

The Protocols of the Elders of Zion:
**20th-Century Popular Reincarnations of the Jewish
Conspiracy to Dominate the World**

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Our cherished land
 Once safe and fearless, innocent and grand
 Is wrapped in evil chains *they* slyly forged
 On hidden anvils. While you slept, they gluttoned
 Their pockets with your wealth, and sucked your blood....
 The *masked deceivers* smile and spin their web,
 Teaching their captives that they must forget
 The ancient ways of freedom and deny
 Their flag, their country.¹

Who are these “masked deceivers” and who are they trying to deceive? According to Brigadier General Gordon “Jack” Mohr, the National Defense Minister of the Civilian Emergency Defense System, USA, a worldwide Jewish conspiracy seeks to usurp the power of White Christian America and enslave the “goyim”—meaning non-Jews. Mohr’s argument is based in a long history of conspiracy theories that pinpoint a secret society of wealthy Jews as the source of all social chaos around the world. This conspiracy is best evidenced by a controversial document known as *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, which perpetrators of the conspiracy have recycled in various forms over the last century. Its origins, authorship, and authenticity are widely contested. However, in the decades since it was first published in 1903, perversions of *The Protocols* have been disseminated throughout the world for various political and social reasons.

Whether *The Protocols* is a fabrication or not, conspiracy theorists and anti-Semites agree that its fundamental principles are TRUE and speak to the “present” global situation, whether in Tsarist Russia, inter-war England and America, Nazi Germany, the 1970s Soviet Union, or the last two decades in the United States. Arab versions have also emerged that justify anti-Israeli discourse and violence. In each of these contexts, the status quo has been threatened and those in power have believed themselves to be in danger. In order to reestablish authority and dominance,

¹ Anonymous poem. From Mohr, Col. Gordon “Jack.” *The Satanic Counterfeit: A Review of the ‘Protocols of the Elders of Zion;’ the Communist Textbook, ‘Psychopolitics,’ and Henry Ford Sr.’s, ‘The International Jew,’ Placed in Historical Perspective.* Muskogee, OK: Hoffman, 1982. (My emphasis.) Also online at <http://www.scripturesforamerica.org/html2/jmindex.html>.

those in power have reinvigorated *The Protocols* and demonized the Jews, especially the Jewish financial elite in Europe and America.

The Protocols [are] purported to be the record of a series of twenty-four secret lectures by a Jewish elder presenting to other elders a master plot to consolidate and finalize Jewish control of the entire world. Through manipulation of the financial system and the press, corruption of public morals, undermining the education system, creation of anarchic mass political parties, corrupting existing political leaders and discrediting them in the eyes of the public, weakening the power of the Christian church by encouraging free-thinking, and marshaling the powers of the Masonic lodges, the conspiracy would achieve its goal of absolute world domination.²

The Protocols first appeared in Tsarist Russia at the turn of the 20th century. Historically, the Russian imperial regime had always manipulated the Jewish population, pinpointing them as a scapegoat in times of social and political chaos. Tsar Nicholas II continued this pattern. Between 1903 and 1906 three versions of *The Protocols* were printed in Russia to garner popular support for the Tsar's pogroms—organized massacres against the Jews.³ Green argues that *The Protocols* were a creation of the Tsarist secret police, Okhrana, with the purpose of discrediting “the whole progressive movement as tools of a Jewish conspiracy and [redirecting] widespread Russian discontent against the Jews and *away from the Tsar*.”⁴ The Tsar felt threatened by both Western democratic ideology and rising Bolshevism, two movements that questioned his absolute rule in favor of either a democratic or socialist government. Contradictorily, Jews were pinned as the secret power behind both movements, capitalist and communist.⁵

In order to prove that the document is a fabrication, scholars have traced the ideology behind *The Protocols* to several different sources. Most notably, Green asserts the Okhrana took much of the material for *The Protocols* from a 19th-century French writer, Maurice Joly. In fact, they

² Green, Ronald S. “Scholars Contending with Delusional Ideology: Historians, Antisemitic Lore and *The Protocols*.” *Shofar*. 2000. 18 (2): 82-83.

³ *Ibid.* 83.

⁴ *Ibid.* 90. (My emphasis.)

⁵ Spier, Howard. “Editorial Postscript.” *Patterns of Prejudice*. 1979. 13 (1): 6.

“plagiarized whole sections of Joly’s work,”⁶ *Dialogue in Hell Between Machiavelli and Montesquieu*. Themes concerning a Jewish conspiracy to dominate the world were also taken from a German writer, Goedsche, who wrote under the English penname of Retcliffe. In his 1868 story, “In the Jewish Cemetery in Prague,” several leading Jewish figures “appeared at midnight to discuss with the Devil their plans for subverting and conquering the Gentile world.”⁷ Only four years later, a Russian version appeared in St. Petersburg.⁸ Clearly, the themes interwoven into *The Protocols* had a long history before their formal compilation in Russia at the turn of the 20th century.

