

# **Jehovah's Witnesses, Anti-semitism and the Third Reich:**

## **The Watch Tower Society's Attempted Compromise with Nazism**

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**Since the Second World War, the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society has taught Jehovah's Witnesses that while the German churches, both Catholic and Protestant, were guilty of compromise with Hitler and the Nazi Party, their German brethren, then commonly known as "Earnest Bible Students," stood solidly against the principles of the Third Reich. Because of the brave stand taken by most ordinary German Witnesses in the face of a terrible persecution that cost many of them their lives in Hitler's concentration camps, they have rightly been praised by secular historians-a fact which the Watch Tower Society has used to buttress its assertions.**

For example, *The Watchtower* magazine of October 1, 1984 (p. 8), reported the findings of Christine E. King and Michael Kater to the effect that the number of Witness imprisonments and deaths brought about by Nazi persecution had been greatly underestimated. Quoting Dr. King, it stated:

"Theological principles were adhered to; Witnesses remained "neutral," they were honest and completely trustworthy and as such, ironically, often found themselves employed as servants of the S.S."

**What has not generally been known either by most Jehovah's Witnesses or many independent scholars, however, is that while ordinary German Witnesses did generally maintain their integrity and commitment to their principles, their leaders--the Watch Tower's second president, Judge Joseph F. Rutherford, and the man who succeeded him in office in 1942, Nathan H. Knorr, plus high German Watch Tower officials-did not.**

Furthermore, Rutherford and his lieutenants tried to save the German arm of their movement by scapegoating the Jews and attacking Great Britain, the United States, and the League of Nations.

During the first half of their history, the Bible Student-Jehovah's Witnesses were notable for their sympathy to the Jews. Even more than most late nineteenth- and twentieth-century American Protestant premillennialists, the Watch Tower's first president, Charles T. Russell, was a thoroughgoing supporter of Zionist causes. He

refused to attempt the conversion of the Jews, believed in the Jewish resettlement of Palestine, and in 1910, led a New York Jewish audience in singing the Zionist anthem, Hatikva. <sup>[1]</sup> For more than a decade after Russell's death in 1916, Judge Rutherford followed in his footsteps.

In 1925 he produced a small book entitled *Restoration*, based on a series of radio broadcasts he had given, and in 1926 he published a similar volume called *Comfort for the Jews*. In both, he proclaimed himself a friend of the Jewish people and asserted that Jewish migration to the ancient Holy Land was a fulfillment of biblical prophecy. Identical Publisher's Forewords to *Restoration* and *Comfort for the Jews* stated:

THE rebuilding of Palestine is claiming the attention of Jews throughout the earth. Some of the Gentile world powers are outwardly favoring the movement but manifestly for selfish reasons.

JUDGE RUTHERFORD, known throughout the world as a friend of the Hebrew people, is vigorously supporting the claim of the Jews to the Holy Land. He is opposed to proselytizing the Jews, holding that such is not only wrong but contrary to the Scriptures. His lectures to large audiences, which have been broadcast throughout the world, on "JEWS RETURNING TO PALESTINE", have created an intense interest. There is a good demand for them in printed form. He has simplified these lectures and now presents them in book form. This volume will be of profound interest to Jews and Gentiles alike. It is the first unbiased presentation of the subject from the Scriptural viewpoint published.

The Publishers send forth this volume confident that it will do much good.

In 1930 Rutherford produced a larger volume on the same theme called *Life*. But suddenly he repudiated his beliefs respecting the Jews. *Life* was withdrawn from circulation,<sup>[2]</sup> and in 1932 Rutherford proclaimed that "fleshly Israel" had no specific role to play in salvation history. He wrote:

The Jews were evicted from Palestine and `their house left unto them desolate' because they rejected Christ Jesus, the beloved and anointed King of Jehovah. To this day the Jews have not repented of this wrongful act committed by their forefathers. Many of them have been returned to the land of Palestine, but they have been induced to go there because of selfishness and for sentimental reasons.

During the long period elapsing from the time of their expulsion to the present day the Jews have not "borne the shame of the heathen" for Jehovah's sake, nor for the name of Christ. During all this period of time, and particularly during the World War, the true followers of Christ Jesus devoted to God, and to his kingdom, have been bearing the shame of the heathen and have been hated by all the nations for Christ's sake and the sake

of Jehovah's name. (Matt. 24: 9: Mark 13: 13)

In contrast to this, during the World War the Jews received recognition of the heathen nations. In 1917 the Balfour Declaration, sponsored by the heathen governments of Satan's organization, came forth, recognized the Jews, and bestowed upon them great favors. In this the seventh world power [the British Empire] took the lead. Now Big Business and other wings of Satan's organization place the Jews alongside of and in the same category as the Gentiles. Heretofore even God's people have overlooked the fact that the affairs of God's kingdom with reference to the things of the earth are of far greater importance than the rehabilitation of that little strip of land on the eastern side of the Mediterranean sea. The Jews have received more attention at their hands than they have really deserved. Therefore this prophecy [of Isaiah] must have its chief fulfillment upon the true people of God's kingdom which are now on earth. <sup>[3]</sup>

Perhaps the judge was simply anxious to assert that Jehovah's Witnesses were the "true Israel of God," but it seems that he had other reasons for making such a dramatic doctrinal switch without any more detailed explanation. While he may formerly have proclaimed himself a pro-Zionist "friend of the Hebrew people" in the tradition of his predecessor, he occasionally manifested a streak of deep-seated anti-semitism. For example, while giving a talk on biblical prophecies respecting the return of the Jews to Palestine at a Canadian Bible Student convention in Winnipeg, Manitoba, in the early 1920s, he interjected:

"I'm speaking of the Palestine Jew, not the hooked-nosed, stooped-shouldered little individual who stands on the street corner trying to gyp you out of every nickel you've got."<sup>[4]</sup>

But there were no doubt other factors in 1932 which impelled him to abandon the Bible Students' long tradition of philo-Judaism besides simple personal bias. During the late 1920s and early 1930s anti-semitism was becoming rampant in the United States and Canada with the rise of a variety of movements both religious and political.<sup>[5]</sup> And with the start of the Depression in 1929, it began to appear possible that the violently anti-Jewish Nazis could come to power in Germany - something which happened on January 30, 1933. So it seems clear that Rutherford was anxious to dissociate the Witnesses from the Jewish community as definitively as possible. Yet these facts can in no way excuse what he and his aids were shortly to do during the first year of the Third Reich.

**Early in April 1933** the Nazis moved against Jehovah's Witnesses. Their branch headquarters at Magdeburg were seized, and their religious activities were temporarily stopped. But on April 28, German authorities returned the properties to the Watch Tower Society to their American owners, no doubt to keep from

offending the United States. [6] However, Witness leaders and Jehovah's Witnesses in general knew that they were not popular with the Nazis. So according to an official Witness account, Judge Rutherford and the German Witness community decided to take a bold stand against the Hitler dictatorship.

The book *Jehovah's Witnesses in The Divine Purpose*, published by the Watch Tower Society in 1957, states:

Judge Rutherford had been watching the German situation closely and was well acquainted with its development as it affected the witness work. With this serious turn of events he lost no time in going to Germany, accompanied by N. H. Knorr, to see what could be done. On June 25..., a convention was called in Berlin. There a Declaration of Facts was presented to the 7,000 in attendance in protest against the Hitler government for their highhanded interference with the witness work of the Society, and was unanimously adopted. The declaration was mailed to every high officer of the government from the president down to the members of the council, and 2,500,000 copies were given public distribution. Retaliation came quickly. Three days later, on June 28, for the second time the Society's property was seized and occupied, and by government decree its printing plant was closed.<sup>[7]</sup>

But was the seizure of Watch Tower property by the German government on June 28, 1933 really because the Declaration of Facts was a bold protest against Nazi actions? No, quite the contrary. In a tape-recorded account of the history of Jehovah's Witnesses in Germany, former Watch Tower Society "branch servant" or "overseer" Konrad Franke tells that when he and another Jehovah's Witness arrived at the Berlin Sporthalle Wilmersdorf where the 1933 Witness convention was being held, they were shocked. The building was bedecked with Swastika flags - evidently to please the Nazis. Then during the convention itself, the Witness faithful were called on to sing a hymn that they had not sung in Germany for years. While they had no objection to the words, the music was the same as that of the German national anthem, "*Deutschland, Deutschland über alles*."<sup>[8]</sup>

As for the Declaration and an accompanying letter sent to Adolf Hitler personally, they were nothing short of self-serving statements which attempted to ingratiate Jehovah's Witnesses with the Nazis. Under a sub-section entitled "Jews," the Declaration reads:

It is falsely charged by our enemies that we have received financial support for our work from the Jews. Nothing is farther from the truth. Up to this moment there never has been the slightest bit of money contributed to our work by Jews. We are the faithful followers of Christ Jesus and believe upon Him as the Savior of the world, whereas the Jews entirely reject Jesus Christ and emphatically deny that he is the Savior of the world sent of God

for man's good. This of itself should be sufficient proof to show that we receive no support from Jews and therefore the charges against us are maliciously false and could only proceed from Satan, our great enemy.

