

Abba Hillel Silver Collection Digitization Project

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

Series V: Writings, 1909-1963, undated.

Reel Box Folder 180 66 577

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AMERICA'S MINORITY GROUPS IN WAR AND PEACE Abba Hillel Silver The Temple -- Cleveland, Ohio

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There is far too much emphasis placed today in our thought and speech on

minorities in the United States. Unconsciously we are helping to re-create here the crazy-quilt pattern of the Old World. In one essential regard America always differed from Europe. Europe, for centuries, has been concerned with the problem of minorities. Here we were concerned not with the rights of minorities but with the rights of man. Here we spoke of the inalienable rights of all men, regardless of race, creed and color. Here we prided ourselves on judging a man on the basis of his worth, character and achievement and not on the basis of the group to which he belonged or the religion to which he subscribed. Those we held to be his own personal and private affairs.

America was able to absorb immigrants from a hundred races and nationalities and mold them into first-rate citizens. In every great national crisis, such as this World War and the last, these Americans, immigrants or the sons of immigrants, responded as loyally to the call of duty and sacrifice as did the descendants of the very first immigrants who settled upon these shores. Read the names of the boys who are inducted into the armed services of our country which appear daily in our newspapers, as well as the names of those killed and wounded. These names speak of a hundred minority groups from which those brave young Americans hail, but they also speak of the complete submergence or these local, parochial minority interests and loyalties into the one overwhelming lowe and devotion to America.

We did not always succeed in wiping out the minority concept in this country. In the case of one important minority group, we failed lamentably. We surrounded the negroes of the United States with political and economic disabilities. We segregated and handicapped them as a group. As a result we fought one tragic Civil War over this problem, and the problem is far from being solved even today. It is easy to create a minority problem. It is most difficult to solve it. In the long run, the majority suffers as much from minority discrimination as the minority itself.

I wish to speak to you this morning about anti-Semitism which may be creating another of these terribly difficult minority problems in America unless we are

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fore-warned and fore-armed. Why did the tide of racism and anti-Semitism rise in our country and in the world in recent years? What happened? The answer is not far to seek. The tide rose because there were powerful agencies which were intent upon making it rise. Of these, the most powerful agency in the world today is the Nazi regime in Germany. It has fed race hatred throughout the world ever since it came into power. Nazism is a political creed out to conquer the world. It is missionary. It is not content to stay confined within the limits of the land of its origin. It regards itself as a crusading movement for a new order to supplant the present order of society. It seeks to destroy the present culture of the Western World. The Nazis have not been reticent about defining the nature of their crusade. The order of things which has prevailed in the Western World ever since the American and French Revolutions is decadent. It must be destroyed. They are out to destroy it. Racial inequality is one of the chief characteristics of the new social order which they hope to establish on the ruins of the old whose foundations were liberty, fraternity and equality.

In the hands of the Nazis, racism has also become a major technique of imperial expansionism. By means of it they hope to create a mood of crisis, and conflict within those countries which they have marked out for conquest, and so to undermine their powers of resistance. By disrupting the internal spiritual unity of a nation they prepare it for easier subjugation. Anti-Semitism has thus become part of the strategy of Total War.

Until recent years, the problem of anti-Semitism was not a serious one in the United States. Some religious or racial prejudice always existed and it was characterized by local fluctuations of varied intensity, but it was never serious enough to disturb the life of the nation, and to arouse national apprehensions. That it has become serious in recent years is due not to the fact that the people of the United States have suddenly come to a realization that the Jews of America constitute a menace. It is due solely to the fact that the ever-widening circles of politically-motivated anti-Jewish propaganda, originating in Nazi Germany, have finally reached our shores.

The Nazi government stimulated and directed it here as it did in other parts of the world. Nazi agents before the War were actively disseminating it here and native Americans of Nazi sympathies were their eager co-workers. Thus, what had been, up to recently, only a sporadic phenomenon has been fanned into a movement, which is directed from abroad and supported by reactionaries at home. The War has put the brakes on it. Its active agents are in jail or under cover.

Reactionaries are everywhere eager to associate the Jew with all the political and economic measures which they dislike, whether it be the New Deal, labor legislation, social security, the C.I.O., Socialism or Communism. The equation Jew == Communism, or Communism == Jew, served the purposes of the Nazis in Germany most admirably. By means of it they destroyed the German Republic. After the Stalin-Hitler pact, they abandoned it, for it was no longer good policy to attack Communism. Hitler accordingly ceased to denounce Jewish Bolshevism. He found it expedient to denounce democratic plutocracy. And in democratic plutocracy Hitler again found the ever-present and accommodating Jew. After Hitler broke his pact with Stalin he resurrected the Jew == Communism line, and his propaganda since has again been frothing about Jewish Bolshevism.