The polemic discourse over the origins and veracity of *The Protocols* often overshadows the political and social uses of the document and its claims. A similar type of overshadowing occurred in thirteenth-century Spain, when Nachmanides, a learned Jewish rabbi and community representative, had to single-handedly defend Judaism against the priesthood and the Christian king, James I. The Spanish king had no intention of fairness in the religious debate; rather the whole affair was put together to humiliate the Jews by discrediting its leaders, thereby producing mass conversions of Jews to Christianity. Despite Nachmanides’ best efforts, the King’s theatrical event gained him popular support among Christians for his anti-Jewish platform, and many Jews ended up converting to Christianity out of fear. In a similar manner, *The Protocols* were forged a century ago to create mass hysteria within the culturally-dominant Russian population. Tsar Nicholas II heightened the Russians’ already virulent hatred for the Jews in order to fend off rising Bolshevist and Western threats to his power.

The document took on a life of its own as it transcended national borders in the second and third decades of the 20th century. Each reincarnation of *The Protocols* served a different purpose depending on the context, yet still placed blame for social problems on a worldwide Jewish

⁶ Green, Ronald S. “Scholars Contending with Delusional Ideology: Historians, Antisemitic Lore and *The Protocols*.” *Shofar*. 2000. 18 (2): 87.

⁷ *Ibid.* 86.

⁸ *Ibid.* 86.

conspiracy to dominate the world. For example, in the aftermath of World War I, *The Protocols* mysteriously appeared in the hands of H.A. Gwynne, editor of the admittedly anti-Semitic English periodical *The Morning Post*. Gwynne learned from the head of the Special Branch at Scotland Yard, Sir Basil Thomson, that the document was a forgery. Even though Thomson debunked the claim that the document represented a series of lectures given by a Jewish elder, he replaced this fabrication with yet another that connected the Jews to Bolshevism: Thomson wrongly claimed that *The Protocols* were a “series of political formulae concocted by Lenin, Trotsky, Leibnecht, Rosa Luxembourg...and other prominent Anarchist Jews’ [meaning Bolsheviks.]”⁹ As Wilson suggests, Gwynne gladly took up this false assertion, as he “was determined to portray Bolshevism in Russia as yet another manifestation of a centuries-old Jewish conspiracy against the social order.”¹⁰ Gwynne’s good friend, Rudyard Kipling, supplied a different, but still false, explanation for the origins of the document: it was a “concoction of German philosophy twenty years ago.” Despite this admission, Kipling concludes that “the programme here set out is, in its essence, exactly what the international Jew has accomplished, and is accomplishing, at the present moment.”¹¹ Thus, with support from other well-known British anti-Semites such as Nesta Webster, Gwynne proceeded to publish *The Protocols* in his paper as a series of seventeen articles from July 12-30, 1920.¹² Later that year, Victor Marsden, the *Morning Post*’s Russian correspondent, produced the most popular English edition of *The Protocols*, which went on to sell over half a million copies in Britain and America within the decade.¹³ These two publications fed the British conspiracy that a secret group of Jews was trying to wreck the British Empire.

⁹ Wilson, Keith. “The Protocols and the Morning Post, 1919-1920.” *Patterns of Prejudice*. 1985. 19 (3): 6.

¹⁰ Ibid. 13.

¹¹ Ibid. 6.

¹² Ibid. 7.

¹³ Holmes, Colin. “The Protocols of ‘The Britons.’” *Patterns of Prejudice*. 1978. 12 (6): 17.

The sentiment that, despite its obfuscated origins, *The Protocols*' fundamental agenda reflected the current political and social atmosphere also took American form in the anti-Semitic ideology of Henry Ford: "The only statement I care to make about the PROTOCOLS is that they fit in with what is going on. They are sixteen years old, and they have fitted the world situation up to this time. THEY FIT IT NOW."¹⁴ In 1919, Ford, the industrial innovator and founder of Ford Motor Company, began publishing a series of anti-Semitic articles in his periodical *The Dearborn Independent*.¹⁵ Ford, like Gwynne, associated the immigrant Jews from Eastern Europe with a Bolshevik threat to American democracy and, more importantly, to White Christian dominance. Ford's ghostwriter, Cameron, reworked *The Protocols* into an anonymous article, published in May 1920, called "The International Jew: The World's Problem." Like Ford, some wealthy Americans, especially old-money families in the Northeast, "feared their historic position at the top of the social hierarchy was being undermined by a combination of new money and new immigrants."¹⁶ They concentrated their anxiety about losing power into a Jewish-Bolshevik conspiracy that Ford's publication helped to popularize. Hence, Ford and others tried to prevent this feared loss of power by demonizing the Jews as part of a greater Bolshevik threat in the eyes of the greater American public.¹⁷ Henry Ford's manipulation of *The Protocols* also played a large role in the "anti-Communist and anti-radical purges in the early 1920s" in the United States.¹⁸

Ironically, Bolsheviks (later Communists) also used *The Protocols*, but for completely different reasons. In the stagnant 1970s, Soviet officials revised *The Protocols* to demonize Soviet Jews in the face of disintegrating Soviet power, accusing them of a hidden bourgeois-Zionist plot to

¹⁴ "Mr. Henry Ford as quoted in the NEW YORK WORLD. February 17th, 1921." Reprint of Marsden, Victor. *The Complete Plan for World Destruction*. London: Briton Publishing Society, 1922.

