

The ‘Protocols’: An Okhrana Hoax

That infamous forgery, “The Protocols of the Elders of Zion,” which attained notoriety in Nazi propaganda during the 1930s, had its origins in the attempt by the Anglo-Dutch financial oligarchy to discredit Russia’s Count Sergei Witte in the eyes of Tsar Nicholas II, and ultimately, to overthrow the Witte coalition (see article in this section). Nicholas carried with him all the backwardness of the Russian aristocracy, including violent anti-Semitism, but had very few of the strengths manifested by his father, Alexander III, and his grandfather, Alexander II, that admirer of Abraham Lincoln, and liberator of the serfs. Suspicions of a “world Jewish conspiracy” would play well in the paranoid psyche of the Tsar and his wife, Alexandra, the superstitious, hysterical former Princess Alix of Hesse-Darmstadt, granddaughter of England’s Queen Victoria.

But the scene of the concoction was Paris, and one of the key players was the infamous Peter Ivanovich Rachkovsky, specialist in the use of *agents provocateurs* and director of the Foreign Agency of the Okhrana (secret police) in 1885-1902. Like most of the Okhrana command, Rachkovsky was part of a faction of the Russian elite that wanted, for its own reasons, to bring down the Romanov dynasty if they couldn’t control it, and collaborated with British imperial interests on that and other geopolitical projects. Among other things, British strategists welcomed

the rise of anti-Semitism in the Russian Empire, which could drive Russian Jews to emigrate to Palestine, potentially to become British puppets there.

Rachkovsky was experienced in forgeries, as was his specialist in such matters, Matvei Golovinsky, the reputed real author of the Protocols.

The anti-Semitic circles that had launched the Dreyfus case in France, helping to keep France and Germany at loggerheads, continuously spread rumors about a Jewish conspiracy, especially blaming Jewish banking circles in France and Germany. The Paris salon of Juliette Adam was a hotbed of this racist propaganda. Active in the Adam salon was one Elie de Cyon (Ilya Faddeyevich Tsion), a converted Russian Jew who had become an ardent Slavophile, and had for a time worked in Witte's Finance Ministry in St. Petersburg. Later in Paris, however, he became Witte's bitterest enemy, writing tracts about how Witte was a pawn of the Rothschilds, although Witte's Russia received only a modicum of support from their bank.

Another noted anti-Semite who attacked Witte in Paris was Edouard Drumont, who attacked Witte for his support of the gold standard and accused him of "maintaining the entire world under the yoke of the great Jews." A key player in the Dreyfus Affair, Drumont was also instrumental in bringing down the French Foreign Minister, Gabriel Hanotaux, who was Witte's main collaborator in establishing the alliance with France.

The "Protocols" are presented as the minutes of a series of meetings of a secret Jewish-Masonic group. They elaborate the method by which the Jews, through their growing financial power, will come to be the masters of the world,

and project that monarchies and Christian society will both be destroyed. The general model for the forgery was an 1860s tract by another French anti-Semite, Maurice Joly, entitled "The Dialogue in Hell between Machiavelli and Montesquieu." These texts began appearing in France in the 1890s, but not in Russia until 1902. It was rumored then that the new Tsar would appoint the obscurantist priest Sergei Nilus as his confessor. Nilus would inform Nicholas about the "Protocols" in order to provoke a final break between the Tsar and Witte.

Nilus published a full edition of the Protocols in 1905, the year in which revolution hit Russia—presaged by the Okhrana networks' 1902-03 mass strikes in Odessa, and fueled by the Russo-Japanese War that Witte's enemies had unleashed. When Witte called his friend Henrik Slisberg, a leader of the Jewish community in St. Petersburg, to ask him about the Protocols, Slisberg indicated to him that the publication was aimed not so much at the Jews, as at the opposition in Russia, and, especially, Witte himself. The 20th Protocol, in particular, warned that the introduction of the gold standard would be a harbinger of the destruction of the nation, a direct reference to Witte's move to strengthen the ruble.

While they had been introduced through Russian émigré circles into Germany after the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, the Protocols received their greatest publicity in an editorial in the *Times* of London in May 1920, which spoke of the "Jewish peril." This would predate by three years the 1923 study of the "Protocols" by the Baltic German fascist ideologue Alfred Rosenberg, whose work would then become a mandatory part of the Nazi arsenal—with the most horrendous consequences.—*William Jones*