Book: *Deutscher Geist und Judenhass: Ein Werk des Volkskraft-Bundes* (Berlin: Kultur-Verlag, 1920)

Translation of title: The German Spirit and Jew-Hatred: A Work of the People Power League (Berlin: Kultur-Verlag, 1920)

Foreword: The moral principles of the People Power League – which does not serve any political faction, but rather desires to work in the purely cultural field – obligate its members to stand up for the noblest strengths of our people, for that form of humanity that allows itself to be led by the holy spirit of understanding, for the reconciliation of all who wear the face of humanity.

To that category belong Jews as well as racial Germans. Those Jews who live by right in Germany, often rooted here even centuries-long, cannot be treated with hostility by our people. Those of us who are German-born are all called to cooperate likemindedly toward the dedication of the Fatherland to true culture. Violation of rights, terrorizing of Jews, would be civil war in our country and the discrediting of our new free state. It would be reactionary, and a foolish anachronism in the era of the League of Nations. In the face of all that is unsettling, the People Power League would like to help preserve our Fatherland, not as shock troops for some sort of party faction, but rather as the protector of a German character that does not depart from the ideals of our humanists, our great thinkers and poets going back to Lessing, Herder, Goethe and Schiller.

Our League is no less enthusiastic for every virtue of the German race than the antisemites are raving for them. It is only that we are committed to proceed truly and critically, exactly toward the Jews as toward all other races. The People Power League is strictly neutral toward all political and religious inclinations, all classes and races. It is nationalist and at the same time internationalist, in that it strives in the best German way toward the best in humanity.

Thus we have considered it our duty, in this time of intolerance and terrorism against our Jewish fellow *Volk* members, to approach several hundred outstanding non-Jewish Germans with the request that they frankly express themselves on the Jewish question.

This is a matter of assembling contributions to a non-partisan judgment of the Jewish question and bringing the collected documents to the attention of the German people and other peoples. . .

This collection contains pro-Jewish and anti-Jewish responses to the inquiry we arranged. More than a hundred requests went unanswered. Many statements were given with careful reserve. But despite all that, so many prominent personalities from all spheres of present-day Germany have unambiguously rendered their judgment on Jew-hatred, that we could justifiably give this collection the title: “The German Spirit and Jew-Hatred.”

May it contribute to expanding the spirit of understanding and reconciliation among our people. Without that spirit our people cannot be strengthened either economically or politically or culturally.

Friedrichshagen in Spring 1920.

Preface. On letterhead of the Reich President

Dated: Berlin, October 18, 1919

Text: With lively interest I have taken notice of the efforts of the People Power League for the preservation of the solidarity and peacefulness of the German people and the furthering of understanding among the religious denominations. The fundamental democratic and social concepts on which our new form of State is built inherently exclude every form of differential treatment based on denomination, and in particular based on antisemitism; but I am also convinced that the healthy and fair spirit of our people condemns the disparagement of Jewry that is salient only idiosynchratically, and decisively rejects every slight toward Jewish fellow citizens, every antisemitic incitement and every attempt at arousing Jew-hatred. From my heart I wish your efforts complete success by way of enlightening our people to contribute to, and thereby cooperate in the preservation of that domestic peace which is so indispensable for the future of our work.

/s/ Friedrich Ebert [President of Germany, Feb. 11, 1919 – Feb. 28, 1925]

pp.35-36: [Matthias] Erzberger, former Reich Minister [Vice Chancellor June 21 – Oct 3, 1919]

I condemn the antisemitic incitement that is currently being organized and promoted by certain elements in Germany. My view of the civil equality in rights and duties for all German citizens leads me to deplore unscrupulous antisemitic activity in the strongest manner. My view is supported by the German constitution. Article 109, section 1 provides that all Germans are equal before the law. Article 135 grants all residents of the German Reich the enjoyment of freedom of religion and freedom of conscience. Article 135 provides that the rights and duties of citizens at the federal and state level may not be abridged or conditioned. The background of antisemitic incitement is well enough known. The circle from which it emanates is supported by elements that have a self-interest in seeking a diversion from their guilt for their rash chauvinism.

Moreover, there are indications close at hand that alongside incitement against Jews there is a parallel incitement against socialists and Catholics, or better said, there is a system at work, first on the Jews, then the socialists, then the Catholics. I readily admit the notable fact that a certain prejudice against the Jews is understandable as a result of the preponderant role of Jewish elements in the Independent Social Democratic Party leadership [aligned with soviet communism], but in the final analysis this fact is also understandable. For it is clear that those elements that formerly were effectively shut out from power are now seeking to make up for it.