The greatest and most oppressive empire on earth is the Anglo-American empire. By this is meant the British Empire, of which the United States of America forms a part. It has been the commercial Jews of the British-American Empire that have built up and carried on Big Business as a means of exploiting and oppressing the peoples of many nations. This fact particularly applies to the cities of London and New York, the stronghold of Big Business. This fact is so manifest in America that there is a proverb concerning the city of New York which says: "the Jews own it, the Irish Catholics rule it, and the Americans pay the bills." We have no fight with any of these persons mentioned but, as witnesses for Jehovah and in obedience to his commandment set forth in the Scriptures, we are compelled to call attention to the truth concerning the same in order that the people may be enlightened concerning God and his purpose.<sup>[9]</sup>

**That was not all.** Besides damning the League of Nations, the Declaration said:

"The present government of Germany has declared against Big Business oppressors and in opposition to the wrongful religious influence in the political affairs of the nation. Such is exactly our position...." <sup>[10]</sup>

Then it proclaimed:

"Instead of being against the principles advocated by the government of Germany, we stand squarely for such principles, and point out that Jehovah God through Christ Jesus will bring about the full realization of these principles." <sup>[11]</sup>

The letter sent to Hitler was equally compromising in nature. To ingratiate the Witnesses with the Nazi Führer, it claimed that the Watch Tower Society had been and was "outstandingly friendly to Germany." But more than that, it falsely asserted that Rutherford and seven members of the Board of Directors of the Watch Tower Society had been sentenced to eighty years in prison "because the [Watch Tower] president refused to use two magazines published by him in the United States for war propaganda against Germany." <sup>[12]</sup>

**As Jehovah's Witnesses were soon to discover, the Nazis were not impressed by either their Declaration or the Society's letter to Hitler.**

Many Germans were thoroughly aware that they had long been pro-Zionist, and Nazis officials were hardly so stupid as not to know that in many ways they stood

in direct opposition to what the Hitler and his associates proclaimed and demanded. The Witnesses were internationalists in a religious sense and were generally quite tolerant of persons of other races; they regarded secular authority as of the devil; and, above all, they were openly anti-militaristic<sup>[13]</sup> - all factors which caused the nationalistic, racist, and militaristic Nazis to despise them. Thus the German government unleashed a wave of persecution against the Witnesses almost immediately.

On June 27, 1933, one day after they begin sending copies of the Declaration by registered mail to German officials, the Prussian Land or state banned them, and the police began to carry out widespread raids on their homes and places of business. As has been noted above, the Society's Magdeburg offices were seized again on June 28.

Ultimately, between two and three million marks worth of Watch Tower property was confiscated and destroyed by the Nazis.<sup>[14]</sup> But it was then, and only then, that Rutherford and the Watch Tower Society decided to oppose Nazi policies in an uncompromising fashion. For some time thereafter, German Witnesses were divided over what they should do.<sup>[15]</sup>

Although after the Second World War most Jehovah's Witnesses and others were unaware of the compromising actions of Witness leaders in the Germany of 1933, there were some who still remembered the Berlin convention.

Furthermore, copies of both the Declaration and the Watch Tower letter to Hitler remained extant. So when the Watch Tower Society published a history of Jehovah's Witnesses in Germany in the *1974 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses*, it was necessary to deal with what were very embarrassing data in a way which would not make the Society's Brooklyn leaders look guilty of violating their own teachings. Thus the full responsibility for the attempted compromise with Hitler and the Nazis was placed on the shoulders of Paul Balzereit, the Society's German branch servant at the time.

Because of the importance of the Society's present official position on this matter, the *1974 Yearbook* account of the 1933 Berlin convention is given in full. It reads:

By the summer of 1933 the work of Jehovah's Witnesses had been banned in the majority of German states. the brothers' homes were being searched regularly and many brothers had been arrested. The flow of spiritual food was partially hampered, although only for a time; still many brothers were asking how long it would be possible to continue the work. In this situation the congregations were invited on very short notice to a convention to be held in Berlin on June 25. Since it was expected that many would be unable to attend because of the various bans, the congregations were encouraged to send at least one or several delegates. But, as it turned out, 7,000 brothers

got there. For many of them it took three days, some riding bicycles the entire distance, whereas others went by truck, since the bus companies refused to rent buses to a banned organization.

Brother Rutherford, who, together with Brother Knorr, had come to Germany just a few days before in order to see what could be done to ensure the safety of the Society's property, had prepared a declaration with Brother Balzereit to be presented to the convention delegates for adoption. It was a protest against the meddling of the Hitler government into the preaching work we were doing.

All high government officials, from the Reich's president on down, were to receive a copy of the declaration, if possible, by registered mail. Several days before the convention started Brother Rutherford returned to America.

Many in attendance were disappointed in the "declaration," since in many points it failed to be as strong as the brothers had hoped. Brother Mütze from Dresden, who had worked closely with Brother Balzereit up until that time, accused him later of having weakened the original text. It was not the first time that Brother Balzereit had watered down the clear and unmistakable language of the Society's publications so as to avoid difficulties with governmental agencies.

A large number of brothers refused to adopt it just for this reason. In fact, a former pilgrim brother [traveling evangelist] by the name of Kipper refused to offer it for adoption and another brother substituted. It could not rightfully be said that the declaration was unanimously adopted, even though Brother Balzereit later notified Brother Rutherford that it had been.

The conventioners returned home tired and many were disappointed. They took 2,100,000 copies of the "declaration" home with them, however, and made fast work of distributing them and sending them to numerous persons in positions of responsibility. The copy sent to Hitler was accompanied by a letter that, in part, read:

"The Brooklyn presidency of the Watch Tower Society is and always has been *exceedingly friendly to Germany*. In 1918 the president of the Society and seven members of the Board of Directors in America were sentenced to 80 years' imprisonment for the reason that the *president refused to let two magazines* in America, which he edited, *be used in war propaganda against Germany*."

Even though the declaration had been weakened and many brothers could not wholeheartedly agree to its adoption, yet the government was enraged and started a wave of persecution against those who had distributed it. <sup>[16]</sup>

## **The question now arises, how well does this account stand up?**

In the first place, it continues to assert wrongly in the tradition of *Jehovah's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose* that there were 7,000 present at the 1933 Berlin convention. The Declaration is clear in repeatedly asserting that there were only 5,000 delegates there. But that is a small matter.

What is more significant is that the *1974 Yearbook* account assumes - apparently on no more authority than the unsubstantiated beliefs of a "Brother Mütze from Dresden" - that Paul Balzereit was the one who "weakened" the Declaration. Balzereit may well have been responsible for having the Declaration translated into German, and he may also have been responsible for drafting the letter to Hitler. Yet there is clear evidence to suggest that he did not tamper with the wording of the Declaration.

**First, the Watch Tower Society published the English version of the Declaration - which is virtually identical to the German version - in the *1934 Year Book of Jehovah's Witnesses* as its official statement to Hitler, the German government, and German officials, high and low; and this it would not have done without Rutherford's full approval.**

**Second, the English version of the Declaration is clearly written in the judge's own bombastic style.**

**Third, the statements directed against the Jews in the Declaration are more in keeping with what an American such as Rutherford would have written rather than a German. How, for example, would Balzereit know the "proverb," so called, concerning New York which says: "the Jews own it, the Irish Catholics rule it, and the Americans pay the bills"? Fourth, Rutherford had been guilty of a similar compromise with secular authority in the United States in 1918 in a vain attempt to escape imprisonment.[17]**

**Then finally, he was an autocrat supreme who would not have brooked the serious type of insubordination that Balzereit would have been guilty of had he "weakened" the Declaration.**

While it must be admitted that this evidence, although strong, is circumstantial rather than direct, this makes little difference in the long run. Regardless of who wrote the Declaration, *the fact is that it was published as an official document of the Watch Tower Society.*

**Thus the American leaders of the Society - and Judge J. F. Rutherford in**

**particular - were directly responsible for what was outright anti-Semitism and a willingness to compromise their loudly trumpeted principle of "Christian neutrality" in order to continue their publishing and preaching work in Germany.**

So the leadership of Jehovah's Witnesses, like the those who led almost every other church, sect, and cult in the Third Reich were willing, under the circumstances of the times, to betray their most sacred values.

**But that is not all.**

The Watch Tower Society is guilty of an ongoing cover-up of its past concerning these matters. While the Society still boasts of the bravery of German Jehovah's Witnesses in their refusal to submit to the dictates of Nazism, it also continues to try to hide its leaders' attempt to compromise with the Nazis in 1933. Although *The Watchtower* of October 1, 1984 quoted from Christine King's *The Nazi State and the New Religions*, its publishers failed to note what Dr. King had written about the Society's 1933 Declaration of Facts.

