



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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V-E statement, 1945.

This is a great day, one of the greatest in the history of the world, a day of victory and triumph after more than five years of devastating war. For this is not just another victory in another war. It is a victory over a brutal and insensate foe who proclaimed his determination to destroy the entire ethical and spiritual heritage of the Western world. The Nazis set out to conquer not a country or a continent, but a civilization, our civilization whose foundations are laid in the classic Judaeo-Christian tradition. Whatever our theologic difference may be, or the degree of emphasis we place upon one or another of our ethical concepts, fundamentally, ours is a common spiritual heritage. We believe in God. We acknowledge the supremacy of the Moral Law. We hold sacred and inviolable the life of the individual. We reach out for a society in which all men shall be brothers and for a world order of universal peace.

We have not always been true to these great ideals, for we are not perfect. But we have never scoffed at them or derided them. We strive to approximate them. We teach them to our children. We feel ourselves continuously challenged by them and even when we fail to practice them fully, we recognize their eternal rightness and are chastened by our inadequacy.

But the Nazis and the German people who collaborated so enthusiastically with them, and who came very near to winning this war and to imposing their regime which, according to their boast, would last a thousand years upon the world, held these ideals in utter contempt and scornfully rejected them. They recognized no God but the State. They recognized no law but the supreme law of the Fuehrer or the Duce. The individual possessed no inalienable rights which the masters of the totalitarian state were bound to respect. In place of the ideal of the brotherhood they proclaimed a tribalism, a racist blood cult, a biologic nationalism which justified the exploitation of some races and the extermination of others. War was extolled as a supreme opportunity for the individual and the nation, and youth was indoctrinated with the ideals of militarism, chauvinism and the morals of ruthlessness.

Thank God that this dangerous and all but successful attack upon Western liberal civilization has collapsed. The shameless spokesmen of this contaminated philosophy and this appalling spiritual perversion which found their foulest expression in the bestialities of a hundred torture chambers, slaughter pens and concentration camps are dead. Their arrogance and vaunted pride lie buried under the smoldering ruins of their cities. Their invincible armies are broken and beaten into unconditional surrender.

One recalls the words which the prophet, Isaiah, spoke when Babylon, the cruel and arrogant conqueror of the ancient world fell into ruin and defeat:

"How art thou fallen from Heaven, O Lucifer
How art thou cut down to the ground
Thou which didst trouble the nations?
Is this the nation which made the earth
to tremble
That did shake kingdoms
That made the world as a wilderness
and destroyed its cities
That opened not the house of his prisoners?
Thy pomp is brought down to the netherworld
And the noise of psalteries;
The maggot is spread under thee
And the worms cover thee."



Our way of life has emerged triumphant. It has demonstrated its vitality and resilience and its capacity to meet and defeat all the massed forces of tyranny and darkness.

Our common and sacred heritage has not been destroyed. The Bible and not "Mein Kampf" will remain the faithful guide and teacher of future generations of mankind.

There is occasion for much rejoicing in all this as men who rejoice who pass from danger to safety, and from bondage to freedom. But this is also occasion for much sober thought -- thoughts for tomorrow. The fact that our civilization came so dangerously near to disaster should provoke deep searching of hearts on our part. The fact too that the counterpart of these Prussians in the Pacific, the brutal Japanese, who are also obsessed with the mad notion of the master race, have not yet

been vanquished, should be a challenge to us to remain fully mobilized for the hard battles which lie ahead.

The last world war taught us that victory in war without a durable peace is no victory at all. It is clear that the building of peace after this war will be an enormously difficult task and the creation of a permanent world security organization will prove even more difficult than the winning of the war. We must not relax in a pleasurable mood of victory, nor delude ourselves with the hope that the destruction of the Nazi-Fascist armies has for all times removed the threat to Western civilization and to our democratic way of life. The era of reconstruction which will follow this war will be a hard and turbulent one, shot through with fears passions and frustrations. Eras of reconstruction are always dangerous ones, wherein demagogues and political adventurers find their great opportunities, wherein hate movements spring up and bigotry and intolerance raise their ugly heads. We had our experience with them after the last war. In the name of our honored dead, let us not harbor them after this war.

Our common task must be to safeguard ~~xx~~ in peace what we have so valiantly defended in war. Our free institutions, thanks to the fortitude and heroic sacrifices of our fighting men, remain intact. Through them, if we have the vision and the courage and the good will, we can solve all the problems of tomorrow however difficult they may be.

The end of the war in Europe and the end of the war in the Pacific, which can not now be far delayed, will give us and the United Nations another chance to build the kind of a world which we wish for our children -- a world of security, law, justice and good will. In this great hour of victory, let us pray to the Father of all Nations to give us the humility of spirit, the wisdom and the understanding, to dedicate ourselves to this unfinished task.

"Bless our country, O Heavenly Father, that it may ever be a stronghold of peace, and the advocate of peace in the councils of nations. May contentment reign

within its borders, health and happiness within its homes. Strengthen the bonds of friendship and fellowship between all the inhabitants of our land. Plant virtue in every soul, and may the love of Thy name hallow every home and every heart. Praised be Thou, O Lord, Giver of peace."



This is a day of victory -- not just another victory ~~in~~ another war. It is a victory over a vicious and insensate foe who was determined to destroy the entire ~~entire~~ ethical and spiritual heritage of mankind. What they proclaimed on the platform concerning the rights of the strong and the superior race they practiced with whips and implements of torture upon the broken bodies of men and women in a hundred concentration camps and torture chambers.

They were out to destroy not a country or a continent, but a civilization -- the civilizaion which our great religions through the centuries helped to fashion. Thank God that ~~this~~ this all but successful attack upon Western civilization and its ethical foundations has finally collapsed. The Bible and not Mein Kampf will remain the faithful guide and teacher of mankind.

There is ground for rejoicing but also for soul-searching and sober thought -- thought for tomorrow. There are stern and trying days ahead. Eras of reconstruction are dangerous eras. Demagogues and political adventurers will again seek to exploit bigotry and intolerance to rise to power. Hate movements follow every ~~war~~ war. There may set in in our country a period of depression and unemployment and people will again be looking round for scape-goats. Some already have their scape-goat tethered in their backyard.

Our common task will be to safeguard our common heritage in peace as we did in war. When we have serious problems let us try to solve them together without looking round for scape-goats. Let us guard ourselves against the whispering campaigns of hate. Let us not judge men collectively but treat our fellow citizens as individuals on the basis of their individual worth, character and action. Let's not talk about the rights of minorities but about the rights of men. We all have bitter memories of the past and large deposits of suspicions and distrust. Let's seek more and more opportunities for contacts, for discussions of our common problems and for the ways of eliminating areas of friction. This is the American way which has stood us in good stead for 150 years while other forms of government and ways of life have crashed and fallen in.

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