

# THE JEW AND AMERICAN IDEALS

## I

### A PACIFIST TURNED ANTI-SEMITE

ABOUT five years ago I was honored by an invitation to join with a well-known American capitalist and certain other men and women in an attempt to bring about the termination of the great World War. The manufacturer in question believed that it was possible to "get the boys out of the trenches by Christmas," and to that end organized an expedition which is now remembered chiefly for the belligerency and belligerency of many of the "pacifists" who journeyed to Europe upon the "Peace Ship."

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In declining the invitation to associate myself with this expedition, I felt that it was incumbent upon me to explain that, while I doubted the wisdom of the undertaking and felt that it might do harm instead of good, I honored the noble and unselfish motives by which Mr. Ford was inspired. His hatred of war and bloodshed, and his desire to promote peace and good will among all peoples and races, seemed to me to be both profound and sincere and evoked my heartfelt admiration and sympathy. The more I doubted his political judgment—believing that he was being used as a dupe and tool in a very dangerous intrigue—the more willing I was to acknowledge those qualities of mind and heart which distinguished the famous manufacturer, and which the authors of the intrigue sought to exploit and use for sinister ends. On many occasions I have given public expression to my belief in Mr. Ford's sincere and unselfish idealism.

If any justification is required for my

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now associating the name of Henry Ford with a matter of grave international political importance, I venture to suggest that it can be found in the pre-eminent position which he occupies in one of the great branches of modern industry and in the fact that as recently as two years ago he aspired to a seat in the United States Senate, being nominated for that position by the Democratic party in the great state of Michigan. Upon both counts views expressed by Mr. Ford upon international questions which may involve great and serious national or racial conflicts become the subject of legitimate public interest, and when in furtherance of such views he associates himself with an active policy which deals with one of the most difficult and dangerous problems confronting civilized mankind, his views and his acts assume public importance and invite and compel attention and discussion. Therefore, believing as I do that Mr. Ford is primarily responsible for a propaganda which is subversive of the best

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traditions and institutions of this Republic, and which has everywhere and at all times resulted in shameful crimes against humanity, and in resistance to every progressive and humane movement, I feel that it is my right and duty to utter my solemn remonstrance and protest.

I have just returned from a tour through several of the European countries most seriously involved in the late war. On the one hand, I was deeply and gratefully impressed while in Europe with the manner in which some of the intensest hatreds engendered by the war appear to be dying out. On the other hand, I was deeply and painfully impressed by the fact that, in country after country, racial hatreds older than any nation in the world were being deliberately and systematically revived and intensified, threatening brutal and ugly crimes against humanity exceeding in horror the worst and most inhuman violence of the Great War which so nearly achieved the ruin of civilization. In Germany, for example, I

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found no hatred of America, notwithstanding the fact that alone among the nations lately fighting against her we were still technically at war with her. On the contrary, there was manifest an almost universal desire for the restoration of friendship between the two countries. In Belgium I saw hundreds of little German children being fed by Belgian agencies, proving that hate was being dissolved by compassion. Even in France the fierce hatred of Germany was obviously dying.

So much for the bright side of the European situation as I saw it. Unfortunately, to complete the picture, it is necessary to acknowledge the numerous evidences of a widespread revival of one of the most despicable, brutal, and dangerous forms of racial hatred and antagonism known to mankind—anti-Semitism. Even in England, long hitherto so free from Jew-baiting, the land in which the Jew Disraeli became Prime Minister, I found an extensive, active, and skillfully organized cam-

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paing directed against Jews, as Jews. It was and is a campaign differing hardly at all from similar campaigns against the Jews in Russia under tsarism, in Rumania, in Poland, and, to a less extent, in Germany under the Hohenzollerns. Unless this prop-  
aganda is checked, unless the intelligence and the conscience of England can be marshaled against it, England will take the place of the Russia of the Romanovs as the land of pogroms, and infamies like the horrible pogroms of Kishinev may occur in British cities.

I found in England great nation-wide organizations, obviously well financed, devoted to the sinister purpose of creating anti-Jewish feeling and sentiment. I found special articles in influential newspapers devoted to the same evil purpose. I found at least one journal, obviously well financed again, exclusively devoted to the fostering of suspicion, fear, and hatred against the Jew. Nothing that the Black Hundreds of Russia under the tsars said of the Jews,

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in order to inflame the ignorant masses and inspire them to savage attacks upon the Jewish population, could have been worse than much of this propaganda. It appealed to every passion, charged the Jews as a race with every crime calculated to rouse the frenzied anger of the non-Jewish population. And in the bookstores I discovered a whole library of books devoted to the same end. One of the greatest living statesmen of England, who is not a Jew, told me that in his judgment this systematically propagated anti-Semitism is likely to bring greater difficulty and shame to England than the Irish question, even.

And now, returning to the United States, I find America confronted by the same peril and shame. Here, too, I find anti-Jewish meetings being held. To my great astonishment and regret, I find that the personal influence and the vast fortune of the erstwhile pacifist-philanthropist are apparently enlisted in the same cruel and vicious propaganda. The *Dearborn Independent*,

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which is the personal organ of Mr. Henry Ford, maintained for the promulgation of his personal political and sociological views, has been devoting a large amount of its space to the creation of anti-Jewish feeling and sentiment. One of the first pieces of accumulated mail to claim my attention on my return was a pamphlet, sent to me by some unknown correspondent, obviously a Jew hater in view of the coarse and brutal comments written upon the margins. This pamphlet contains a reprint of nine articles which originally appeared in the *Dearborn Independent*. It is, therefore, apparently impossible for Mr. Ford to disclaim personal and direct responsibility for the contents of the pamphlet. If I am wrong in any of these particulars I shall be very glad to be corrected and to apologize for the error. To find any American engaged in such a propaganda seems to me such a pity and such an outrage against our national ideals that I should welcome proof that my information and inferences are all wrong

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and unfounded so far as Mr. Ford is concerned.

In this discussion of the anti-Semitic propaganda, and of the share of the *Dearborn Independent* in that propaganda, I have not the slightest intention of attacking Mr. Ford personally. While I find myself deeply interested in the psychology of the transformation of an extremely idealistic pacifist into an aggressive propagandist of race hatred, with that I am not here and now concerned.