For example, in a brief evaluation of that document, she makes what, from a Witness standpoint, is a rather damning remark. She says:

"The document is a master of its kind and worthy of the other four sects [the Christian Scientists, the Latter-day Saints, the Seventh-day Adventists and members of the New Apostolic Church] all of whom supported, in one way or another, the Nazi state." [18]

In another paragraph, she remarks:

"Having attempted to assure the authorities by the Declaration of Facts, of their good citizenship, having interpreted and explained their teachings in a way, which given the preoccupations of the regime, was designed to allay fears and offer a hint of compromise, the Witnesses seemed to have expected little further harassment. Had the Declaration not condemned with the Nazis, the League of Nations, had it not described National Socialism as standing out against the injustices Germans had suffered since 1919 and had it not ended with a personal appeal to the Führer?" [19]

So it is hardly possible that the present-day leadership of the Society can be ignorant of the Declaration and its compromising, anti-Semitic nature.

Despite such statements by Dr. King, however, the June 8, 1985 *Awake!* (p. 10) damned both the Catholic and the Protestant clergy for supporting Nazism and proclaimed: "However, there was one group in Germany that courageously

championed Christian principles. That group was Jehovah's Witnesses. Unlike the clergy and their followers, the Witnesses refused to compromise with Hitler and the Nazis. They refused to violate God's commandments. They would not break their Christian neutrality in political affairs. (See Isaiah 2:2-4; John 17:16; James 4:4.) They did not attribute Heil, or salvation, to Hitler, as did the overwhelming majority of their flocks." And more recent issues of both *Awake!* and *The Watchtower* have taken much the same tack.

*Awake!* published several articles on the Holocaust in its April 8, 1989 issue in which it argued rightly that many others besides Jews had died as a result of Nazi extermination policies. Dealing with the persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses from 1933 to the collapse of the Third Reich in 1945, one of these articles, "The Holocaust: Victims or Martyrs?", states on page 12:

"They [Jehovah's Witnesses] were of many nationalities but were misconstrued as a pacifist threat to Germany's National Socialist regime because of their Christian stand of neutrality and refusal to be incorporated into the war effort of any nation. Hitler called them a `brood to be exterminated.'"

Significantly, this article also quotes Christine King, but it makes no mention of either the Declaration of Facts or the Society's 1933 letter to Hitler.

Then, just after the publication of the April 8, 1989 *Awake!*, a series of articles appeared in the April 1 and 15 and May 1 and 15, 1989 issues of *The Watchtower* on the subject of "Babylon the Great." Referring to the great "whore" or "harlot" described at Revelation 17, these articles identified her as the world-wide empire of false religion which has "committed fornication with the kings of the earth." Accordingly, *The Watchtower* censured both Catholicism and Protestantism - which they regard as parts of Babylon the Great - in the harshest terms for having supported various European secular governments in past centuries and, especially, for having been in league with Nazism during the Second World War. But not once in these articles does the anonymous author admit that, from the standpoint of their own teachings, Watch Tower leaders were also were willing to commit "fornication" with the rulers of the Third Reich had the Nazis been willing to let them get into bed with them.

What is even more serious is that when confronted with the facts relating to the Watch Tower German Declaration of 1933, the Society's spokesmen have denied them categorically. In 1985, when I published a brief synopsis of the nature of the Declaration in my book *Apocalypse Delayed*,<sup>[20]</sup> Watch Tower officials attacked me in the strongest terms, practically calling me a liar.

The Society's public relations officer for Canada, Walter Graham, claimed "the declaration was neither to placate Hitler nor anti-Semitic," and he said respecting me:

"Penton does have an axe to grind. He has been trying to discredit the Jehovah's Witnesses ever since he was removed from the society."

Yet curiously, he admitted that he had not read the evidence that I had presented. He said: We aren't interested in reading it. We're not interested in what James Penton does, writes or thinks, because he has chosen not to be one of us." [21] In a similar vein, Eugene Rosam, a senior Watch Tower official of Jewish ancestry, refused to comment on *Apocalypse Delayed*. "We have no comment on the publication," said Rosam. "Anybody can write a book and get it published. It's just surprising some people refer to it as if it were Gospel." [22]

It is not surprising that Jehovah's Witness leaders are reluctant to discuss the nature of the Declaration, the Watch Tower letter to Hitler, or the Berlin convention of June 1933 any more than is necessary. After all, no religious organization is anxious to broadcast its past sins. Yet the cover-up surrounding the nature of those events is hypocritical, especially since the Watch Tower Society is so uncharitable towards other religions over their collaboration with Nazism. None the less, the Watch Tower Society has no other real option than to attempt to continue that cover-up. Jehovah's Witnesses claim that the collective body of persons who have governed them since 1919 have been and are the "anointed footstep followers Jesus Christ, described as `the remaining ones of her [God's heavenly organization's] seed, who observe the commandments of God and have the work of bearing witness to Jesus.'" [23]

Thus to admit that they had compromised with a regime such as that of Hitler would be contradictory to this claim. On the basis of their own teachings, it would make them just another part of Babylon the Great! So in order to demonstrate clearly that the account given in this article is historically accurate and that the basic facts presented are irrefutable, we reprint full documentation in the pages that follow.

## **DOCUMENT A**

### **KONRAD FRANKE'S TESTIMONY**

Konrad Franke, later Watch Tower Society branch servant (director or overseer) for Jehovah's Witnesses in Germany, was present at the June 26, 1933 Witness convention in Berlin. In 1976 Franke gave a series of two part lectures (which lasted about three hours in all) in many places throughout West Germany. These

lectures were entitled "The History of Jehovah's Witnesses in Germany." Significantly, they contained information on the 1933 Berlin convention which has never been published by the Watch Tower Society. Those lectures were tape recorded and have been transcribed in full. The statement which appears below is an English translation of remarks taken from them:

... At the last moment, therefore, we were invited to a special assembly in Prussia, thus Berlin, [to be held] in the Tennis Hall, where a "Declaration" was to be presented. Many were now unable to come [to the convention], but I had the privilege of traveling with Brother Albert Wandres from Wiesbaden to Berlin on a motorcycle through torrential rain. That did not bother us too much, but we were shocked when we arrived at the Tennis Hall the next morning and did not find that atmosphere which we ordinarily found at [Jehovah's Witness] conventions. When we entered, we found the hall bedecked with Swastika flags! But not only that: when the meeting started, it was preluded by a song which we had not sung for years, especially not in Germany, because of the melody. Though the lyrics were fine, the melody--well, the musicians who are here will recognize that the notes were [taken from the] the melody of "Deutschland, Deutschland, über alles"!

Can you imagine how we felt? Many could not join in the singing; it was just as though their throats were throttled. What kind of leaders did we have who brought us [into] such dangers--and the danger of faltering under these circumstances--instead of helping and supporting us, so that we could take a fearless stand [against Nazism]. May all elders who are here among us [listening to this lecture] learn something from these examples, and may they recognize their responsibilities in such matters in the near future.

Now the Declaration, which Brother Rutherford had prepared, was approved, and every person was instructed to take 250 copies home if he possibly could. If he then had the courage to do so, he was to send copies of it by registered mail to judges, lawyers, mayors, etc.

At the time, I sent fifty-two registered letters [with the Declaration], and the result was that a few days later I found myself in a concentration camp for the first time, when most people had no idea what a concentration camp was.

## **DOCUMENT B**

### **Declaration of Facts**

"This company of German people, who are peaceable and law-abiding citizens representing many others from every part of Germany, all of whom are earnestly laboring for the highest welfare of the people of this land, being now duely assembled at Berlin this 25th day of June, A.D. 1933, do joyfully declare our

complete devotion to Jehovah, the Almighty God, and to his kingdom under Christ Jesus, whose shed blood bought the human race. We declare that the holy Scriptures set forth in the Bible constitute the Word of Jehovah God given to men for their guidance in righteousness, and that the Word of God is the truth, and that it is of greatest importance that man have a knowledge of his relationship to God. We ask to be judged by the standard of the Word of God.

"Christ Jesus is Jehovah God's great Witness to the truth, and as his faithful and devoted followers we are, by His grace, witnesses to the truth. The purpose of this Declaration is that we may present a true and faithful witness before rulers and the people as to the name and purpose of Jehovah God and our relation thereto.

"We are wrongfully charged before the ruling powers of this government and before the people of this nation; and in order that the name of Jehovah God may be exalted in the minds of the people, and that his benevolent purposes be better understood and our position fairly placed before the government, we do respectfully ask the rulers of the nation and the people to give a fair and impartial consideration to the statement of facts here made.

"The Scriptures plainly state that the chief opposer of Jehovah God and the greatest enemy of mankind is Satan the Devil, whose name is also that of Serpent and Dragon. It is written in the Scriptures that Satan, who has long been the invisible ruler of this world, deceives and blinds the people to the truth in order that the light of and concerning Jehovah God and Christ Jesus may not shine into the minds of men. (2 Corinthians 4: 3,4) Frequently by fraud, subtility [*sic*] and deception Satan has induced honest persons to war with each other, in order that he might turn them all away from God and destroy them. Above all things, the people need to know Jehovah God and his gracious provision for their general welfare.

## **Jews**

"By the term 'clergy', as used in our literature, reference is made to the class of professed religious teachers, priests and Jesuits who employ improper political means to accomplish their ends and join forces even with those who deny God and the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the same class to whom Jesus referred as his persecutors. We have no criticism of any honest religious teacher.

