PRESENTATION TO
HIS MAJESTY, KING GUSTAF V OF SWEDEN
OF
FIFTH ANNUAL AWARD BY BRITH SHOLOM
TOWN HALL, PHILADELPHIA
February 23, 1944
by
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In this Fifth Annual Award, Brith Sholom, a National Jewish Fraternal Order of the United States, has chosen as recipient a reigning sovereign, His Majesty, King Gustaf V of Sweden, in recognition and appreciation of his humane endeavors and untiring efforts in giving refuge to the persecuted peoples of Europe. The Award is presented this evening in Philadelphia, the City of Brotherly Love, through His Majesty's representative the Honorable Martin Kastengren, Consul General of Sweden, who is present at this great gathering in the Town Hall. I am privileged on the invitation of Brith Sholom to make the presentation.

The courage and worth that have been determinative of the choice for the Award transcend national, racial and religious lines and are not obscured by distance or the storms of war. In this period of history, with its ravages upon individuals and nations, many persons are called to play a part. Some are unknown, some are in high places. And the contrasts of thought and deed are striking. Each day there is being recorded for the future a great range of human conduct -- conduct that emanates from the exercise of the free will with which each individual is endowed. One person, casting aside the criteria that should govern his relations with his fellows, turns upon them to persecute and to destroy. Another, with

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fine perception of the true relationship holds out his hand to his fellows. When the former is leader of a nation and pursues his evil designs by national action against the peoples of the world, the incalculable suffering which we are witnessing these days is the consequence. When the other is a King and meets his responsibility and opportunity in a kingly manner, the meaning of hope and true charity is again made manifest in the lives of the afflicted. His Majesty, King Gustaf V, whose country by reason of proximity can feel the hot breath of intolerance and oppression that approaches her borders, has held out his hand to the persecuted and the oppressed. He has drawn these in charity and good will to the haven of his country to live there in friendship. Thus those who have been made to suffer are made glad again in the companionship of their fellows. By such exercise of high qualities of leadership and of personality are the minds and hearts of men everywhere lifted and inspired.

The Award, which is a tribute to those qualities, is in full accord with the sentiments of our own nation; and we extend those sentiments indirectly to all the people of Sweden, who are represented so nobly by their King in the national policy which has encouraged the victims of hatred and force to come to Sweden away from the miseries and horrors that have driven them from their homes and kin.

Persecution is a peculiarly evil thing because it is a denial of the nature of men as children of a common Father. It is the unjust punishment of the innocent. Often, and especially in these recent years, it is a use of superior power alone to thrust ones fellows down, utilizing as a leverage no standard of conduct acceptable to man or
revealed by God. It is a loosening of the restraints essential to an ordered life. It is a delusion of self-glorification seen in a mirror of distorted values. It is a deterioration of mind and soul that leads to violence — violence that deliberately spends itself to the injury of human beings and the breaking of the moral law. Mankind as a whole, therefore, truer to its nature, turns its face against persecution. Men of good will of all nations, men who compose all races, and the faithful of all religions, constantly seek to eradicate it from thought and deed as they struggle for a world wisely and justly composed and governed.

One of the chief heritages of our own country, rooted in our ideals of liberty and justice, is that America has been a refuge for the fugitive from injustice, oppression and persecution. In his first inaugural address in 1801, Thomas Jefferson posed the question, "Shall oppressed humanity find no asylum on this globe?" He answered by expressing a thought that has dominated our policy, that those who were to come should receive the same hospitality as those who had come in the beginning of our colonization, with safeguards "against the fraudulent usurpation of our flag." And within recent weeks President Roosevelt has taken new measures to effectuate this policy in the America of today. These are his recent words: "It is the policy of this Government to take all measures within its power to rescue the victims of enemy oppression who are in imminent danger of death and otherwise to afford such victims all possible relief and assistance consistent with the
successful prosecution of the war. The Secretaries of State, of
the Treasury and of War have been constituted a War Refugee Board
with the responsibility of carrying out this policy, and, without
limitation, for the development of plans and programs and the
inauguration of effective measures to rescue, transport, maintain
and relieve the victims of any oppression and the establishment of
havens of temporary refuge for them. The heads of all agencies
and departments of the Government are called upon to assist the
Board and to cooperate with all existing and future international
organizations concerned with the problems of the rescue of refugees
and their maintenance, transportation, relief, rehabilitation and
resettlement. The Board is responsible directly to the President
and is required at frequent intervals to report to him concerning
the steps taken and to make recommendations deemed appropriate
for further action to overcome difficulties encountered. Thus
are old values confirmed and reasserted. The practical application
of them gives life to principles that guide our great might and
make it truly strong.
We know that material strength alone is vain. The inalienable right to the pursuit of happiness, imbedded in the charter of our independence and there recognized as an endowment of the Creator, contemplates not merely the pursuit of material prosperity. Such a pursuit, if an end in itself, can lead only to frustration and self-defeat. The pursuit of happiness must be with the enduring and eternal strength of the spirit that is manifest by such action as that which we honor tonight and which is the basis of the Award.

