PUBLIC STATEMENT

New York, November 30, 1920—A conference to discuss the widespread campaign of secret anti-Jewish propaganda in the United States was called by the American Jewish Committee. This conference was participated in by the foremost national Jewish organizations and authorized the issuance of a public statement in which the so-called “Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion” now being circulated in large numbers by secret agencies are condemned as a forgery, and the charge that Bolshevism is part of a conspiracy of Jews and Freemasons to secure world domination is denounced as a malicious invention inspired by foreign reactionary forces for the purpose of breeding suspicion and hatred of the Jews and Freemasons in the United States in order to discredit “free government in the eyes of the European masses and thus facilitate the restoration of absolutism in government.”

The signatories of the declaration which is addressed “To Our Fellow Citizens” include the following representatives of Jewish organizations: The American Jewish Committee, the Zionist Organization of America, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the Union of Orthodox Jews, the United Synagogue of America, the Provisional Committee for an American Jewish Congress, The Independent Order of B’nai B’rith, the Central Conference of American Rabbis, the Rabbinical Assembly of the Jewish Theological Seminary, and the United Orthodox Jewish Rabbis of America. The complete address follows:

TO OUR FELLOW CITIZENS:

During the war, by secret agencies, a document variously called “The Protocols of the Elders of Zion,” “The Protocols of the Meetings of the Zionist Men of Wisdom,” and “The Protocols of the Wise Men of Zion,” was clandestinely circulated, in typewritten form, among public officials and carefully selected civilians, for the purpose of giving rise to the belief that the Jews, in conjunction with Freemasons, had been for centuries engaged in a conspiracy to produce revolution and anarchy, by means of which they hoped to attain the control of the world by the establishment of some sort of despotic rule. Some months ago this document was published in England. More recently it has appeared in print in the United States and thousands of copies have been circulated with an air of mystery among legislators, journalists, clergymen and teachers, members of clubs, and indiscriminately to the general public. The London Morning Post has given out a series of articles as a commentary upon The Protocols, in which the charge of an unholy conspiracy between Jews and Freemasons is elaborated, and Bolshevism is characterized as a movement of, for and by the Jews and is declared to be a fulfillment of The Protocols. These articles, whose authorship is not disclosed, have now appeared in book form under the title “The Cause of World Unrest.” During the past six months there have been sent forth weekly in Henry Ford’s organ, The Dearborn Independent, attacks of extraordinary virulence upon the Jews. These assaults upon the honor of the Jewish people are all founded on The Protocols and on the discredited literature of Russian and German anti-Semitism, inspired by the minions of autocracy. Parrot-like they repeat the abominable charges that can only appeal to the credulity of a stunned intelligence—charges long since conceded to be unfounded by all fair-minded men. Ford is employing his great wealth in scattering broadcast his fulminations, regardless of consequences.

When the Jews of the United States first learned of these malodorous pranks, they deemed it beneath their dignity to take notice of them, because they regarded them as a mere recrudescence of medieval bigotry and stupidity showing upon their face their utter worthlessness. These publications have, however, been put in circulation to such an extent that it is believed that the time has come, humiliating though it be to them, for the Jews to make answer to these libels and to the unworthy insinuations and innuendoes that have been whispered against them.

Speaking as representatives of the Jewish people, familiar with the history of Judaism in its various phases and with the movements, past and present, in Jewish life, we say with all solemnity:

(1) The Protocols are a base forgery. There has never been an organization of Jews known as The Elders of Zion, or The Zionist Men of Wisdom, or The Wise Men of Zion, or bearing any other similar name. There has never existed a secret or other Jewish body organized for any purpose such as that implied in The Protocols. The Jewish people have never dreamed of a Jewish dictatorship, of a destruction of religion, of an interference with industrial prosperity, or of an overthrow of civilization. The Jews have...
never conspired with the Freemasons, or with any other body, for any purpose.

