

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE
PROTOCOLS OF THE LEARNED ELDERS OF ZION
AND ITS REOCCURRENCE THROUGHOUT
THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

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Carl Klang, self-proclaimed as “America’s #1 Christian Patriot Musician” has an anti-Semitic anthem on his album “Extremist” called “The News Behind the News.” The chorus goes something like this:

It’s the news behind the news and the methods you can use. It’s the blueprint and the plan they all rely on. And it’s within *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*.¹

It is interesting that *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion* makes an appearance in this modern-day song, when it has been known for 85 years to be a complete fabrication. In fact, the *Protocols* have appeared and reappeared as the world’s primary anti-Semitic text throughout the 20th century. Forged in Russia in 1905, it was alleged evidence that the age-old myth of a secret international Jewish Conspiracy for world domination was true, giving anti-Semites justification for their ideology and crimes. Although it was proved a forgery in 1921, the *Protocols* endured, making several large revivals throughout the century after its initial effects in post-revolution Russia: it was used by Hitler and the Nazis as justifica-

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tion for their campaign of genocide during the Holocaust of the 1940s; it was the primary inspiration for America's most prominent anti-Semite in history, automobile mogul Henry Ford; and it has now undergone its greatest comeback in the Middle East, a revival which to the present has been increasingly fueled by the invention of the Internet. The *Protocols'* claims are horrendous and ridiculous. According to the *Protocols*, a Jewish Conspiracy has always secretly controlled the world; every war and significant event in history is said to be the work of the Jews, from the fall of Rome to the French Revolution. It is said that every year in a graveyard in Prague, the 12 heads of the tribes of Israel meet, contact Satan, and continue their plans for achieving world domination and for making slaves of all other races. Jews are depicted as evil, greedy, and bloodthirsty villains, completely consumed with lust for money and power. Protocol number one states: "Therefore in governing the world the best results are obtained by violence and intimidation."² Many Jewish stereotypes and anti-Semitic hate crimes owe something to the *Protocols*. Perhaps if they never had been written, half of Europe's Jewish people might not have been murdered in the Holocaust.

It is unquestionable that the effects of the *Protocols* have been catastrophic. But then why have the *Protocols* endured for so long, causing so much damage, when it was proven to be a forgery so soon after it was first published? Historically, the Jewish people have been the symbol of progressive change. Because they have been forced into the role of social outcasts, their culture seemed to be shrouded in mystery, and biblical anti-Semitism is centuries old. Throughout the 20th century, a time of great social and political revolution, there have always been traditional conservatives who fear progressive change. The *Protocols* aid these traditionalists, desperate for a simple and all-encompassing explanation for the frightening modern world, blaming these changes on the work of an International Jewish Plot. In Russia, the *Protocols* were used to blame Jews for the modernization and liberalization of the Czarist government, and then for the subsequent Bolshevik Revolution. In Germany, combined with an age-old notion of Jews as the eternal enemy of the German people, the *Protocols* helped to

blame Jews for Germany's devastating defeat in World War I, and provided an excuse for the atrocities of the Holocaust. In America, Henry Ford preyed on Americans' fear of immigrants using the *Protocols* to spread his anti-Semitic message. Finally, the *Protocols* have been used in the Middle East to accuse the Jews of being the villains in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

Anti-Semitism was not, of course, born with the *Protocols*—the myth of a Jewish conspiracy dates back for centuries. Religious anti-Judaism is almost as old as Judaism itself, the first example being from the Bible. In *Exodus*, chapter one Pharaoh calls the Jews “the enemy.”³ For the rest of history, most religious anti-Semitism stems from the misuse of the New Testament, which was interpreted to blame the Jews for the crucifixion of Christ, this one crime being the basis for all discrimination and hate for centuries to come. For this crime, the Catholic Church at one point sentenced the Jews to eternal damnation. Jews started to be seen as demonic figures even earlier than the Middle Ages. St. Augustine in the 5th century said of Jews that those who were once the favored sons of God are now the sons of Satan. Jews were thought to be worshipers of the Anti-Christ, a satanic force whose reign over the world would precede the second coming of Christ.⁴ They were the target of public hate and were massacred by the mob. St. John Chrysostom called the synagogue “the temple of demons...cavern of devils...a gulf and abyss of perdition.” Beginning in the 12th century, Jews were accused of sacrificing Christian children to the Devil in return for powers of black magic. There were rumors in Muslim Spain of a secret Jewish government that used “sorcery” to incite war against the Christian world.⁵ In the Middle Ages, it was considered a grave sin for Christians to engage in usury, so because they had no chance of escaping Hell, Jews were a high proportion of the small merchants, moneylenders, and bankers, which locked them into the stereotype as greedy, miserly, and money-obsessed. Their belief of being God's chosen people, their “strangely exotic”

religion, and supposed damnation to Hell, all contributed to the formation of an exclusive Jewish community apart from the rest of society.⁶ The discrimination they suffered only made the Jewish community regard the Christian world with resentment, further distancing and isolating them.⁷ Because their culture was not visible in European society, the Jewish faith eventually achieved “mystical status” with “demagogic leaders.”⁸ Because they were treated as inferior, with few or no human rights, Jews began a trend of siding on the liberal side of politics, a pattern that eventually led to Jews being a symbol of liberal and progressive change.⁹