Why did the Nazis in the earlier stages identify Communism with the Jew?

To be sure there were Jews among the Communists in Germany and in Russia. Some of them were in prominent positions. They were not nearly as numerous as the Nazi propagandists would have one believe, and one must not forget that there were Jews in large numbers and in prominent positions in all the anti-Bolshevist parties in Germany and in Russia. Why then did the Nazis identify all Jews with Communism, and all Communism with the Jew? For the same reason that sixty years prior to their time, Bismarck had identified all the liberal movements of his day with the Jews. For the same reason that the Dominicans and the defenders of the crumbling scholasticism attempted to discredit Humanism and the New Learning in pre-Reformation Germany by branding them as Jewish, and by inaugurating bitter attacks upon the Jews and their

literature. This conspiracy the brilliant authors of "Epistolae Obscurorum Virorum" cunningly exposed.

The guiding princple is always the same: -- inodiate a cause by tagging on to it an unattractive label! It is very serviceable to pin an existing historic prejudice on your opponent. By branding your opponent's cause as Jewish, you give it an unpopular and suspect origin. It looms up as something alien. You are saved the trouble of refuting your opponent's position logically. You score an initial victory of great moment. Bismarck, after he turned reactionary, attacked liberalism by identifying it with the Jews and stimulated a powerful anti-Semitic movement in Germany which produced a voluminous anti-Semitic literature from which the later Nazis borrowed extensively. The same tactics were employed by the Nazis years later to discredit the liberal and radical movements in post-war Germany.

In post-war Germany there were millions of men whose conditions were intolerable, and who were turning to Socialism and Communism. In the last free elections in Germany there were over seven million votes cast for the Socialist ticket, and some six million for the Communist ticket. The problem which confronted the frightened industrial, military and Junker classes of Germany was how to check this stampede toward radicalism, and how to deflect the resentment of the masses away from themselves. The problem, too, was how to assuage the sense of national hurt and humilitation induced by the defeat in the war. Where could they find a visible scapegoat upon whose back all the sins, failures and miseries of the German nation could be put? Such a scapegoat was not difficult to find. A small, defenseless minority, the Jews, against whom there already existed a none-too-latent historic prejudice was fortunately available. From there on it was simple. It was the Jews who stabbed Germany in the back! The German army was never really defeated! Why did the Jews stab Germany in the back? Because the Jews wish to dominate the world, to destroy the Christian nations, and upon their ruins to raise themselves to world dominion. But where is the proof? Why, it is here, in a book -- "The Elders of Zion!"

This book reveals the whole plot. That the book is an acknowledged forgery does not matter. If a lie serves a useful purpose, it must be regarded as truth. This book was circulated by the millions of copies in Germany in the years following the World War. How does the Jew go about destroying one Christian country after another? He has a/cunning way of doing it. He adopts two seemingly contradictory devices. One is capitalism and the other is Communism. These are the converging pincers in the Jew's grand strategy. The capitalism against which you, Christian workingmen and middle-class folk of Germany justly complain, is not the true capitalism. There are two kinds of capitalism: the good, creative, Christian capitalism, and the bad, destructive Jewish capitalism. What you should attack, is not the good Christian capitalism, but the bad Jewish capitalism. A lso, there is a good socialism and a bad socialism. When you vote for the Social Democrats you are voting for the bad, international, Jewish Socialism which is anti-German and unpatriotic. So are your labor unions bad, because they are dominated by Jews, and so is your liberal press which is controlled by Jews. The only good Socialism is National Socialism. In this wise was the economic struggle deftly transferred to another terrain. The struggle was no longer one between progress and reaction, between liberalism and feudalism. The struggle was now between the embattled Aryan and the menacing Jew, between patriotism and alienism, between Berlin and Jerusalem

This propaganda, intense and skillful, and heavily financed by great industrialists -- some of whom have since been disillusioned -- went on for years, and it succeeded in undermining the peoples' faith in democracy and liberalism.

Anti-Semitism was thus exploited, in a political and economic struggle, to defeat progress and to save reaction.