From the time of the destruction of the Temple at Jerusalem by Titus, the Jews have had no political state. For centuries they were forced to wander from land to land, to flee for refuge wherever they might find it against bitter persecution. They were pent up in ghettos, were deprived of even the shadow of civil or political rights, and were made the objects of every possible form of discrimination. It is little more than fifty years since the Jews of Western Europe became politically emancipated. Until the outbreak of the World War, the Jews of Eastern Europe, constituting a majority of all the Jews of the world, were not even permitted to exercise the rights of citizenship in lands where they and their ancestors had dwelt for generations. The great mass of the Jews were hamperecl in every way in their efforts to earn a livelihood. Far from desiring to govern the world, they were content with the opportunity to live. Numerically they constitute less than one per cent of the population of the Earth; and more than one-half of them are on the verge of starvation. The suggestion that, in their feebleness, they have been planning in secret to seize absolute power and to dominate the ninety-nine per cent of non-Jews upon the globe is a ridiculous invention than which even madness can conjure nothing more preposterous.

Where is the habitat of these so-called Elders of Zion, by whatever name they may be called? Who are these hidden sages? Where and by whom was the book composed? What is the nature of their organization? The distributors of The Protocols are silent on that subject. Whence come these pretended Protocols? There have been various versions. One Serge Nilus, of whose identity little is known, a Russian mystic and an ardent supporter of Caesarsl, claims to have received them in Russia, in 1901, in manuscript form, from a Russian office-holder, who stated that the manuscript had been originally obtained by a lady, whose name is not given, and who, he said, received them in a mysterious way. In what language they were written is not stated. Where that manuscript now is does not appear. Nilus asserts that he submitted The Protocols to one of the Russian Grand Dukes, who, after examination, returned them with the despairing message: "Too late." Apparently there was no room for them in the Russian archives, and they suggested no task for the Czar's bureaucracy.

Where then do they come from? What is the nature of their organization? The distributors of The Protocols are silent on that subject. Whence come these pretended Protocols? There have been various versions. One Serge Nilus, of whose identity little is known, a Russian mystic and an ardent supporter of Caesarism, claims to have received them in Russia, in 1901, in manuscript form, from a Russian office-holder, who stated that the manuscript had been originally obtained by a lady, whose name is not given, and who, he said, received them in a mysterious way. In what language they were written is not stated. Where that manuscript now is does not appear. Nilus asserts that he submitted The Protocols to one of the Russian Grand Dukes, who, after examination, returned them with the despairing message: "Too late." Apparently there was no room for them in the Russian archives, and they suggested no task for the Czar's bureaucracy.

Irrespective of this history, bristling with suspicion, an analysis of The Protocols shows that on their face they are a fabrication and that they have been emanated from the bitter opponents of democracy. They are replete with cynical references to the French Revolution, and to the conceptions of liberty, equality and fraternity. They uphold privilege and autocracy. They belittle education. They condemn religious liberty. They assert that political freedom is an idea and not a fact, and that the doctrine that a government is nothing but a steward of the people is a mere phrase. These are the very doctrines that one would expect from the protagonists of autocracy. Nothing can be more foreign to Jewish thought and aspiration than these brutal theories of reaction. That the Jews, whose very life has been a prayer for the blessings of liberty and equality, should hold them in contempt is unthinkable.

The document throughout is farceful in its absurdities. In the Russian original there is a
Department, his General Staff is composed exclusively of non-Jews.

In "The Cause of World Unrest" a list of fifty names is given, most of whom are classified as Jews and Bolsheviks, in order to establish the thesis that "nearly all of the Bolshevik leaders are Jews." An examination of the list shows that ten of the Jews included in the list are the leaders of the anti-Bolshevik movement in Russia; that a number of those who are classified in the list as Jews are not Jews at all; that a large proportion of those classified as Jews are men who are so obscure and hold positions so inconspicuous that whether or not they are Jews is not only uncertain but unimportant. They are certainly not leaders.