The position I take as to antisemitic incitement is all the more plain since I have consistently stood up for the equal rights of our Jewish fellow citizens. I am reminded that, among other things, I regularly fought against holding Jews back in the army, particularly in the officer corps. Respectable demeanor and ability are the only criteria for every German. Equality of rights in civil activity and religious exercise belongs to the fundamental rights of every German. My view is that of the entire Reich government. The government is resolved to oppose antisemitic incitement with the full power of the law.

In a democratic country, pogroms have no place. We have no need to resemble Russia.

I myself – and I do not think it amiss if I say the government as well – am sympathetic toward the efforts being pursued by the Zionists in Palestine. In that regard, I refer to the declaration issued by the former Undersecretary of the Foreign Office, Baron von dem Busche-Haddenhausen. As for the prospects of the Jewish people in this respect, so far as I am informed, the English government stands well-disposed on this question. Should the Jewish State in Palestine become a reality, I hold out the firm hope that the Christian places on holy ground within that State will have all desirable freedoms.

p.56: Antonius von Henle, Bishop of Regensburg [northeastern Bavaria]

I repudiate Jew-hatred with every fiber of my being, because every hatred is un-Christian, but we must be careful with this reproach. In most cases anti-Jewish agitations are directed not against a race or a religion, but rather against the dregs thereof.

p.89: Dr. [Ernst] Müller, [Bavarian] Minister of Justice [May 1919 – July 1920], Munich

On the whole, the accusations against Jewry sow the greatest injustice. Hatred simply produces yet more hatred. Unrighteous persecutions in the past produced revolutionary inclinations in a portion of Jewry. The heavy participation of Jewish elements recently in the November Revolution – the greatest national misfortune of the German people – produced yet again widespread hatred of Jews. Thus not only do we not get out of the circle of hatred, we go deeper into it. But nevertheless I have hope that German respect for law will here again set effective limits. Tactful conduct by the other side could tremendously further this worthy goal. The neglect of such tact on the part of certain elements hurts the educated, respected portion of Jewry today - as I have often heard in recent months from the Jewish side – more than it hurts the Ahlwart-type\* Jew-baiters, who are becoming numerous again but will surely founder upon the good sense of the German people.

\*Hermann Ahlwart was a German whose antisemitic movement peaked in the late 1800s and who died in 1914.

p.94: Dr. Baron von Ow, Bishop of Passau [eastern Bavaria]

Your invitation to send in my judgment about the Jewish question, I will not leave unanswered, even though I do not think that what I have to say will serve your purposes.

Right in the first sentence of your highly esteemed request is something I cannot agree with. “Jew-hatred,” aside perhaps from some isolated instances that are diminishing and therefore meaningless, is not being incited in Germany. What passes today for so-called “Jew-hatred” in written or verbal remarks that are more or less overly high-spirited, is nothing other than the natural reaction against the vile, heartless, capitalistic spirit of usury and against the absurd destruction of all the achievements of our culture by a senseless Bolshevism: the representatives and promoters of these two movements are today, moreover, chiefly members of the Jewish race, and one of the leading mindsets within Jewry – a mindset that is found so predominantly only within this circle – is the primary handmaid and propagator of all those unholy phenomena that poison our entire economic life by driving out ethical values in favor of the crassest egoism and materialism.

It is only against this aspect of Jewry that defensive measures are raised, which may sometimes in part be advanced in a sharp manner, but still are far removed from inciting “Jew-hatred,” much less a persecution of Jews on account of their religion or their nationality. Even if in one case or another, measures have exceeded the bounds of justified defense, there is in such cases not nearly so critical a danger to the “reputation of German culture” as there is from the phenomena against which those defenses are raised.

Note: One historian who mentions this book, only with respect to the Bishop of Passau’s contribution, is Rudolf Lill in “German Catholicism’s Attitude towards the Jews in the Weimar Republic,” in Otto Dov Kulka and Paul Mendes-Flohr, *Judaism and Christianity under the Impact of National Socialism* (Jerusalem: Historical Society of Israel, 1987), p.159. Lill attributes the Bishop’s statement to a strong attachment to the Bavarian monarchy, which was overthrown by a revolution in which a large number of Jews had been leaders. This investigation makes no comment on the accuracy, or adequacy, of this explanation.