Minorities have been used for such purposes throughout the ages. The great Church Father Tertullian, recalls the experiences of the Christian minority in ancient Rome: "If the Tiber rose to the walls of the city, if the inundation of the Nile failed to give the fields enough water, if the heavens did not send rain, if an

earthquake occurred, if famine threatened, if pestilence raged, the cry resounded:
'Throw the Christians to the lions!'"

Unless these classic tactics are firmly grasped, Americans will not appreciate what is behind the anti-Semitic movement in the United States, which, at least up to the time of our entry into the war, had made grave inroads in our national life.

Anti-Semitism today is a powerful, perhaps the most powerful weapon in the hands of economic reaction. It has been and will be increasingly used by all its unscrupulous lackies and henchmen. It has become an accepted technique.

Anti-Semitism before the War was stimulated in the United States in order to confound our national life, and disrupt its unity. It was to pave the way for an ultimate Facist triumph in the United States. The propaganda device was quite simple: Proclaim from the housetops -- "'The Philistines are upon thee, Samson!' You are being betrayed! The American people is being sold down the river! The international bankers (and by now, of course, this term has been made synonymous with Jewish bankers, for Christian international bankers have somehow disappeared) -- are driving Americans into war, hoping to profit from the sale of armaments and munitions, and hoping also to avenge theselves on their enemies, the Nazis. The Jews are betraying the United States. The Jews were responsible for the last depression and for all past and present economic ills. You, the American people, are not being told the truth, because your press is controlled by the Jews. So are your movies and your radio. Your government cannot help you because your government, too, is in the hands of Jews, from the President down The machinery of democracy is no longer capable of saving the American people. If you wish to be saved you must yield all power, temporarily, of course, to us, your saviors, who will rescue you from this dire plot. When the job is done, all your liberties will, of course, be restored to you, and you will live happily ever after ... " The same tactics which put the Nazis into power in Germany was being employed in this country on an increasingly large scale. And there are Thyssens here in the United States, as there were in Germany who, rather than see their economic privileges

undermined, would welcome the destruction of our free democratic institutions. Some of these American Thyssens and Fascist fellow-travelers had already been decorated by the Nazis....

Anti-Semitism is today no longer the slightly embarrassing thing that it was in the past — something to be counteracted by easy-going, good-will movements. It is a far more sinister thing. It is a powerful and dangerously imminent threat to American democracy. It is the same sinister force which destroyed one free country after another in Europe. Wherever Fascism is on the march, — anti-Semitism is its vanguard. The shock troops of Fascism are always anti-Semites. By that sign ye shall know them!

Believe me, when I speak of anti-Semitism to you, I do so not only because I am a Rabbi and wish to defend my people. This would be quite natural, especially in this most tragic hour for my people in Europe when they are being subjected to wholesale butchery and ruthless annihilation. After all we are an old people and we have experienced persecution from the days of Pharaoh in Egypt, four thousand years ago, to the present. We have survived. Somehow we have a strategy for survival, and our faith in God Who was with our fathers through the long weary centuries and Who sleepeth not nor slumbereth today sustains us in this dark hour with the hope that we will come through the vast tribulations of the present. I speak of anti-Semitism because it is a threat to all human liberties. It is the most successful weapon in the hands of all the privileged classes of the world who seek to destroy the freedom of men and check for all time their progress to a fuller enjoyment and a fairer sharing of the social goods.

The answer to the question: "Can the rising tide of race prejudice be stemmed?", depends, therefore, upon how long the Nazi regime will last. There will be little abatement in race prejudices until the Nazis are defeated. With their defeat, political anti-Semitism, that is to say, the exploitation of anti-Semitism as an imperialistic propaganda weapon, will be completely discredited, although anti-Semitism, as a social phenomenon, will not quickly disappear. In the unsettled reconstruction period following the war, it is likely to be very active, and exploited by economic

interest.

What can be done to counteract it? There still remains, of course, the oldfashioned but very dependable method of democratic education. Education still remains
the strongest bulwark of a free people. The American people should be educated in the
techniques of modern propaganda which have been so skillfully elaborated in our day.

Courses in the detection of, and the prophylaxis against false propaganda of all kinds,
and particularly race propaganda, should be introduced into the curricula of all of
our high schools and colleges. Our people should be made aware of the methods which
are being employed and the true character of the organizations and governments which
employ them. They should be informed as to how racial and religious antagonisms are
aroused and exploited, in order to divide a people, confuse its counsels, and undermine
its national resistance to aggression. We have long assumed that education in
democracy will somehow take care of itself, as an unconscious by-product of our day-byday living. This is no longer true. Quite deliberately and specifically we must
begin to educate our people anew, and especially our youth, in the principles,
practices, advantages and obligations of the democratic way of life.