On the other hand, the leaders of the Mensheviki, who are the sworn foes of Bolshevism, are to a large extent Jews. Among the chiefs of the Constitutional Democratic Party of Russia, who are strongly opposed to the Soviets, are Vinaver, Shlosberg, Plessnik, Karinka, Landau and Friedmann, all prominent Jews. Among the leaders of the Peoples Socialist, the Socialist Revolutionary, and the Menshevik section of the Social Democratic parties, bitter opponents of the Bolsheviks, are a large number of Jews. The leading anti-Bolshevik newspapers, which are necessarily published outside of Russia, have Jews upon their editorial staffs. An overwhelming majority of Russian Jews have been ruined by the coercive measures of the Soviets. They have submitted to the confiscation of their property and are undergoing unspeakable hardships. The Orthodox Jews, whose numbers preponderate, remaining loyal to the faith of their fathers, regard the Bolsheviks as the enemies of all religion, and, therefore, hold the doctrines of Bolshevism in abhorrence. With comparatively few exceptions the Jews are looked upon by the Bolsheviks as belonging to the hated bourgeoisie and as favoring capitalism. The Zionists, who constitute a numerous and important element of the Jews of Russia, have been denounced by the Soviets as counter-revolutionaries, and many of them have been cast into prison and threatened with death—Zionists, we repeat, who are the followers of Herzl.

If the Jews are to be condemned because of a Trotsky, who has never in the slightest degree concerned himself with Judaism or the welfare of the Jews, then there is not a people that has ever lived that might not with equal right be condemned because in its membership there were men who are alleged to have advocated hateful doctrines. The Jew has traditionally stood for religion, law, order, the family, and the right of property. It is, therefore, the height of cruelty to charge him with responsibility for Bolshevism, when its doctrines, should they prevail, would inevitably lead to the destruction of Judaism. It is especially a brutal charge when one considers all that the Jew has suffered from Russian autocracy and from its effort to suppress every aspiration that the Jew had for freedom. It is a great tribute to the patriotism of the Russian Jews that, in spite of the indignities that they had to undergo, hundreds of thousands of them fought under the banner of the Czar, loyally and gallantly, and in large numbers
down their lives in the Allied cause. The rosters of the army and navy of the United States contain the names of tens of thousands of Jews born in Russia who served so faithfully under our colors that they gained the unqualified approval of their officers, and proportionately many of them were awarded decorations of honor by a grateful country.

We have refrained from commenting on the libels contained in The Dearborn Independent. Ford, in the fulness of his knowledge, unqualifiedly declares The Protocols to be genuine and argues that practically every Jew is a Bolshevist. We have dealt sufficiently with both of these falsehoods. It is useless in a serious document to analyze the puerile and venomous drivel that he has derived from the concoctions of professional agitators. He is merely a dupe. What is the motive of those who have set in motion this new onslaught of anti-Semitism? It is the motive that again and again has actuated autocracy and its adroit supporters—that of seeking a scapegoat for their own sins, so that they may be enabled under the cover of a false issue to deceive the public.

It is an attempt to drive into the solidarity of the citizenry of our country that has been its pride and its strength the wedge of discord, by arousing suspicion and inciting overt acts not only against those of Jewish origin but also against Freemasons, in the hope of discrediting free government in the eyes of the European masses and thus facilitate the restoration of absolutism in government.

The Protocols were manufactured in Russia under the bureaucracy, and the ammunition with which the campaign is conducted has been furnished out of the arsenal of imperialistic Germany and by those who are seeking to restore the Hapsburgs, the Hohenzollerns, and the Romanoffs on their former thrones. Ancient hatred and unreasoning prejudice and a failure to understand and know what the Jew really is, are likewise responsible for the readiness with which these falsehoods have been accepted by those who are ever willing to believe evil of their fellow-men.

We have an abiding confidence in the spirit of justice and fairness that permeates the true American, and we are satisfied that our fellow-citizens will not permit the campaign of slander and libel that has been launched against us to go unrebuked. There is enough of all of us to do in the great task of building up our common country and of developing the principles on which it is founded. Let not hatred and misunderstanding arise where peace and harmony, unity and brotherliness, are required to perpetuate all that America represents and to enable all men to know that within her wide boundaries there is no room for injustice and intolerance.