"When Jesus went to the Jews to tell them of the truth, it was the Jewish clergy, that is to say, the Pharisees and priests, that violently opposed him and persecuted him and caused him to be charged with all manner of crimes and offenses. They refused to hear the truth, and addressing them Jesus said: "Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in truth, because there is no truth in him. When he

speakech a lie, he speakech of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not.' (John 8: 43-45) Although the Pharisees and priests then claimed to represent Jehovah God Jesus told them that they were in fact the representatives of Satan the Devil.

"We have no fight with any persons or religious teachers, but we must call attention to the fact that it is generally those who claim to represent God and Christ Jesus who are in fact our persecutors and who misrepresent us before the governments and nations. As true followers of Christ Jesus we are to expect such opposition, and we mention it here in explanation of why we have been misrepresented before the rulers of this nation. To his faithful followers Jesus said: 'Remember the word I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they [the false religious teachers] have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.' (John 15: 20) Furthermore, Jesus said that this same class of men would cause his true followers to be wrongfully charged before the ruling powers, his language being: 'But take heed to yourselves: for they [false religious teachers] shall deliver you up to councils [police power]; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten; and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them.' (Mark 13: 9) This explains why Jehovah God now permits his faithful witnesses to be misrepresented and persecuted, namely, that those of a wrong spirit may identify themselves as opponents of God and thus bear witness against themselves. The same materialistic spirit that caused the persecution of Jesus Christ now exists and is back of the persecution of us his faithful followers.

"It is falsely charged by our enemies that we have received financial support for our work from the Jews. Nothing is farther from the truth. Up to this hour there never has been the slightest bit of money contributed to our work by Jews. We are the faithful followers of Christ Jesus and believe upon Him as the Savior of the world, whereas the Jews entirely reject Jesus Christ and emphatically deny that he is the Savior of the world sent of God for man's good. This of itself should be sufficient proof to show that we receive no support from Jews and that therefore the charges against us are maliciously false and could proceed only from Satan, our great enemy.

"The greatest and most oppressive empire on earth is the Anglo-American empire. By that is meant the British Empire, of which the United States of America forms a part. It has been the commercial Jews of the British-American empire that have built up and carried on Big Business as a means of exploiting and oppressing the peoples of many nations. This fact particularly applies to the cities of London and New York, the stronghold of Big Business. This fact is so manifest in America that there is a proverb concerning the city of New York which says: 'The Jews own it, the Irish Catholics rule it, and the Americans pay the bills.' We have no fight with any of these persons mentioned, but, as the witnesses for Jehovah and in obedience

to his commandment set forth in the Scriptures, we are compelled to call attention to the truth concerning the same in order that the people may be enlightened concerning God and his purpose.

## **Our Literature**

"It is said that our books and like literature, when circulated amongst the people, constitute a danger to the peace and safety of the nation. We are certain that this conclusion is due to the fact that our books and other literature have not been carefully examined by the rulers and hence are not properly understood. We respectfully call attention to the fact that these books and other literature were written originally in America and the language therein used has been adapted to the American style of plainness of speech and, when translated into German, the same appears to be harsh. We admit that the same truths might be stated in a less blunt and more pleasing phrase, and yet the language of these books follows closely the language of the Bible.

"It should be borne in mind that in the British Empire and in America the common people have suffered and are now suffering greatly because of the misrule of Big Business and conscienceless politicians, which misrule has been and is supported by political religionists, and hence the writers of our books or literature have endeavored to employ plain language to convey to the people the proper thought or understanding. The language used, however, is not as strong or emphatic as that used by Jesus Christ in denouncing the oppressors and false teachers of his time.

"The present government of Germany has declared emphatically against Big Business oppressors and in opposition to the wrongful religious influence in the political affairs of the nation. Such is exactly our position; and we further state in our literature the reason for the existence of oppressive Big Business and the wrongful political religious influence, because the Holy Scriptures plainly declare that these oppressive instruments proceed from the Devil, and that the complete relief therefrom is God's kingdom under Christ. It is therefore impossible for our literature or our work to in any wise be a danger or a menace to the peace and safety of the state.

"Our organization is not political in any sense. We only insist on teaching the Word of Jehovah God to the people, and that without hindrance. We do not object or try to hinder anyone's teaching or believing what he desires, but we only ask the freedom to believe and teach what we conceive the bible to teach, and then let the people decide which they wish to believe.

"To know Jehovah God and his gracious provision for mankind is of most vital importance to all persons, because God has declared in His Word that where there is no vision or understanding of his Word the people perish. (Proverbs 29: 18) We

have devoted our lives and our material substance to the work of enabling the people to gain a vision or understanding of God's Word, and therefore it is impossible for our literature and our work to be a menace to the peace and safety of the nation. Instead of being against the principles advocated by the government of Germany, we stand squarely for such principles, and point out that Jehovah God through Christ Jesus will bring about the full realization of these principles and will give to the people peace and prosperity and the greatest desire of every honest heart.

"Our organization seeks neither money nor members, but we are a company or organized body of Christian people engaged solely in the benevolent work of teaching the Word of God to the people at the least possible cost to them. Our organization was originally incorporated in the United States of America in 1884 under the name of the WATCH TOWER BIBLE & TRACT SOCIETY, and in 1914 incorporated under the laws of Great Britain by the name of the INTERNATIONAL BIBLE STUDENTS ASSOCIATION. These are merely the corporate names of our organization for legally carrying forward its work. The Scriptural name by which we are known is 'Jehovah's witnesses'. We are engaged solely in a benevolent work. The purpose of our organization is to aid the people to understand the Bible, which discloses the only possible way for the complete relief and blessing for mankind. Our organization has extended its work throughout the earth. The education, culture and upbuilding of the people must and will come through the agency of God's kingdom concerning which we teach as set forth in the Bible. The salvation of the people depends upon the true knowledge of and obedience to Jehovah God and his righteous ways.

"The people are in great distress and in need of help to understand the reason for their unhappy condition and what is the means of relief. The Scriptures, when understood, make this matter clear. Instead of collecting money from the people and using the same to erect great buildings and to support men in luxury, we print the gospel message of God's kingdom and carry it to the homes of the people that they may, at the least inconvenience to themselves, gain a knowledge of God's purposes concerning them.

"A careful examination of our books and literature will disclose the fact that the very high ideals held and promulgated by the present national government are set forth in and endorsed and strongly emphasized in our publications, and show that Jehovah God will see to it that these high ideals in due time will be attained by all persons who love righteousness and who obey the Most High. Instead, therefore, of our literature and our work's being a menace to the principles of the present government we are the strongest supporters of such high ideals. For this reason Satan, the enemy of all men who desire righteousness, has sought to misrepresent our work and prevent us from carrying it on in this land.

"For many years our organization has put forth an unselfish and persistent effort to do good to the people. Our American brethren have greatly assisted in the work in Germany, and with money freely contributed, and that at a time when all Germany was in dire distress. Now because it appears that Germany may soon be free from oppression and that the people may be lifted up, Satan, the great enemy, puts forth his endeavors to destroy that benevolent work in this land.

## **League of Nations**

"The language in our books or literature concerning the League of Nations has been seized upon as a reason for prohibiting our work and the distribution of our books. Let us remind the government and the people of Germany that it was the League of Nations compact that laid upon the shoulders of the German people the great unjust and unbearable burdens. That League of Nations compact was not brought forth by the friends of Germany. In America at one time the public press announced that 140,000 clergymen had set aside a certain period of time in which a concerted movement was to be made, and which was made, to induce the American people to fully endorse the League of Nations. It was the Federation of Churches in America that issued a manifesto stating that the 'League of Nations is the political expression of God's kingdom on earth', and which by them was substituted in the place and stead of God's kingdom under Christ. It was in America that our organization under the visible leadership of its president pointed out emphatically that the League of Nations is not an institution of Jehovah God, because it is oppressive and unfair. It was that condition, existing at the time, which called forth language that appears in our books concerning the League of Nations and also calling attention to the fact that such League of Nations compact can never bring about the relief and blessing of the people, because such relief and blessing can come by adhering strictly to the principles laid down in God's Word and in the manner which Jehovah has pointed out.

"For almost half a century our strictly Christian organization has carried on its work in various parts of the earth. Its books are published in more than 50 languages, and upward of 140 million of these books are in the hands of the people. For more than thirty years our books and literature have been distributed throughout Germany, and millions of these are now in the hands of the German people and are read by the people, all of whom will bear testimony to the fact that these books, based strictly on the Bible, are of great help to them and upbuild them and give them hope for a realization of the blessings which Jehovah God long ago promised. In all these years of our work, and in the wide distribution of our books and literature, not one instance can be truthfully cited wherein our work or literature has been a menace to the government or has in any wise endangered the peace and safety of the nations.

"The endeavors of our organization being exclusively confined to bearing

testimony to the name and Word of Jehovah God, it would be entirely inconsistent for us to attempt to exert any political influence in the governments of this world or to do anything that would endanger the peace and safety of the nation. We have no desire nor inclination to do anything except to carry out our divinely given commission to proclaim the Word of Jehovah God.

