~is~~ <sup>is</sup> ~~completely~~ <sup>completely</sup> ignored. The lesson, the past 2 wars are discounted. All will be different now. The neo-fascists will not come into power again. The German General Staff will not talk again. Germany, reunited with the old and











6/ The threat <sup>as an enemy to our free institutions</sup> of the North <sup>may have named during the year</sup> but <sup>(5)</sup>  
the <sup>negroes</sup> fact of the fact that an free democracy is always  
present - and we must always be as firmly against it.

(a) A <sup>lesson</sup> <sup>of attacks on civil liberties - freedom of expression</sup> <sup>and structural inhibition</sup>  
<sup>- free, liberal from stock lock</sup>

7/ On the most <sup>important</sup> <sup>events</sup> 1954 - was the <sup>supreme</sup> <sup>court</sup> <sup>decision</sup> <sup>on</sup> <sup>school</sup> <sup>segregation</sup> by the Supreme Court, the U.S. This  
is a milestone in America's steady progress towards  
a full realization of its noble ideal of justice for all.

A unanimous decision was rendered in May of this year.  
Chief Justice Warren declared for the unanimous Court (quote)  
that all the States in the Union have accepted the ruling  
and at the moment plan to abide by it. The process is  
not yet out of their system. Some states have voted  
to abolish the public school system, education altogether  
rather than relent. It will take time for full accomplish-  
ment, but a great road-block has been cleared.

~~It is very~~ - <sup>Peace-time economy</sup> <sup>No money in pocket - too</sup>  
<sup>disorders, depression</sup>

8/ Our people employed - Our standard of living high -  
no where as far as health do so many enjoy so  
much - And we have shared - Our charities  
used abroad - Prospect for 1955

9/ Ten century - opportunity to review: contribution  
to plan for future

10/ Israel - progress. Population steady increase - 2M.



Since 1950, the population, Israel has increased by 30%.  
 The national income - by 37%.

~~The trade deficit~~

The exports + re-exports have steadily increased -

The trade deficit has steadily decreased -  
 Still a substantial ~~trade~~ adverse trade balance - experienced  
 by every pioneering country - The U.S. had an adverse

trade balance until the late 1850s.

② Was it not for defense costs - self-maintenance

11) Political friction with neighboring Arab States - Break her!

Boycott and Blockade continue.

Suez - But failure - Israel - Israel shipping.

12) American Arms Policy.





## Part III. EQUALITY BEFORE THE LAW

*Our Constitution is color-blind. . . . The law regards man as man, and takes no account of his surroundings or of his color when his civil rights as guaranteed by the supreme law of the land are involved.*

Mr. Justice Harlan, alone dissenting  
in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, 1896.

*We come then to the question presented: Does segregation of children in public schools solely on the basis of race, even though the physical facilities and other "tangible" factors may be equal, deprive the children of the minority group of equal educational opportunities? We believe that it does.*

