

# Textual Research on the Scientists and Content Background behind the Declaration of 93 People

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**Abstract:** *In July 1914, World War I broke out internationally. Germany invaded neutral Belgium within two months at the beginning of the war. In order to create public opinion for the rationalization of German military operations, 93 people, including outstanding German natural scientists, artists, writers and priests, jointly signed a statement, The Book to the Civilized World, also known as the Declaration of 93 People. This infamous declaration and its influence occupy an important place in the history of human culture and science. In this paper, firstly, the specific contents of the Declaration of 93 People are translated, and then the names of the signatories are listed one by one. Finally, the background and influence of the Declaration are briefly summarized.*

**Keywords:** *Declaration of 93 people; Letter to the civilized world; Signature list*

## 1. Specific contents of the Declaration of 93 People

As representatives of German Science and Art, we hereby protest to the civilized world against the lies and calumnies with which our enemies are endeavoring to stain the honor of Germany in her hard struggle for existence—in a struggle that has been forced on her.

The iron mouth of events has proved the untruth of the fictitious German defeats; consequently, misrepresentation and calumny are all the more eagerly at work. As heralds of truth we raise our voices against these.

It is not true that Germany is guilty of having caused this war. Neither the people, the Government, nor the Kaiser wanted war. Germany did her utmost to prevent it; for this assertion the world has documental proof. Often enough during the twenty-six years of his reign has Wilhelm II shown himself to be the upholder of peace, and often enough has this fact been acknowledged by our opponents. Nay, even the Kaiser, whom they now dare to call an Attila, has been ridiculed by them for years, because of his steadfast endeavors to maintain universal peace. Not till a numerical superiority which has been lying in wait on the frontiers assailed us did the whole nation rise to a man.

It is not true that we trespassed in neutral Belgium. It has been proved that France and England had resolved on such a trespass, and it has likewise been proved that Belgium had agreed to their doing so. It would have been suicide on our part not to have preempted this.

It is not true that the life and property of a single Belgian citizen was injured by our soldiers without the bitterest self-defense having made it necessary; for again and again, notwithstanding repeated threats, the citizens lay in ambush, shooting at the troops out of the houses, mutilating the wounded, and murdering in cold blood the medical men while they were doing their Samaritan work. There can be no baser abuse than the suppression of these crimes with the view of letting the Germans appear to be criminals, only for having justly.

It is untrue to say that our war violated international law. International law does not know the cruelty of indiscipline. Look at the land in our east, which is soaked with the blood of women and children brutally slaughtered by the brutal Russian army. In the west, Damme shells are tearing the chest of our soldiers. Those who are least qualified as defenders of European civilization are those who associate with Russians and Serbs and describe Mongols and blacks as whites[1-3].

It is untrue to say that this is a war against our so-called militarism rather than a war against our German civilization. Without German militarism, German culture would have disappeared long ago. In order to protect our civilization, a country that has been invaded and insulted for centuries has recently developed so-called militarism. The German army and the German people are one. Today, this awareness is approaching 70 million German people, regardless of education, class or party. We can't

get rid of the enemy's lying weapon, but we can only declare to the world that they have perjured us. You know, many of our scientists and scholars have always been the most precious property of mankind: trust us! We will fight this war to the end like a civilized nation. The spiritual heritage of Goethe, Beethoven and Kant in this nation is as sacred as the spirit of the whole country and every inch of land. We serve you in our name and honor!

## 2. List of all signatures of the Declaration of 93 People

Ninety-three German academic elites signed the Letter to the Civilized World. Including natural scientists, artists, priests, poets, lawyers, doctors, historians, writers and politicians (including 14 Nobel Prize winners and one Nobel Prize nominee)[4-5].

### (1) Natural scientists (15 people)

Adolf von Baeyer (1905 Nobel Prize in Chemistry); Karl Engler (professor and director of chemistry at Karlsruhe Technical University); Emil Fischer (1902 Nobel Prize in Chemistry); Wilhelm Julius Foerster (professor of astronomy at Berlin University, chairman of the International Bureau of Weights and Measures); Fritz Haber (1918 Nobel Prize in Chemistry); Ernst Haeckel (a famous evolutionist); Felix Klein (famous mathematician, the originator of Klein bottle); Philipp Lenard (1905 Nobel Prize in Physics); Gustav Hellmann (a famous meteorologist); Walther Nernst (Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 1920); Wilhelm Ostwald (1909 Nobel Prize in Chemistry); Max Planck (1918 Nobel Prize in Physics); Wilhelm Röntgen (Nobel Prize in Physics in 1901); Wilhelm Wien (1911 Nobel Prize in Physics); Richard Willstätter (1915 Nobel Prize in Chemistry).

### (2) Artists (22 people)

Peter Behrens; Franz Defregger; Wilhelm Drpfeld; Edward von Gebhardt; Adolf von Hildebrand; Ludwig Hoffmann; Engelbert Humperdinck; Leopold Graf von Kalckreuth; Arthur Kampf; Friedrich August von Kaulbach; Max Klinger (Max Klinger); Max Liebermann; Ludwig Mansel; Bruno Paul; Max Reinhardt; Fritz Schaper; Franz Stuck; Hans Thomas; Wilhelm Trübner; Siegfried Wagner; Felix Weingartner; Maximilian Lenz.