In enumerating briefly some of the results of the policies of His Majesty and the people of his nation, we note that as of last November, 41,000 refugees had been received in Sweden. Of these 12,000 were children under the age of 16, citizens of tomorrow. Comparing our own population with that of Sweden, it would mean, had we furnished refuge on a similar scale, that 850,000 refugees would have come to the United States. The fact is that since the war began we have fallen far below this number. A significant fact about the refugees in Sweden is the diversity of their nationality, race and religion. They include nationals of Denmark, Norway, Finland, Germany, Russia, Estonia, Poland and Czechoslovakia. Among them also are British subjects who have reached Sweden from other areas. Of the 29,000 adult refugees, 9,000 are Jews — approximately one-third. At the beginning of the persecution of Jews in Denmark, Sweden offered haven to them. More than 5,000 reached Sweden's shores and are there as guests of the country. Remarkable is the contrast between this enlightened and inspiring policy of this great Scandinavian country, and the deeds of dark and dismal persecution, oppression and
aggression from below the Baltic, where men have been laboring under some delusion of racial supremacy and relying upon the efficacy of force and oppression as a basis of national policy. Failure is the inevitable fruit of such policy.

Mention is due to certain particular activities of Sweden related to the opening of the country as a haven of refuge. I refer to the various relief activities of Swedish organizations, such as the Red Cross, the Save the Children Society, the Swedish Aid to Norway, the Norden Association, the V. H. C. A. and the nationwide collections among the Catholics undertaken at the call of the Vicar and Bishop Johannes Eric Müller, to which generous response has been made. The six and a half million inhabitants of Sweden, with a very high per capita contribution, have given hundreds of millions of dollars to the oppressed peoples of the world. Food, clothing, medicine and prefabricated houses are among the contributions. Workers have given up their holidays and contributed their wages; and contributions so made have been matched by the employers. The sick are cared for and camps and thousands of children are supported by the Save the Children Society. Aid has gone abroad, to Belgium, France and Holland, and to the Greeks. Grain from America and Great Britain has gone to Greece in Swedish Red Cross tonnage and has been there ground and distributed, under a joint Swiss and Swedish Committee, to 700 bakeries which make it available at a cost only about one-fifteenth of the average daily wage of an Athenian laborer. One could give details indefinitely with respect, for example, to the handling of communications between prisoners in Germany and other countries, the making of contacts with relatives and friends, the collection and
distribution of books sent to British and Russian prisoners in Germany, and the cheerful giving of assistance to strangers as well as relatives and friends in warring countries.

This brief enumeration is by no means complete or full. The facts mentioned are inadequate to portray the true situation, but in no way do they overstate the generosity of Sweden or the magnanimity of the policies and actions of her King.

I should like now to turn in person, as it were, to the recipient of the Award and on behalf of Brith Sholom and all those here present, as well as on behalf, I believe, of all our people and of the uncounted and voiceless victims of oppression everywhere, to say across the distance to His Majesty in this the 87th year of his life and the 36th of his reign that the course which he and his people have pursued in making their country a haven to receive those unjustly driven from their own land is an example for all the world. It is not only one of those fine acts which result in solace and peace to many individual human beings sorely in need, but it is also conduct which in its influence reaches beyond those directly assisted. It pierces into the gloom that envelopes the oppressed and persecuted wherever they are. It is a ray of light and encouragement to which these may lift their minds and hearts while they await the day of liberation. By this example, fruitful in the hearts and lives of many persons, you have demonstrated what all men must one day acknowledge — that individual, national and international action must rest upon justice and friendship.

Indeed, a better world must arise from the ashes of this great war, a world in which might must forever be relegated to a position.

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inference to right. Greed and organized brutality must never again emerge as the avowed policy of governments. The painful progress of civilization toward attainment of the promise of peace and justice which are implicit in the spiritual aspirations of all mankind must never again be frustrated by such global violence due to aggression, oppression and persecution. Civilization, which has flowered in the past, will flower again. It is fighting for its life and will not be sacrificed to darkness, oppression and destruction.

The stones with which the foundations of the future will be built assuredly must be those which in the past have proved their merit. Those which have proved false must be rejected. We want a world in which men and women on route to eternity will live a while in unity, acting upon principles of honesty and friendship in dealings between nations as between themselves, with regard always for the essential integrity of the human soul and personality. It must guarantee to every man the freedoms so eloquently set forth in the Atlantic Charter. A world so constituted would contain both preventive and cure for the malady of strife which has recurred so frequently in history with ever more extensive involvement when it erupts. Global warfare calls for global peace, and global peace, let us not forget, calls for the right of the individual to obtain that interior peace which the world cannot give and which the world, therefore, may not rightly seek to take away.

The building stones, to pursue our metaphor only a little further, are most certainly to be found among those enlightened people who will survive this great crisis. The people of Sweden will be among these. The history of the Swedish people, in the last quarter of a century
particularly, is one of steady, purposeful, and successful approach toward the ideal of freedom, carrying with her progress a bright emblem of hope to millions of oppressed peoples all over the world. She has stirred other millions who can not properly be described as oppressed to an awareness of even greater opportunities than they already enjoy.

There is much that we in the United States, who, with excusable pride, believe that we live in the greatest democracy in the world, have learned from the Swedes. We have found much not only to respect but to emulate in her industry, her culture and her political life.

So it is indeed appropriate that this body today, representative as it is of one of the most persecuted minorities in the world, should honor the King of Sweden and through him the people of Sweden. For it is the persecution of the Jews which epitomizes the barbarism we are fighting and will overcome. The symbolism of this Award is a tribute to the truth of human relations under divine guidance that will make men free, and a condemnation of the error of darkness that would enslave them.