



## Abba Hillel Silver Collection Digitization Project

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

Series V: Writings, 1909-1963, undated.

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American Red Cross, 1940.



For American Red Cross  
over  
WTA M  
May 27, 1940

I am very happy to have this opportunity to add my voice to those of others in urging upon my fellow citizens of Cleveland to respond as generously as they can to the appeal which is now being made throughout the nation by the American Red Cross for Ten Million Dollars to help the sufferers from war and invasion overseas.

The Jews of Cleveland have recently concluded a campaign among themselves and raised a substantial fund to assist their fellow co-religionists abroad who are the victims of the self-same scourge of Europe. My fellow co-religionists in Central and Eastern Europe are suffering from a double toll of tragedy. Added to the inevitable ravages of war and invasion, they have been compelled in recent years to suffer a studied and deliberate persecution because of their race and religion, and hundreds of thousands of them have been broken upon this wheel of intolerance, stripped of their citizenship, robbed of their possessions, denied the right to work, and branded as pariahs beyond the protection of all law. The Jews of America have in recent years responded to their pitiful appeals for aid, and have made, and are making substantial sacrifices to alleviate their suffering. Nevertheless, in spite of this great burden, I urge upon my fellow Jews to respond most generously also to the appeal which is now being made by the American Red Cross for other refugees and war-sufferers overseas. Human charity and compassion can not know any sectarian boundaries, and Jewish charity never has.

The American Red Cross has for decades now served with rare devotion, men and women, whole communities and peoples, in all manner of crisis and disaster, without regard to class, creed, or color. It has never been partisan. Its record in the last world-war, and in the years of reconstruction which followed, is one of imperishable moral grandeur and heroism. It is being called upon



again by a world at war again, to care for the new casualties whose numbers are mounting appallingly day by day.

Many peoples ~~are~~ are today drinking of the same bitter waters of exile and persecution. A common foe has brought measureless tragedy to countless human beings, regardless of their race or creed, and he has finally united all men of good will, of all races and creeds, in the common task of human rescue and succor. We have now become allies in one ministry of love.

Within the last nine months the countries of Poland, Finland, Denmark, Norway, Holland, Belgium, Luxembourg and France have been invaded. Wherever the totalitarian beast struck, there misery and suffering were visited upon hosts of defenseless and often unsuspecting and unprepared men and women. Great sorrow has come to little countries. The American Red Cross extended <sup>aid</sup> to Poland and to Polish refugees in Lithuania, Hungary, Rumania, and Latvia. It sent aid to Finland and Norway. It is as yet impossible to estimate the true extent of the human catastrophe of recent weeks. Millions have been engulfed in it. In a sense, the problem of caring for all these victims is quite beyond us. It is too vast. Nevertheless, the mandate is clear: wherever we can help, and to the degree that we can help, we must help! Since the invasion of Holland, Belgium and Northern France, in the last few weeks, literally millions of people have had to flee from their homes. Invasion struck them like lightning, and those who took to flight left precipitously, in most instances, bereft of everything. They are now far away from their homes, many still wandering upon the hard and broken roads of exile, in areas swept by war and death, subject to bombing and slaughter, many others finding temporary asylum in over-crowded cities removed, for the time being, from the battle zone where no adequate preparations exist for their accommodation.

The Red Cross representative overseas, Mr. Wayne Chatfield-Taylor, cabled a few days ago: "Millions of people are involved, with the main impact



on France, as transport to England is obviously difficult. While the army is fighting for its life, France is welcoming Belgians, old and young, who arrive on foot, by wagons, on bicycles, in trucks, automobiles, and trains. Some are wounded, some are sick, all are hungry and completely exhausted. They bring with them practically nothing. Meanwhile French evacuees in great numbers have been withdrawn from the battle areas under similar conditions.

"Government agencies, French, Belgian Red Cross and other units are striving valiantly to meet this unparalleled situation and American Red Cross assistance is very opportune. I have allotted full amount to French and Belgian agencies alone and more will be needed.