"In America, Canada and other parts of the British Empire the political clergy, priests and Jesuits have persistently persecuted and continue to persecute those of our organization, and without just cause or excuse; and we have every reason to believe that a like influence has been subtly [*sic*] employed by the great enemy Satan to misrepresent us and our work in Germany. We remind you that in the years past the political clergymen have brought more sorrow upon the German people than probably any other class of men. We have no desire to fight with the clergymen, but we do ask that the ruling powers of the nation judge us not by the misrepresentation of such men, but that we be judged according to the Word of God and the work we are doing consistent therewith. Jehovah God persecutes no one, but permits each one to choose his own course, holding him responsible for his acts according to knowledge. Jehovah God has emphatically expressed his anger against those who do persecute others who are trying to serve him; and this proves that those who persecute us do so do not represent God, but that they are incited so to do by the enemy of God and man.--Psalm 72:4

## **Great Truths**

"The Holy Scriptures, viewed in the light of present-day events which are in fulfillment of divine prophecy, disclose that: The time has arrived when Jehovah will make his name known to all creation and vindicate his name and clear it from the defamation which Satan has placed against that holy name. (Psalm 83: 18) When Jesus Christ, the Vindicator, ascended into heaven Jehovah commanded him to wait until his due time to put the enemy down. That period of waiting has now come to an end and God has sent forth his beloved Son to oust the enemy and rule in righteousness. (Psalm 110: 1-4; Hebrews 10: 12,13) The world, or uninterrupted rule, of Satan has ended, and this began to be evidenced by the World War in 1914, and since then until now is the time when the gospel of the Kingdom must be told to the people. (Matthew 24: 3,4) Satan has now been cast out of heaven and down to the earth and now confines his operations to the earth in an endeavor to blind the people to the truth and destroy them, and that is the reason for the present-day sufferings of humanity. The prophetic words of Jesus now apply: 'Woe to the inhabitants [the rulers] of the earth, and of the sea [the people in general]! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.'--Revelation 12: 12.

"The people of Germany have suffered great misery since 1914 and have been the victims of much injustice practiced upon them by others. The nationalists have

declared themselves against all such unrighteousness and announced that 'Our relationship to God is high and holy'. Since our organization fully endorses these righteous principles and is engaged solely in carrying forth the work of enlightening the people concerning the Word of Jehovah God, Satan by subtilty [*sic*] endeavors to set the government against our work and destroy it because we magnify the importance of knowing and serving God. Instead of our organization's being a menace to the peace and safety of the government, it is the one organization standing for the peace and safety of this land.

We beg to remind all that the great crisis is upon the world because the transition period from bad to good is at hand, and the hope of the world is God's kingdom under Christ, for which Jesus taught his followers to constantly pray: 'Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is done in heaven.'

"The power of Jehovah God is supreme and there is no power that can successfully resist him. His time to exercise his power in the interest of humanity and to the vindication of his great name is here. In this connection we respectfully call attention to the admonition and warning of Jehovah God, both to the rulers and to the people, which applies to this very hour, wherein he says: 'Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.... Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.'--Psalm 2: 6, 10-12.

"The present government having declared adherence to the aforementioned high ideals, we are persuaded that the rulers do not desire to knowingly resist the progressive witness work to the name of Jehovah God and his kingdom which we are now carrying forward. If our work is merely that of men, it will fall of its own weight. If it is of Jehovah God and being carried forward in obedience to his commandment, then to resist it means to fight against God.--Acts 5: 39.

We therefore appeal to the high sense of justice of the government and nation and respectfully ask that the order of prohibition against our work and our literature be set aside, and the opportunity be given us to have a fair hearing before we are judged. We respectfully ask that the government appoint a committee of impartial men to hold conference with a committee of our organization and that a fair and impartial examination of our literature and our work be made, to the end that all misunderstanding may be removed and that we may without hindrance obey Jehovah God's commandment now applying to us, to wit: 'Go through, go through the gates; prepare ye the way of the people; cast up the highway; gather out the stones; lift up a standard for the people.'--Isaiah 62: 10.

"The peoples of Germany are a God-fearing people and should not be deprived of an opportunity to learn of Jehovah God and of his gracious provision to bring

lasting peace, prosperity, liberty and everlasting life on earth to all those who know and obey him. Let all who love God work together to the honor and vindication of his name. All who take a contrary course must take responsibility before God; but as for us we will serve Jehovah forever.

"RESOLVED, That copies of this Declaration be respectfully delivered to high officials of the government and that the same be given wide publication to the people, that the name of Jehovah may be further known."

**The German reprint which appears below was taken directly from a copy of the Erklärung or Declaration which was adopted by the 1933 Berlin Jehovah's Witness convention and sent to German officials from Adolf Hitler on down. An examination of it will show that it is virtually identical in substance to the English that appears above:**

## ERKLÄRUNG

**Dieser Kongreß** deutscher Männer und Frauen, friedlicher und ordnungsliebender Bürger aus allen Teilen des Landes, die alle miteinander ernsthaft an dem höchsten Wohl des deutschen Volkes mitarbeiten, hat sich heute, den 25. Juni 1933, offiziell in Berlin versammelt und erklärt freudig seine völlige Ergebenheit gegenüber Jehova Gott, dem Allmächtigen, und seinem Königreich unter Christus Jesus, dessen vergossenes Blut die Menschheit erkaufte hat. Wir bekennen, daß die Heilige Schrift, die Bibel, Gottes Wort ist, das den Menschen zur Unterweisung in Gerechtigkeit gegeben wurde, und daß dieses göttliche Wort die Wahrheit ist, die für den Menschen von größter Bedeutung ist, damit er über sein Verhältnis zu Gott Kenntnis erhalte. Wir berufen uns auf das Wort Gottes und möchten nach diesem Maßstabe beurteilt werden.

Christus Jesus ist Jehova Gottes großer Wahrheitszeuge, und als seine treuen und ergebenen Nachfolger sind wir durch seine Gnade Zeugen der Wahrheit. Der Zweck dieser Erklärung ist, den Führern und dem Volk ein wahres und aufrichtiges Zeugnis über den Namen und das Vorhaben Jehovas und über unsere Beziehungen dazu zu überreichen.

Wir sind fälschlicherweise bei den Regierungsbehörden und bei dem deutschen Volke angeschuldigt worden. Damit nun der Name Jehova Gottes in der Auffassung des Volkes erhöht und sein gütiger Ratschluß besser verstanden und unsere Stellung der Regierung gegenüber in rechter Weise dargelegt werden möchte, ersuchen wir hiermit die Führer und das deutsche Volk, die folgende Erklärung des wahren Sachverhalts gerecht und unparteiisch zu prüfen.

Die Schrift erklärt deutlich, daß Satan der Teufel, dessen Name auch Schlange und Drache ist, der Hauptgegner Jehova Gottes und der größte Feind der Menschheit ist.

Es steht in der Schrift, daß Satan, der seit langem der unsichtbare Herrscher dieser Welt war, die Menschen über die Wahrheit täuscht und verblendet, damit das Licht über Jehova Gott und Christus Jesus nicht in ihre Herzen hineinscheint. (2. Korinther 4: 3,4) Satan hat oft durch Betrug, List und Täuschung aufrichtige Menschen veranlaßt, sich gegenseitig zu bekämpfen, damit er sie alle von Gott entfremde und sie vernichte. Vor allen Dingen sollten die Menschen Jehova Gott und seine gütige Vorkehrung zu ihrem allgemeinen Wohlergehen kennenlernen.

## **JUDEN**

Wenn in unserer Literatur der Ausdruck „Geistlichkeit“ gebraucht wird, so bezieht sich dieser Ausdruck auf solche angeblichen Religionslehrer, Priester und Jesuiten, die unrechtmäßige politische Mittel anwenden, um ihre Zwecke zu erreichen, und die sogar ihre Kräfte verbinden mit solchen, die Gott und den Herrn Jesus Christus verleugnen. Das ist dieselbe Klasse, die Jesus als seine Verfolger bezeichnete. Wir üben keine Kritik an aufrichtigen Religionslehrern.

Als Jesus zu den Juden kam, um ihnen die Wahrheit kundzutun, war es die jüdische Geistlichkeit, daß heißt die Pharisäer und Priester, die ihn heftig bekämpfte, ihn verfolgte, und die Ursache war, daß er aller möglichen Verbrechen und Sünden bezichtigt wurde. Sie weigerten sich, die Wahrheit zu hören, und Jesus richtete folgende Worte an sie: „Warum versteht ihr meine Sprache nicht? Weil ihr mein Wort nicht hören könnt. Ihr seid aus dem Vater, dem Teufel, und die Begierden eures Vaters wollt ihr tun. Jener war ein Menschenmörder von Anfang und ist in der Wahrheit nicht bestanden, weil keine Wahrheit in ihm ist. Wenn er die Lüge redet, so redet er aus seinem Eigenen, denn er ist ein Lügner und der Vater derselben. Weil ich aber die Wahrheit sage, glaubet ihr mir nicht.“ (Johannes 8: 43-45) Obschon die Pharisäer und Priester damals vorgaben Jehova Gott zu dienen, sagte ihnen Jesus, daß sie in Wirklichkeit Vertreter Satans des Teufel seien.