### (3) Theologians (12 people)

Gustav Adolf Deissmann; Albert Eilhard; Gerhardt Isler; Adolf von Harnack; Wilhelm Herrmann; Alois Knoepfler; Anton Koch; Joseph Mausbach; Sebastian Merkle; Adolf Schlatter; August Schmidlin; Reinhold Seeberg.

### (4) Economists and jurists (7 people)

Lujo Brentano; Johannes Conrad; Theodor Kipp; Paul Laband; Franz von Liszt; George von Mayer; Gustav von Schmoller.

### (5) Physiologists and medical scientists (7 people)

Emil von Behring (1901 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine); Paul Ehrlich (1908 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine); Albert Ludwig Siegmund Neisser; Albert Plohn; Max Rubner; August von Wassermann; Heinrich Wilhelm Gottfried von Waldeyer-Hartz.

### (6) Philosophers and Historians (13 people)

Heinrich Johannes Finke; Jan Jakob Maria de Grut; Karl Gotthard Lamprecht; Eduard Meyer (who was nominated for the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1927); Karl Robert; Martin Spahn; Wilhelm von Bode; Friedrich von Duhn; Theodor Weigand; Rudolf Christoph Eucken (1908 Nobel Prize for Literature); Alois Adolf Riehl; Wilhelm Windelband; Wilhelm Maximilian Wundt.

### (7) Linguists, poets (15 people)

Richard Dehmel; Herbert Eulenberg; Ludwig Fulda; Max Halbe; Gerhart Hauptmann (1912 Nobel Prize for Literature); Karl Hauptmann; Hermann Sudermann; Karl Karl Vollmöller; Richard Voss; Alois Blandell; Justus Brinkmann; Andreas Hessler; Heinrich Morf; Karl Vossler; Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf.

### (8) Politicians (2 people)

Friedrich Naumann; George Riecke.

### 3. The Background and Influence of the Declaration of 93 People

On July 28th, 1914, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, with the support of Germany, declared war on Serbia under the pretext of the Sarajevo incident. Then, Germany, Russia, France and Britain went into war one after another, which started the first world war. Although the trigger of World War I was the Sarajevo incident, the fundamental reason was the unbalanced political and economic development among imperialists, especially the irreconcilable contradiction between Germany and Britain for world hegemony and colonial issues. On September 18th, 1914, the British published an article in the New York Times entitled "English writers condemn Germany". "We love Germany of Goethe and Beethoven, and we hate Germany of Bismarck and William II". On October 4, 1914, 93 academic elites signed the Book to the Civilized World. Outstanding signers supported Germany's propaganda cause with their great international reputation, agreed with Germany's "just" self-help goal, and denied Germany's improper behavior. Asserting that Britain's anti-German propaganda is completely false. 93 people attacked any attempt to separate the positive view of German culture from the negative view of German militarism, claiming that German culture would have disappeared from the earth long ago without the army. The Book to the Civilized World also denied the following allegations: Germany started this war, Germany invaded neutral Belgium, German soldiers harmed the life and property safety of Belgian citizens, the German army destroyed cultural monuments in Leuven, and the German army did not respect international law. However, we should note that this war was really caused by Germany's preemptive strike, and Germany has an unshirkable responsibility for the war. The Book to the Civilized World is just a propaganda of the government's defense of Germany's war atrocities and support for German military operations in Belgium and other places. Conservative and nationalistic German academic circles believe too much in their own importance, are too intoxicated with the excitement of the outbreak of war, and are too superstitious about Germany's moral and military superiority to take into account the reaction these words will cause[6-9].

This infamous declaration humiliated German scientists and scholars collectively, and caused a rare international antipathy. Conscious scientists refused to sign the declaration, including Einstein, Hilbert and von Laue etc. At the end of World War I, Germany was defeated, and scientists such as Fischer and Planck publicly apologized for the Book to the Civilized World. In particular, the co-signer, Wilhelm Julius Foerster, soon regretted signing this declaration. And in mid-October 1914, together with Einstein and George Friedrich Ferdinand Prinz von Preußen Nicolai, they drafted a tit-for-tat anti-war peace declaration "Letter to Europeans". In 1921, The New York Times published an article quoting the German writer M. H. Wehberg, who claimed that only 16 signatories still supported their signatures, about 60 regretted signing, and some signatories claimed that they had not read the contents of the copy carefully before signing. In any case, the Declaration of the 93 People dispelled the illusion that the academic world remained United in the supranational concept, and the scientific community was completely split. German scientists and their allies were turned away from almost every international scientific conference. It was not until September 1926 that the International Research Council began to open its membership to German scientists. Although science has no nationality and scientists have nationality, politics should not be brought into scientific affairs. Scientists should not only stand on the standpoint of their own countries, but should stand on the standpoint of the whole mankind to call for peace[10-11].

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