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Strategy of survival, 1962.

December - 1962

# Strategy of Survival

62-6  
Jews have always suffered most in times of upheaval, like those of today, and their salvation depends on closing ranks, strengthening defenses, mutual help

By DR. ABBA HILLEL SILVER



Dr. Abba Hillel Silver

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Dr. Abba Hillel Silver, the venerable Rabbi of The Temple, in Cleveland, has long been one of American Jewry's outstanding leaders. This article is based on an address he delivered in Washington, D. C., at a B'nai B'rith banquet in honor of Louis C. Grossberg, local community leader.—*Editor.*

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What is new in the world recently? Certainly not the feuding around Laos, or Berlin, the Congo, or Cuba, or the strife in Algeria or Tunisia, or the harangues of Khrushchev and the counterblasts of Western diplomats. These were the *headlines*. But they will appear strange to readers a generation hence, or even a decade.

What is really new? All that was revealed and achieved which heretofore was unknown and unachieved—that is new! All doors to knowledge which were unlocked, all discoveries in the fields of the sciences, all that advanced man on his eternal pilgrimage, all that made life more just and noble, and added to the happiness of people. All the victories won by mind and spirit over darkness and ignorance—that is new.

Man orbiting around the earth, scientists probing the mysteries of outer space, or through research in medical laboratories learning how to alleviate human suffering and prolong life, all new sources of energy which were made available, all that was added to man's power and security—that is new. Whatever belongs to the rewarding tasks of mankind — the works of teachers, artists, painters, sculptors, poets, musicians, the true words fearlessly spoken, the examples of sacrifice and valor in behalf of the freedom of men, nations, and races—*these* are the new things.

At the opening of Johns Hopkins University in 1876, the eminent scientist, Thomas Huxley, declared: "I cannot say that I am in the slightest degree impressed by your bigness (i.e., the bigness of America), or your material resources, as such. Size is not grandeur. The great issue about which hangs a true sublimity is—what are you going to do with all these things? What is the end to which these are to be the means?"

If this is the true criterion of national greatness — the end, the goal — then

everything that a nation does to foster science and education, to increase the opportunities of young people to receive a better education, everything that is done to improve the health of people, to provide more adequate housing, to make employment more secure, and to care more fully for the unemployed, to provide care and security for the aged, and to combat bigotry and discrimination, to promote brotherhood and cooperation among people — all *that* is really new and brings us nearer to the true goal.

We do not speak much today of humanity. We speak of nations, classes, races, regional interests, and regional defenses, East and West. Our international vocabulary is rich in terms which suggest competitive segments of humanity; it is rather poor in terms suggesting mankind and the basic unity of the human family.

I am therefore proud that the B'nai B'rith, of which I have been a member for nearly half a century, has had, since its inception, a clear vision of what true civilization involves, and has steadily, through the years, devoted itself to those tasks which enrich, sweeten, and advance the life of society. In love and compassion it has served the aged and the orphan. It

has brought the ethical message and inspiration of our ancient faith to the young men and women on our college and university campuses. It has fought bigotry and racial and religious intolerance. Through many ways it has reached out for human brotherhood, and has at all times sought to build bridges of mutual understanding and communication between men.

It is this vision, too, which gives lustre and promise to the new-born State of Israel, which the B'nai B'rith helped bring into existence. We are all proud of the achievements of the young state. It has given our people a sense of unity hitherto unknown. We have become more fully aware of our strong bond of peoplehood. We have gratefully rediscovered the pride of our heritage and destiny. Our children are facing their world with a new courage, a firmer faith, and a greater dignity.

But while the hope of national restoration was always an integral part of our people's faith, it was never the whole of it. What has so providentially transpired in our day should recharge our courage for the greater tasks which lie ahead. For the Messianic hope of our people has been realized only in part. In its profounder and universal sense the establishment of the good society of universal justice, brotherhood and peace, the Messianic hope of our people is far from having been consummated. This as yet unrealized hope we must continue to proclaim, certainly in this day when our proud civilization is crawling underground into caves and bomb shelters.

These are dangerous and unpredictable times for all peoples. Such violent times are especially dangerous for minority groups, and even more so for the Jewish minority group, which historically has suffered most in periods of social, political, or economic upheaval. During the past year there was a resurgence of anti-Semitism — most shamelessly in Argentina, but also in the freest countries on earth, Britain and the United States. The Algerian Jewish community was scattered in a mass flight, and Moroccan Jewry feels itself unsafe and is emigrating. Suppression of the rights of the Jewish people in the Soviet Union continues.

In such times our only salvation, as a people, lies in closing ranks, in strengthening our defenses, in mutual helpfulness. We dare not relax our alertness. We dare not be tardy in rushing aid, economic or political, to any hard-pressed sector of our people anywhere. This has been our strategy of survival in the past; it must continue to be so in the future.