Propaganda, ever since the last World War, has developed into a new science, a Voodoo science, if you will, but still a science. It is no longer left to chance. It has been very carefully elaborated, and those who wish to employ it for their special interests know exactly how to compound the ingredients of that intoxicating cup by which the masses are made drunk and inflamed so as to be the more easily pushed in the direction in which the interested parties want them to move. "The driving power of great social change," declared Hitler, "is not insight but hysteria." If you wish to bring about a social revolution, do not rely upon the slow processes of education and evolution. Rely upon hysteria! Inflame the passions of people, arouse them to a high pitch of passion, fear, or anger, and then you can do with them whatever you wish. By the time they recover from the fumes of your propaganda, they will be faced by your machine guns, if you are clever....

Illiteracy and ignorance used to be the greatest foes of human progress. They are no longer. Mankind has found ways of stamping out illiteracy in very quick order. The real foe of human progress today is the far more subtle and insidious one called propaganda, which employs a bastard literacy, and a venal and corrupt educational process as an important part of its technique. The mind of man is not kept uninformed but misinformed.

Democracy, generally, should cease to be naive, trusting and doctrinaire. The forces hostile to our way of life and to our free institutions must be continuously exposed. No democracy is immune, as long as it is a democracy, from anti-democratic propaganda, either native or foreign. Forces opposed to democracy will use the very apparatus of democracy, as well as its abundant tolerance, to destroy it. In the face of this, democracy must not remain complacent. It must aggressively and relentlessly expose and harass every form of propaganda which is hostile to our basic conceptions of life and government. The agents of foreign dictatorships and their native-born kinsmen must be kept under constant surveillance.

Laws should be enacted — if they do not already exist — against the public vilification of any race or religion, and against the incitement of people against any race or religion. The most virile and business—like democracy of all — Switzerland — has had such laws for some time. France found it necessary to enact them, but, unfortunately, too late!

Increased opportunities for contact between all racial and religious groups in America for the discussion of their common problems, and for a survey of all areas of friction are highly desirable. It is a sure way to "plant companionship thick as trees along all the rivers of America" — Walt Whitman's dream.

The times call for frank and honest self-criticism on the part of all, Jews and non-Jews alike, and particularly on the part of those who constitute the majority; for after all, the solution of anti-Semitism lies with them. It would be very helpful if each group would begin to beat its own breast instead of beating its neighbor's breast

and would confess "mea culpa" ...

There was a race problem in the United States long before the Nazis kindled the Jewish race problem. There was a negro problem, and there is a negro problem in this country. American-made -- not imported. To this day millions of citizens of the United States live and are tolerated only as members of an inferior race. They are segregated in many parts of this country, as to schools, churches, residential districts, hospitals, travel, and places of amusement. Millions of those fellow citizens are economically handicapped because of race. They find it hard to get employment in skilled trades. By and large, they are restricted to the lower strata of our industrial life. to jobs which the white man does not want. In many instances they are denied the right to equal wages for equal work. In some parts of the country, and not merely in the South, they are denied the right to join labor unions. They are curbed in the exercise of their franchise as regards voting and holding office. They are denied equal opportunities in education. There are few recreational facilities available for their young people. Many of them are herded into miserable slums, and these slums are not restricted to the South. Since 1915, over one million negroes migrated to the North and their living conditions, are up to at least 50%, below the minimum standard of decent human habitations. They are subjected sporadically to mob violence, to lynching, and a Federal law intended to curb mob violence, was filibustered in the Senate of the United States as recently as two years ago, for forty-seven days, and a similar filibuster was recently successfully employed against repeal of the Poll Tax. As a result, this race which, given opportunities, has evidenced remarkable gifts in many fields, is disproportionately subjected to poverty, ignorance, disease and vice.

Here is a native American race problem, the kind of problem which the Nazis have only recently begun to create in Germany, and this problem is allowed to exist within the framework of democracy. Here is a test of our sincerity. We all recognize that this problem is a hard, indurate, and time-encrusted one. But it is not an insoluble

one. With the right kind of attitudes on the part of the white man, — the majority group — a solution can be approximated, — given patience, courage and vision on both sides. What the problem calls for above all else is a resolute will to be fair and just, and a determination to attempt to solve it not in the gross but in the detail, not in the abstract, but in the concrete.