Wir haben keinen Streit mit irgend jemand, auch nicht mit Religionslehrern, jedoch müssen wir darauf aufmerksam machen, daß oft diejenigen, die vorgeben Gott und Christus Jesus zu vertreten, unsere tatsächlichen Verfolger sind, die uns bei den Regierungen der Länder in falschem Lichte darstellen. Als wahre Nachfolger Christi Jesu haben wir solche Gegnerschaft zu erwarten, und wir erwähnen dies hier zur Erklärung, weshalb wir bei den Führern des Volkes in Verruf gebracht worden sind. Jesus sagte zu seinen treuen Nachfolgern: „Gedenket des Wortes, das ich euch gesagt habe: Ein Knecht ist nicht größer als sein Herr. Wenn sie [die falschen Religionslehrer] mich verfolgt haben, werden sie auch euch verfolgen. Wenn sie [die wahren Lehrer] mein Wort gehalten haben, werden sie auch das eure halten.“ (Johannes 15: 20) Des weiteren erklärte Jesus, daß dieselbe Gruppe von Menschen veranlassen würde, daß seine treuen Jünger bei der Staatsgewalt in falschem Verdacht gebracht werden würden. Seine Worte lauteten: „Ihr aber, sehet

auf euch selbst, denn sie [falsche Religionslehrer] werden euch an Synedrien [Polizeigewalt] und an Synagogen überliefern; ihr werdet geschlagen und vor Statthalter und Könige gestellt werden um meinetwillen, ihnen zu einem Zeugnis [andere Übers.: zu einem Zeugnis wider sie]." (Marcus 13: 9) Dies erklärt, warum Jehova Gott es jetzt geschehen läßt, daß seine treuen Zeugen in falschen Verdacht kommen und verfolgt werden, nämlich damit solche, die von einem falschen Geist beseelt sind, sich selbst als Feinde Gottes offenbaren und somit wider sich selbst Zeugnis ablegen.

Es ist von unseren Feinden fälschlich behauptet worden daß wir in unsere Tätigkeit von den Juden finanziell unterstützt werden. Dies ist absolut unwahr, denn bis zur gegenwertigen Stunde ist auch nicht das geringste an Beitragen oder finanzieller Unterstützung für unser Werk von Juden geleistet worden. Wir sind treue Nachfolger Jesu Christi und glauben an ihn als den Heiland der Welt. Die Juden dagegen verwerfen Jesus Christus völlig und leugen absolut, daß er der Welt Heiland ist, der von Gott zum Nutzen des Menschen gesandt wurde. Schon allein diese Tatsache sollte Beweis dafür sein, daß wir von den Juden nicht unterstützt werden und daß die Anschuldigungen gegen uns in böser Absicht vorgebracht wurden und falsch sind, und nur von Satan, unserem großen Feinde, herrühren können.

Das Anglo-Amerikanische Weltreich is die größte und bedrückendste Herrschaft auf Erden. Hiermit ist das Britische Reich, wovon die Vereinigten Staaten Amerikas einen Teil bilden, gemeint. Es sind die Handelsjuden des Britisch-Amerikanischen Weltreiches, die das Großgeschät aufgebaut und benutzt haben als ein Mittel der Ausbeutung und der Bedrückung vieler Völker. Diese Tatsache bezieht sich insonderheit auf die Städte London und New York als Hauptstützpunkte des Großgeschäfts. Dies ist in Amerika so offenbar, das es in Bezug auf die Stadt New York ein Sprichwort gibt, das heißt: „Den Juden gehört die Stadt, die irischen Katholiken beherrschen sie, und die Amerikaner müssen zahlen." Wir haben mit den erwähnten Gruppen keinen Streit, sonder als Zeugen für Jehova und in Befolgung seiner in der Schrift niedergelegten Gebote müssen wir auf die Wahrheit hierüber aufmerksam machen, damit das Volk über Gott und sein Vorhaben aufgeklärt werden möchte.

## **UNSERE LITERATUR**

Es is gesagt worden, daß unsere Bücher und Schriften, wenn sie unter dem Volke verbreitet werden, die öffentliche Ordnung und Sicherheit des Staates gefährden. Wir sind überzeugt daß diese Schußfolge allein der Tatsache zuzuschreiben ist, daß unsere Bücher und Schriften von den Führen nicht sorgfältig geprüft und daher auch nicht richtig verstanden worden sind. Wir machen ergebenst darauf aufmerksam, daß diese Bücher und Schriften im Original in Amerika geschrieben wurden, und daß die Sprache dem offenen und direkten amerikanischen Stil entspricht, so daß

sie in der deutschen Übertragung hart erscheint. Wir geben zu, daß dieselben Wahrheiten nicht so derb gesagt und in eine mildere Form gekleidet werden könnten. Die Sprache dieser Bücher entspricht jedoch genau der Redeweise der Bibel.

Man sollte daran denken, daß in dem Britischen Weltreich und in Amerika das allgemeine Volk gelitten hat und jetzt noch sehr leidet durch die Mißherrschaft des Großgeschäfts und der gewissenlosen Politiker; diese Mißherrschaft wurde und wird von politischen Religionsvertretern unterstützt, und darum waren die Schreiber unserer Bücher und unserer Literatur bemüht, eine offen Sprache zu führen, um dem Volke den rechten Gedanken und das rechte Verständnis zu vermitteln. Die angewandte Redeweise ist jedoch nicht so kräftig und deutlich wie diejenige, die Jesus Christus gebrauchte, als er die Bedrücker und falschen Lehrer seiner Zeit anklagte.

Die nationale Regierung hat sich nun deutlich ausgesprochen gegen die Bedrückung durch das Großgeschäft und gegen verkehrte religiöse Einflüsse in den politischen Angelegenheiten des Staates. Genau dies ist auch unsere Stellungnahme, und wir erklären ferner in unserer Literatur, warum das bedrückende Großgeschäft besteht, und warum der verkehrte politisch-religiöse Einfluß vorhanden ist; denn die Heilige Schrift erklärt deutlich, daß diese bedrückenden Werkzeuge vom Teufel herkommen, und daß die gänzliche Errettung davon in Gottes Königreich unter der Herrschaft Christi kommen wird. Es ist darum unmöglich, daß unsere Literatur oder unsere Tätigkeit in irgendeiner Weise die öffentliche Ordnung und Sicherheit des Staates bedrohen oder gefährden kann.

Unsere Organisation ist keineswegs politisch; wir bestehen nur darauf, das Wort Jehova Gottes dem Volke zu lehren und dies ohne Behinderung tun zu können. Wir haben nichts dagegen und suchen auch niemand zu hindern, zu lehren oder zu glauben was ihm beliebt. Wir erbitten jedoch die Freiheit, zu glauben oder zu lehren was wir für biblische Lehre halten, und dann mag das Volk entscheiden, was es zu glauben wünscht. Es ist für jedermann von größter Wichtigkeit, Jehova Gott und seine gütige Vorkehrung für die Menschheit kennenzulernen, weil Gott in seinem Worte erklärt hat, daß, wo kein Gesicht oder kein Verständnis seines Wortes ist, ein Volk zügellos wird (and. Übersetzung: umkommt). (Sprüche 29: 18) Wir haben alles, was wir sind und haben, unserer Aufgabe gewidmet, damit das Volk ein Gesicht oder Verständnis des göttlichen Wortes erhalten möchte. Es ist daher unmöglich, daß unsere Literatur und unsere Wirksamkeit die öffentliche Ordnung und Sicherheit des Landes bedrohen könnte. Anstatt gegen die von der deutschen Regierung vertretenen Grundsätze eingestellt zu sein, treten wir vollkommen ein für diese Leitsätze, und weisen darauf hin, daß Jehova Gott durch Christus Jesus die gänzliche Verwirklichung dieser Grundsätze bringen, dem Volke Frieden und Wohlstand schenken und die höchsten Wünsche aller

aufrichtigen Herzen erfüllen wird.

Unsere Organisation sucht weder finanziellen Gewinn noch Mitglieder, sondern sie ist eine organisierte Körperschaft christlicher Männer und Frauen, die lediglich in gemeinnütziger Weise damit beschäftigt sind, möglichst unentgeltlich dem Volke das Wort Gottes zu lehren. Unsere Gesellschaft wurde ursprünglich in den Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika im Jahre 1884 unter dem Namen „Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society“ gegründet, und 1914 wurde die Gesellschaft nach englischem Gesetz unter dem Namen „International Bible Students Association“ eingetragen. Diese Korporationsbenennungen dienen unserer Gesellschaft als gesetzliche Grundlage zur Hinausführung ihres Werkes. Der schriftgemäße Name aber ist: Jehovas Zeugen. Wir betreiben ein absolut gemeinnütziges Werk; denn der Zweck unserer Bewegung besteht darin, dem Volke zu einem Verständnis der Bibel zu verhelfen, wodurch der einzig mögliche Weg zur Segnung und völligen Errettung der Menschheit klargelegt wird. Die Tätigkeit unserer Organisation hat sich über der ganzen Erde erstreckt. Bildung, Kultur, und Aufbau des Volkes muß und wird kommen, durch Gottes Königreich, worüber wir das lehren, was in der Bibel niedergelegt ist. Das Heil der Menschen hängt ab von ihrer richtigen Erkenntnis und ihrem Gehorsam Jehova Gott und seinen gerechten Wegen gegenüber.