¹⁵ Brown, Mary Elizabeth. "Henry Ford: The Protocols of the Elders of Zion." *Shapers of the Great Debate on Immigration: A Biographical Dictionary*. CT: Greenwood Press, 1999, 170.

¹⁶ Ibid. 169.

¹⁷ Ibid. 169.

¹⁸ Thurlow, Richard C. "The Powers of Darkness: Conspiracy Belief and Political Strategy." *Patterns of Prejudice*. 1978. 12 (6): 2.

overthrow the socialist order. The anti-Zionist campaign paralleled Zionists with “their ‘protocols’ counterparts” who were trying to “manipulate and subvert the governments and international organizations of the ‘goyim.’”¹⁹ In official party publications, “‘Zionist’ multi-millionaires (we)re portrayed as standing behind the scenes of world events, manipulating financiers, industrialists, statesmen and the like.”²⁰ Again, the Soviet status quo seemed threatened, so the Party redirected popular dismay with Soviet rule by reintroducing the sensational conspiracy theory about a hidden Jewish elite trying to dominate the world.

In 1982, Gordon Mohr—an author, evangelist and lecturer for the Civilian Emergency Defense System, USA—produced a pamphlet warning fundamental White Christian Americans about the Jewish conspiracy threatening America’s Protestant foundation. The pamphlet is an almost exact replica of Marsden’s *The Complete Plan for World Destruction*, but Mohr adds an evangelical Baptist undertone to the argument. He warns that because of Christians’ lapse of faith, Jewish conspirators are garnering power to overthrow the American government and enslave Christians. He therefore calls for an imminent return to faith for White Christian Americans, using biblical, apocalyptic language to persuade his readers that the Jews pose an imminent threat. He argues that “honest historians will admit that the only thing which saved England...from the same fate, was a vast spiritual revival.”²¹ He continues: “One thing in our favor, is that the enemy [Jews] does not realize that we [White Christian evangelicals] have at our disposal, the most powerful secret weapon mankind has ever seen...promises made by *our God*.”²² Mohr, like Gwynne and Ford, reinterprets *The Protocols* as a Jewish-Communist plot to dominate Christian America. In the context of the Cold War, Mohr links the Jews to Communism, which during the 1980s was seen as

¹⁹ Spier, Howard. “‘Zionists and Freemasons’ in Soviet Propaganda.” *Patterns of Prejudice*. 1979. 13 (1): 5.

²⁰ Ibid. 1.

²¹ Mohr, Col. Gordon “Jack.” *The Satanic Counterfeit: A Review of the ‘Protocols of the Elders of Zion;’ the Communist Textbook, ‘Psychopolitics,’ and Henry Ford Sr.’s, ‘The International Jew,’ Placed in Historical Perspective*. Muskogee, OK: Hoffman, 1982, 3.

²² Ibid. 1.

the greatest enemy to America. Like Gwynne and Ford before him, Mohr admits that the original document was a fabrication; however, he argues that the content fits the current situation. Whether or not they are authentic, “It really doesn’t matter...The PROTOCOLS are more relevant now, than at any time in our history. THEY CERTAINLY FIT THE WORLD SITUATION NOW.”²³ Note the similarity of the language to Ford’s earlier statement.

Since 1903, each subsequent publication and interpretation of *The Protocols* has carried the same message: a worldwide Jewish conspiracy is seeking to undermine the current power structure. Although many scholars have proven that the document did not come from a secret meeting of Jews, but rather was a compendium of 19th-century anti-Semitic lore, those who have used the document to their benefit have consistently ignored this fact, inserting their own “facts” to further their own religious, social or political agendas. While Jewish and non-Jewish scholars’ attempts to counteract this anti-Semitic strain have had some positive results, versions of *The Protocols* are still used by neo-Nazis, terrorists, and even governments (such as Ukraine in the 1990s)²⁴. Conspiracy-oriented anti-Semitism has been and will continue to be a active force in many societies, including our own. One can only hope that, overall, the theory remains marginalized—because if it’s ever accepted by the mainstream, as it was in Nazi Germany, Jewish life could be in danger yet again.

²³ Ibid. 5.

²⁴ Petrovsky-Shtern, Yohanan. “Contextualizing the Mystery: Three Approaches to the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.” *Kritika*. 2003. 4 (2): 404.