The Oriental Exclusion Act is another instance of race discrimination allowed to exist within the framework of our democratic America. The Chinese are our gallant Allies in this war for human liberty, and yet no Chinese can become a citizen of the United States.

What is needed most in order to stem the rising tide of race prejudice which will disfigure our common life, is to discipline ourselves to treat men as individuals. It is not an easy thing to do, but we are not concerned here with easy problems or with easy solutions. The chief characteristic of the democratic dogma is the concept of the free human being and his inalienable private rights. Before the rise of democracy in Western Europe, before the Rights of Man were proclaimed, individuals were treated legally, socially, and economically not in relation to themselves but within the frame-work of an associated life in relation to the group to which the belonged — nobleman, cleric, military, peasant. It was a hierarchic, a for arrangement of social life. It was from a long experience with

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Prefaredness is relative. If other vatures do name - pair passer we do not in prise an position by expend, 9 mer untliers. We in-Crease volum but and relative streng the -4). Forlation - Oceans - Old horld Politics are no concern form -Well mind our our beservers. Did m in 1898 - in 1917. an wi dorng it nun in China - hadin ameria -Can be? Can be become seon involved in the world and get hole isolated from it! he way with for Isolation but as the while the things which outarght as go are Front. Commerce, hum thouts - competition - demons for green door. as unnary that we can keep out gleents, will describ theef out, the west Herenflow, I, it? Perrehation - econ + ideal + weh matily pol - 9 Nagis, Tos. + leppenden in Latin amer warry - Moserve Dochum -Shall we abandon it - + trum over Central M. hurer to durpan un her alum, like afer rei - after 100 g peace en this Her of the. and if we do abandon it - will temp was wife, withert, day to an down, wine us prater place? 5]. The trally we having faith in Kraladen, or in hentality Laws, such as we enacked. - For we woke for wer trune armaments - Repeal.

We har realized that husbally laws the on hands - frequently shouther the hands - frequently shouther the hands of the who we would letter, but who has resonner, his own, and is not defendent after Who well of supplies - and cripples the Metin nation, the offaces who weeks on supplies. heed wall, say but China - Johan; or Ethicken + I taly; + Finland this abdication simply makes - and be made - for moreony luke awardy

and our people und not tolerante it indef. Reveatures. 6). Peace through Concernan - appearment - damic 6 xaugh Mounds -Phone an story, werates first nations (small, unaterfirst nections don't matter) demanding and throughny. Salisty them! Esp. if it can be done ho water is ever bratisfied - est of its leaders have inter dreams and weeks were - the acres have interested as whether "Wein Kampf" is the program - frang with osters + Wern's Musselmi - Tunisia, Conta, Nice Then an Hance of Ham No by waterns - access to some grande of anguagement water all who wish to pay for the But to to arrange for a poertical redistributions of all lands to sales of all the Territorial Ham and is guit faither. hill ud disarun anders 1/ Disarrament - Effect ned Cause all an Disacus. Corf. han failed. Naval hun tation agreements here holes down, must be seeming funt! 8. What Rend I Learney? Regional Parts? Munich will joth way of stuna & Locarno. Predatory-Comfetiline + Exclusions by water = Fascent dutates abhun League but relish 4 Power leg. Mits. why? Exclude They are the form of the form by 4- anging confined to the

9/. Our me Leunty. Cilluline - hayen & Beller down ho fanet q hayen - its idea. Found!
Bedrayed - U.S - Just the Chair rever 1932

There given a chance Here rapid deleviration. Possely water water has Return to mentable Idea - for which no substitus! Templemental to act - act gruckly given semmy- propenses desarmament and take place slowly but skadily - Kahn, do not want to draw 10/. Far 9/ Sex - But no are other roads , hankind an idea inherently sound - rawed he perm defeated anences must help - Tacked was tolore less (Just)

ud in "leading" but in "corperating" If we will not undervene them regulated inter procedure to step aggussors + defend Jules law - we will find our - selner undervening them was (Inter) My leave our Notion of National Somereynthy-and proper def. of nat. Sovereynth is status surject to Somen just - if it is not anardy - is always how that by law Just as Personal likely is freedom under law-els ticeus undiend a genery functioning as hand to adjust cut matter at issue on the losis of lan - any une > walnied. her a right to get first want to settle a dispute -