Die Menschen befinden sich in großer Bedrängnis und benötigen eine Anleitung, den Grund ihrer unglücklichen Lage und den Weg zu ihrer Errettung zu erkennen. Ein Verständnis der Schrift erhellt diese Sache. Anstatt bei den Leuten Geld zu sammeln und dieses zu verwenden, große Bauten zu errichten, oder einzelnen hohe Gehälter zu zahlen, verwenden wir die Mittel zum Druck der frohen Botschaft von Gottes Königreich und bringen diese den Menschen ins Haus, damit sie ohne Mühe über Gottes Vorhaben mit ihnen unterrichtet werden.

Eine sorgfältige Prüfung unserer Bücher und Schriften wird deutlich zeigen, daß die hohen Ideale, die sich die nationale Regierung zum Ziel gesetzt hat und die sie propagiert, auch in unseren Veröffentlichungen dargelegt, gutgeheißen und besonders hervorgehoben werden. Unsere Literatur beweist ferner, daß Jehova Gott dafür sorgen wird, daß alle, die Gerechtigkeit lieben und dem Allerhöchsten gehorchen, zur bestimmten Zeit diese hohen Ziele erreichen werden. Anstatt daß unsere Schriften und unsere Tätigkeit die Grundsätze der nationalen Regierung gefährden, werden in ihnen diese hohen Ideale sehr unterstützt. Darum hat auch Satan, der Feind aller, die Gerechtigkeit lieben, versucht, unsere Tätigkeit in Verrufung zu bringen und sie in diesem Lande zu verhindern.

Seit vielen Jahren war unsere Bewegung unablässig bestrebt, in uneigennütziger Weise dem Volke Gutes zu tun. Unsere Amerikanischen Brüder haben das Werk in Deutschland auch mit Geldmitteln fleißig unterstützt, und zwar zur einer Zeit, wo sich ganz Deutschland in großer Not befand. Nu, wo es scheint, Deutschland bald

von Bedrückung befreit und das Volk in eine bessere Lage gebracht sein wird, bemüht sich Satan, der größte Feind, dieses gemeinnützige Unternehmen hierzulande zu vernichten. Man möchte uns gestatten, hier darauf aufmerksam zu machen, daß in Amerika, wo unsere Bücher geschrieben wurden, Katholiken als auch Juden sich miteinander verbunden haben in der Beschimpfung der nationalen Regierung in Deutschland und in dem Versuch, Deutschland zu boykottieren wegen der von der nationalsozialistischen Partei verkündigten Grundsätze.

## **VÖLKERBUND**

Man hat das, was in unseren Büchern oder Schriften über den Völkerbund gesagt wurde, als Grund angenommen, unsere Tätigkeit und die Verbreitung unserer Bücher zu verbieten. Wir möchten die Regierung und das Deutsche Volk daran erinnern, daß es der Völkerbund war, wodurch dem deutschen Volke große, ungerechte und unerträgliche Lasten aufgelegt wurden. Jener Völkerbund ist nicht von den Freunden Deutschlands gemacht worden. Die Presse kündigte seinerzeit an, daß in Amerika 140 000 Geistliche eine bestimmte Zeit festgelegt hatten, während der gemeinsame Anstrengungen gemacht werden sollten und auch gemacht wurden, um das Amerikanische Volk zu bewegen, dem Völkerbund beizutreten. Der Kirchenbund in Amerika gab ein Manifest heraus, worin erklärt wurde, daß der Völkerbund „der Politische Ausdruck des Reiches Gottes auf Erden“ sei und so wurde dieser von ihnen an die Stelle des Königreich Gottes unter Christi Herrschaft gesetzt. Damals zeigte unsere Organisation unter der sichtbaren Leitung ihres Präsidenten klar und deutlich, daß dieser Völkerbund keine Einrichtung Jehova Gottes ist, weil er bedrückend und unfair ist. Was aber von Jehova kommt kann nicht bedrückend und unfair sein. Die damals vorhandenen Umstände gaben den Anlaß, in unseren Büchern offen über den Völkerbund zu reden und darauf aufmerksam zu machen, daß ein solcher Völkerbund niemals Befreiung und Segnung der Völker bringen kann, weil die Errettung und Segnung nur kommen kann, wenn die Grundsätze, die in Gottes Wort niedergelegt sind, befolgt werden, und nur auf die Weise, wie Jehova sie bestimmt hat.

Seit beinahe einem halben Jahrhundert hat unsere christliche Organisation ihre Tätigkeit in verschiedenen Teilen der Erde ausgeübt. Unsere Bücher sind in mehr als 50 Sprachen erschienen, und mehr als 140 Millionen dieser Bücher sind in den Händen der Menschen. Seit mehr als 30 Jahre sind unsere Bücher und Schriften in ganz Deutschland verbreitet worden, und Millionen dieser Bücher befinden sich in den Händen des deutschen Volkes und werden gelesen. Alle, die diese Bücher gelesen haben, werden bezeugen, daß diese sich gänzlich auf der Bibel stützen, und daß sie ihnen geholfen, sie auferbaut und ihnen die Hoffnung auf die Segnungen gegeben haben, die Jehova Gott seit langem verheißen hat. Aus all diesen Jahren unserer Tätigkeit und bei der weiten Verbreitung unserer Bücher und Schriften kann wahrheitsgemäß kein einziges Beispiel angeführt werden dafür, daß unsere Tätigkeit oder unsere Literatur jemals in irgendeiner Weise die Regierung oder die

öffentliche Ordnung und Sicherheit des Landes bedroht hätte.

Das Bestreben unserer Organisation ist ausschließlich darauf beschränkt, für den Namen und das Wort Jehova Gottes Zeugnis abzulegen. Es wäre daher von uns ganz unkonsequent, wenn wir versuchen wollten, irgendwelchen Einfluss auf die Regierungen dieser Welt auszuüben oder irgendetwas zu tun, was die öffentliche Ruhe und Sicherheit des Landes gefährden würde. Wir haben weder den Wunsch noch den Gedanken, irgend etwas anderes zu tun, als nur den uns von Gott gegebenen Auftrag, das Wort Jehova Gottes zu verkündigen, auszuführen.

In Amerika, Kanada und in anderen Teilen des Britischen Weltreiches haben die politischen Geistlichen, Priester und Jesuiten die Glieder unserer Organisation ohne guten Grund oder eine Entschuldigung fortgesetzt verfolgt und fahren fort, dies zu tun, und haben wir Grund zu glauben, daß ein ähnlicher Einfluß in listiger Weise von dem großen Feind Satan angewandt wurde, um uns und unsere Tätigkeit in Deutschland in Verruf zu bringen. Wir möchten Sie daran erinnern, daß in den letzten Jahren politische Geistliche dem deutschen Volke mehr Sorgen bereitet haben als irgendeine andere Gruppe. Wir wollen uns nicht mit den katholischen Geistlichen streiten, doch wir ersuchen die Reichsregierung, uns nicht nach der falschen Darstellung dieser Männer zu beurteilen, sondern nach dem Maßstab des Wortes Gottes und nach der Tätigkeit, die wir im Einklang damit ausüben. Jehova Gott verfolgt niemand, sondern überläßt es jedem einzelnen, seinen eigenen Weg zu wählen, aber er hält jeden nach seiner Erkenntnis verantwortlich für sein Tun. Jehova Gott hat deutlich seinen Zorn zum Ausdruck gebracht gegen alle, die seine Diener verfolgen. Dies beweist, daß, wer uns verfolgt, nicht Gott dient, sondern von dem Feinde Gottes und des Menschen dazu veranlasst wird. -- Psalm 72: 4.