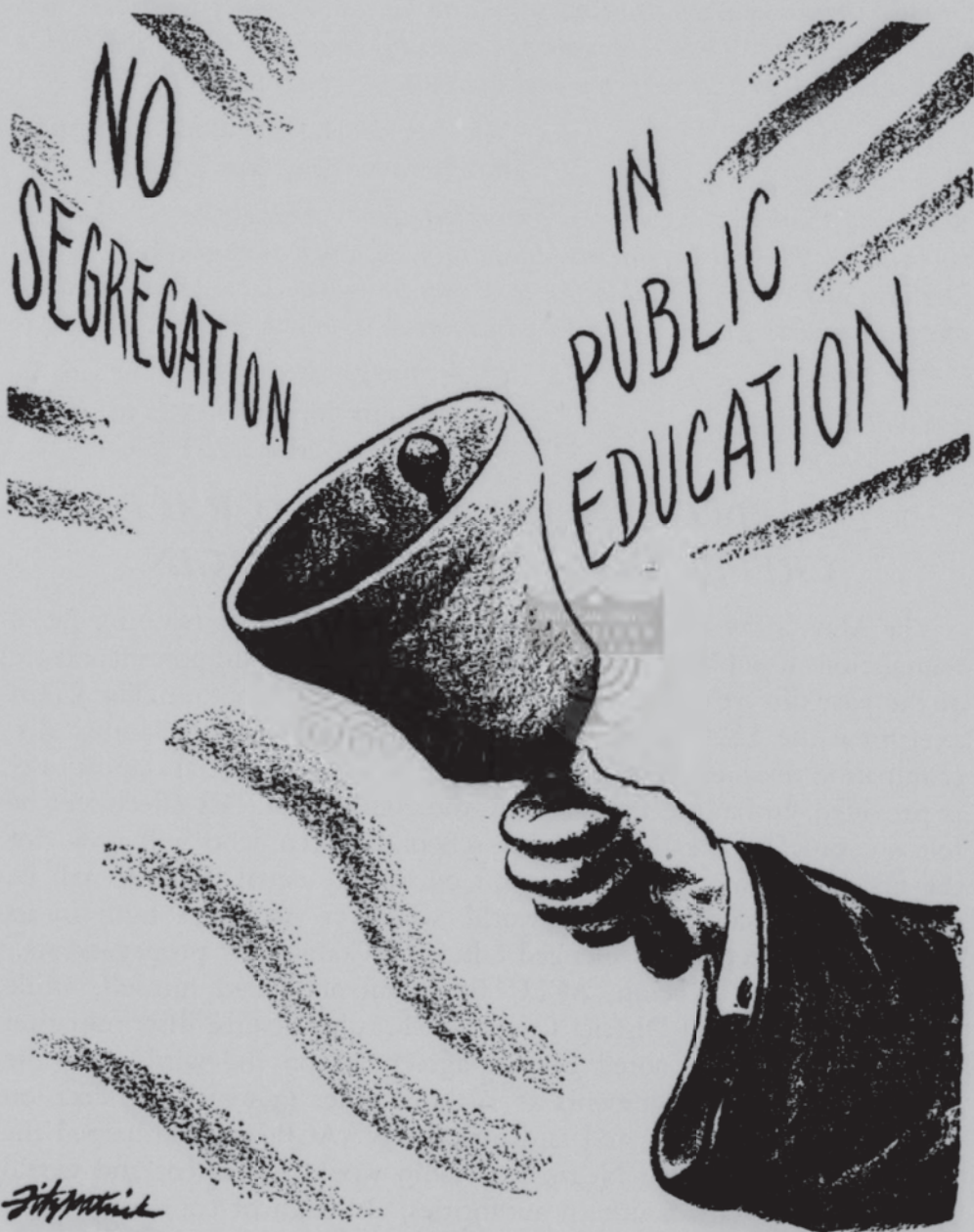
Chief Justice Warren for the unanimous Court in *Brown v. The Board of Education*, May 17, 1954.

### EQUALITY IN RELATION TO RACE, CREED AND NATIONAL ORIGIN

The May, 1954 decision of the U.S. Supreme Court banning racial segregation in public schools is undoubtedly the most important victory of the past fifty years in the warfare against discrimination. The Court overthrew the 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* doctrine which held that discrimination does not exist if separate but equal educational opportunity is provided. In hailing the decision, the ACLU said, "Its effect will be felt not only by the thousands of school children who will now, for the first time, enjoy their education on a truly equal basis. It will be felt in the far corners of the world, wherever America's faith in its democratic concepts is challenged falsely by Communist propagandists." Judge J. Waties Waring, ACLU Board member, had himself, while sitting on the federal District Court bench, ruled against discrimination in several cases. He noted general agreement on the wisdom of the court in asking for arguments as to the manner in which the decision should be implemented, and said that the NAACP had also helped the situation by stating that Negro leadership would be patient and would be cooperative with Southern authorities, although of course reserving the right to court action where the rights of Negroes are denied.

It is significant that this decision was made at a time when the South itself was of differing mind about racial equality. For example, in February 1954, at the very time the court was deliberating, Washington, D.C., witnessed the racial integration of two receiving centers, the district jail, a public hospital, a training school, and six public





LIBERTY BELL, 1954