"Nevertheless, the problem will become even more acute when the refugees have reached southwestern departments of France, already overcrowded with Alsatian evacuees.

"Immediate needs will be clothing, shoes, layettes, cooking utensils and food.

"The impact of the evacuees on food reserves, plus loss and disruption in the productive areas will quickly produce a food stringency, and the clothing situation will progressively deteriorate."

To try to avert, if only to some degree, a frightful human catastrophe, the Red Cross is rushing aid overseas. It hopes to send additional help as rapidly as funds are made available - more food, clothing, bedding, shoes, medications, surgical appliances and ambulances.

I am confident that the generous heart of Cleveland will respond to this emergency appeal. You who will contribute to the Red Cross at this time will do more than extend help to men, women and children in their dark hour of need. You will do more than assume your elementary and inescapable human responsibilities. In a profounder sense, you will be building dikes against the flood of spiritual anarchy which is engulfing our world. You will be throwing up a defense line



of human compassion across the path of an invasion which has been threatening the very character of our civilization and the whole spiritual life of man. Increasingly, callousness to human wrong and suffering, and unconcern with the breakdown of standards of human decency ~~we~~ have spread among the peoples of the earth. A selfish and comfortable attitude of detachment and non-involvement in the sufferings of a riven and menaced world have steadily manifested itself in our midst. Spiritual isolationism has grown into a far graver threat to civilization than economic isolationism. The common bond of humanity is in danger of being snapped - that mysterious spiritual cord of human sympathy, the quick and loyal response of one man's pity to another man's suffering - the sense of moral outrage at the sight of wanton human cruelty. This moral aloofness and indifference of our times are far more serious than the spread of dictatorship, for they spell the doom of any hope or any effort ever to free mankind from the curse of dictatorship. Such hopes and efforts are nourished only by the spiritual nature of man, by his strong sense of human solidarity, and by the compelling mandates of brotherhood and reciprocity. "It is through fraternity that liberty is saved", declared Victor Hugo. Even political and economic isolationism have proved vain and dangerous doctrines in our day. Spiritual isolationism would completely fragmentize our world, and reduce it to hopeless anarchy.

The appeal of the American Red Cross in behalf of suffering humanity is an encouraging evidence of a strong opposite tendency, of a firm resolve on the part of men and women who are still free, to strengthen the common bond of humanity, to fortify the spirit of universal sympathy and interdependence, and to reintegrate the shattered spiritual life of the world. Whereas other voices - hard and cruel voices - are shouting into the confusion of our day, words of division, of hate, threat and abuse, words freighted with the ~~most~~ mischievous conceits of superior and inferior peoples, of master and slave races, or with the



dark doctrines of class struggle, purges and liquidations, the voice of the American Red Cross is the still small voice, but withal, the eternal and undeniable voice, of love and healing, of brotherhood, of unity and solidarity. And as long as that voice remains unsilenced amidst the sound and fury of our war-ridden world, so long will there be hope for a redeemed humanity.





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Belgium and Northern France, in the last few weeks, literally millions of people *from ruined cities and devastated towns*  
have had to flee from their homes. Invasion struck *with fearful suddenness* them like lightning, and

*when able to flee*  
those who ~~took to flight~~ left precipitously, in most instances, bereft of everything. They are now far away from their homes, ~~many still~~ wandering upon the hard and broken roads of exile, in areas swept by war and death, subject to bombing and slaughter. *Many are* finding temporary asylum in over-crowded cities, removed, for the time being, from the battle zone where no adequate preparations exist for their accommodation.

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I am confident that the generous heart of Cleveland will respond to this emergency appeal. *Our share, the 10 M. quota is \$240,000 - not a large sum for Cleveland to raise.* You, who will contribute to the Red Cross at this time, will

do more than extend help to men, women and children in their dark hour of need.

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