## **BETEUTUNGSVOLLE WAHRHEITEN**

Die Heilige Schrift, betrachtet im Lichte heutiger Ereignisse, wodurch göttliche Prophetie [sic?] erfüllt wird, offenbart: der Zeitpunkt ist gekommen, wo Jehova seinen Namen der ganzen Schöpfung bekanntgeben, rechtfertigen und von der Schändung die Satan auf Gottes heiligen Namen gebracht hat, reinigen wird. (Psalm 83: 18) Als Jesus Christus, der große Rechtfertiger, in den Himmel aufgestiegen war, befahl Jehova ihm, bis zu dem bestimmten Zeitpunkt zu warten, wo der Feind niedergeworfen werden sollte. Diese Wartezeit ist jetzt zu Ende, und Gott hat seinen geliebten Sohn gesandt, den Feind aufzutreiben und dann in Gerechtigkeit zu herrschen. (Psalm 110: 1-4; Hebräer 10: 12,13) Die Welt oder die ununterbrochene Herrschaft Satans ist zu Ende, was durch den Weltkrieg 1914 in Erscheinung trat. Seitdem ist die Zeit, wo das Evangelium vom Königreich den Nationen kundgemacht werden muß. (Mattäus 24: 3, 14) Satan ist nun aus dem Himmel hinaus und auf Erden hinabgeworfen worden, und seine Wirksamkeit ist jetzt auf die Erde beschränkt. Es ist sein Bestreben, die Menschen gegen die

Wahrheit blind zu machen und sie zugrunde zu richten, und dies ist die Ursache für die gegenwärtigen Leiden der Menschheit. Jetzt haben die prophetische Worte Jesu Anwendung: „Wehe denen, die auf Erden [die Führer] wohnen, und auf dem Meer [das allgemeine Volk]! denn der Teufel ist zu euch hinabgekommen und hat große Wut, da er weiß, daß er wenig Zeit hat.“ Offenbarung 12: 12.

Das deutsche Volk hat seit 1914 große Not gelitten und hat viele Ungerechtigkeiten durch andere erdulden müssen. Die National-sozialisten haben erklärt, daß sie gegen jede solche Ungerechtigkeit Stellung nehmen, und haben als Leitsatz kundgetan: „Unser Verhältnis Gott gegenüber ist hoch und heilig.“ Da unsere Organisation diese gerechten Grundsätze durchaus gutheißt und einzig damit beschäftigt ist, die Menschen über das Wort Jehova Gottes aufzuklären, ist Satan in listiger Weise bestrebt, die Regierung gegen unser Werk zu wenden und es zu zerstören, weil wir die Notwendigkeit, Gott zu erkennen und ihm zu dienen hervorheben. Unsere Organisation gefährdet keineswegs die öffentliche Ordnung und Sicherheit des Staates, sondern sie ist die Bewegung, die für die öffentliche Ordnung, Ruhe und Sicherheit des Landes eintritt. Wir möchten allen vor Augen führen, daß die große Krise über die Welt gekommen ist, weil dies die Übergangszeit vom Schlechten zum Guten ist. Die Hoffnung der Welt ist Gottes Königreich unter der Herrschaft Christi, wofür Jesus seine Jünger lehrte, ständig zu beten: „Dein Reich komme, dein Wille geschehe, wie im Himmel so auch auf Erden.“

Jehova Gottes Macht ist über alles erhaben, und es gibt keine Macht, die ihm erfolgreich widerstehen kann. Sein Zeitpunkt, seine Macht zum Nutzen der Menschheit und zur Rechtfertigung seines hohen Namens auszuüben ist herbeigekommen. In diesem Zusammenhang gestatten wir uns ergebenst, auf die Ermahnung und Warnung Jehovas sowohl an die Führer als auch an das Volk hinzuweisen. Diese Schriftstelle hat auf die gegenwärtige Stunde Anwendung und lautet: „Habe doch ich meinen König gesalbt auf Zion, meinem heiligen Berge ... Und nun, ihr Könige, seit verständig; lasset euch zurechtweisen, ihr Richter der Erde! Dienet Jehova mit Furcht, und freuet euch mit Zittern! Küsst den Sohn, daß er nicht zürne, und ihr unkommet auf dem Wege, wenn nur ein wenig entbrennt sein Zorn. Glückselig alle, die auf ihn trauen!“ Psalm 2: 6, 10-12

Nachdem sich die nationale Regierung zu den oben erwähnten hohen Idealen bekannt hat, sind wir überzeugt daß die Führer nicht wissentlich das fortschrittliche Zeugniswerk für den Namen Jehovas und seines Königsreiches, das wir jetzt hinausführen, bekämpfen wollen. Wenn unser Werk nur Menschenwerk wäre, so würde es von selbst untergehen. Wenn es jedoch Gottes Werk ist und auf seinem Befehl getan wird, so bedeutet die Bekämpfung dieses Werkes einen Kampf gegen Gott. -- Apostelgeschichte 5: 39.

Wir appellieren daher an den Gerechtigkeitsinn der Landesführere und ersuchen

ergebenst, daß das Verbot unserer Tätigkeit und unserer Literatur aufgehoben werden möchte, und daß man uns eine Gelegenheit gebe, in unparteiischer Weise angehört zu werden, ehe man uns verurteilt. Wir bitten ergebenst darum, daß die Regierung ein Komitee [*sic*] unparteiischer Männer bestimme, um mit einem Komitee [*sic*] aus unserer Organisation zu verhandeln, und daß unsere Literatur und unsere Tätigkeit in fairer und unparteiischer Weise untersucht werde, damit jedes Mißverständnis behoben werde und wir uns gegenseitig behilflich sein möchten, und damit wir ohne Behinderung dem Gebote Gottes, daß jetzt auf uns Anwendung hat, nachkommen können, nämlich: „Ziehet durch die Tore, bereitet den Weg des Volkes; bahnet die Strasse, reiniget sie von Steinen, erhebet ein Panier über die Völker.“ -- Jesaja 62 Vers 10.

Das deutsche Volk ist ein gottesfürchtiges Volk, und ihm sollte nicht die Möglichkeit genommen werden über Jehova Gott und über seine gütige Vorkehrung, allen die ihn kennen und ihm gehorchen, ewigen Frieden, Wohlfahrt, Freiheit und ewiges Leben auf Erden zu geben, unterrichtet zu werden. Möchten doch alle, die Gott lieben, zusammen arbeiten zur Ehrung und Rechtfertigung seines Namens. Alle, die einen entgegengesetzten Weg verfolgen, müssen selber vor Gott die Verantwortung auf sich nehmen; was aber uns betrifft, so werden wir auf ewig Jehova dienen.

**Es wird hierdurch beschlossen**, je ein Exemplar dieser Erklärung den hohen Regierungsbeamten ergebenst zu überreichen und sie allgemein zu verbreiten, damit der Name Jehovas immer mehr bekannt gemacht werde.

## **WATCH TOWER BIBLE AND TRACT SOCIETY, MAGDEBURG**

**Duck u. Verlag: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society , Magdeburg**

### **Footnotes:**

1 For a full account of Russell's Zionism, see David Horowitz, *Pastor Charles Taze Russell: An Early American Christian Zionist* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1986).

2/SUP For a Watch Tower review of *Life* after Rutherford had changed Watch Tower Society policy toward the Jews, see *The Golden Age* of October 26, 1932, p. 54.

3 The new policy statement itself appears in J.F. Rutherford, *Vindication*, (Brooklyn, N.Y.: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 1932), Vol. 2. pp. 257-8.

4 Based on a statement by my father, L.B. Penton, who personally heard Rutherford's remark. My father died a Jehovah's Witness in good standing in May 1972.

5 The most important of these movements was the Ku Klux Klan which existed on a widespread scale in both countries. But the Klan-- which was also anti-Caucasian and anti-Catholic--was only one of such movements. Anti-Semitism was also quite rampant among American and Canadian Catholics, some of whom were openly pro-fascist. This was particularly true in the province of Quebec.

6 Some of the German Länder or states had banned the Witnesses earlier, and these bans remained in force after April 28, 1933. For a detailed chronology of these events, see the *1974 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses* (Brooklyn, N.Y.: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, Inc., 1973), pp. 108-9.

7 P. 130

8 Franke's statement is given in full in one of the documents following this article. It is reproduced both in English translation and in the original German.

9 This quotation is taken from the English language edition of the *1934 Year Book of Jehovah's Witnesses* (Brooklyn, N.Y.: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 1933), p. 134.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 135

11 *Ibid.*, p. 136

12 This letter appears in both English translation and in the original German among the documents which follow this article. The statement that the eight Watch Tower officers were sentenced to eighty years in an Atlanta, Georgia federal penitentiary appears in many Watch Tower sources, evidently for shock effect. In fact, seven of them were sentenced to four terms of twenty years each which were to run *concurantly*. Thus the seven were really sentenced to twenty years incarceration, not eighty. The eighth member of the group was sentenced to ten years.

While it is true that the Watch Tower Society did not ordinarily censure Germany any more than the Allies during the First World War, it did publish statements and cartoons quite critical of German "autocracy."

13 See, for example, the booklet *The Crisis* (Brooklyn, N.Y.: Watch Tower Bible & Tract Society, 1931) which exemplifies these views. It was distributed widely throughout Germany in 1932.

14 *1974 Yearbook*, pp. 111-12

15 *Ibid.*, pp. 131-33

16

17

18 Christine Elizabeth King, *The Nazi State and the New Religions: Five Case Studies in Non-Conformity* (New York & Toronto: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1982), pp. 151, 152

19 *Ibid.*

20 M. James Penton, *Apocalypse Delayed: The Story of Jehovah's Witnesses* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), pp. 147-9

21 See *The Toronto Star*, Saturday, July 20, 1985, p. L 12 and the *Spokane Chronicle*, Saturday, August 10, 1985, p. 11.

22 *The Hamilton Spectator*, Saturday, September 7, 1985, p. D 12

23 *The Watchtower*, August 15, 1958, p. 486