A different form of anti-Semitism, political anti-Semitism, began to appear during the industrial revolution of the late 18th century. This was a time of great social change in which the lower classes of society began to fight for political power and individual rights. No event better exemplifies this period of change than the French Revolution, where the peasants and townsfolk rose up against the King, seized power in the nation, and decapitated the nobles. Throughout the 19th century, traditional values and beliefs began to come into question. Many left rural life for the fast and chaotic urban metropolis. Democracy, Secularism, and Socialism flourished as society became increasingly more modernized and liberal.¹⁰ Along with progressive political change, there was also a great surge of poverty, disease, and prostitution in major Victorian Era cities. Epitomizing the common notion at the end of the 19th century that society was in a rapid state of moral and structural decay, Hungarian author Max Nordau wrote his book entitled *Degeneracy* in 1892, speaking against the rise of social evils and immorality, and blaming late 19th century society on social “degenerates.” Traditional conservatives throughout Europe felt a need for a clear explanation for why the old way of life was suddenly disappearing. Some Jews had favored progressive change, while others were more orthodox, but political parties began to blame society’s new problems on the Jews. New political movements in Europe were aimed specifically against Jews.

It was against this backdrop of political anti-Semitism that the *Protocols* were written in Russia. Prior to the *Protocols*, Russia

already had a history of anti-Semitism. For hundreds of years, Jews had been forced to work in low-status occupations such as shopkeepers, innkeepers, and managers for estates with absentee landlords. Because their jobs always put Jews in contact with the lower class of peasants, their status was thus lowered.¹¹ Under the reign of Nicolas I (1825-1855), 600 anti-Jewish laws were established. Jews were driven out of the villages, Yiddish and Hebrew books were confiscated, and the curriculums at Jewish schools were interfered with by the government. Many young Jewish men were conscripted into the army. Until the rule of Alexander II in 1858, Jewish boys could be forced into service at the age of eight years old, instead of the 20 years old for Christians. Once conscripted into the army, a Jewish soldier would be prohibited from keeping his Jewish prayer books.¹²

The *Protocols* itself was actually the culmination of prior anti-Semitic texts. The most influential work of anti-Semitic literature leading up to the *Protocols* was a novel written in 1868 by German author Hermann Goedsche, under the pseudonym Sir John Retcliffe, entitled *Biarritz*, which depicts the fantastic story on which the *Protocols* are based. In a chapter of this novel, called "In the Jewish Cemetery in Prague," two men, a German scholar and a baptized Jew, stumble across a secret occult ceremony in the Jewish cemetery in Prague during the Feast of the Tabernacle. At exactly 11:00 at night the gates of the cemetery creak open as a mysterious white figure makes his way silently to an ominous tombstone at the heart of the cemetery. Kneeling, the figure presses his forehead against the tombstone three times and recites an inaudible prayer. Then, out of the shadows another figure silently appears, a very old man, coughing and limping, who makes his way to the same tombstone and performs the same ritual as the first man. Then, a third man appears, this one tall and youthful, who also performs the same strange ritual as the first two men. Slowly and silently, this ceremony continues as a total of 13 men appear at the tombstone. When they are all in place, the clock strikes midnight as a demonic blue flame appears above the tombstone, emitting a strange metallic noise. Then the dark voice of the Anti-Christ himself addresses the 13 kneeling men: "I greet

you, heads of the twelve tribes of Israel.” In unified response, they answer, “We greet you, son of the accursed.” The meeting then begins, as each Elder reports to the council on the progress made in their goal for world domination since their last centennial meeting. The Levite speaks of the rebirth of Israel, the head of the Reuben tribe reports that by use of the stock exchange the Jews have been able to control all the governments of the world by placing them in debt. The representative from Judah explains how the Jews are succeeding in reducing gentile artisans and craftsmen to the status of factory-workers who can easily be controlled. One Elder recommends that they begin monopolizing the industries of liquor, wool, butter, and bread, and another suggests that Jewish men should begin marrying non-Jewish woman. After each Elder gives his speech, the Levite gives a message of hope and encouragement, celebrating the fact that at their next meeting, 100 years later, their goal of world domination will be achieved, and their grandchildren will get to live in wealth and power, ruling over the enslaved peoples of the world. At the meeting’s close, they recite an oath to the Anti-Christ, and then each tosses a stone onto the blue flame, after which a brilliant image of a golden calf appears. When all have departed, the two shocked onlookers swear to each other that they will devote the rest of their lives to exposing and combating the secret Jewish conspiracy that they had uncovered.¹³

Not long after it was published, “In the Jewish Cemetery in Prague” started to be distributed not as a work of fiction, but as a true account of actual events. In the next few years, the story went through a number of evolutions and adaptations. In 1881, the same story was published in the French *Le Contemporain*, condensed into one single speech presented by the head Rabbi at a secret congregation of Jewish leaders. Accompanying this speech was an editorial note, vouching for its authenticity as a valid primary document. Later published as *The Rabbi’s Speech*, it was distributed through Europe for years, appearing in various publications, distributed by anti-Semitic organizations, and later became the chief source of authenticity for the *Protocols*.¹⁴

Anti-Semitic texts like *The Rabbi’s Speech*, and eventually the *Protocols*, were primarily used by Russian *pogromshchskis*—individu-

als who made it their business to incite the hundreds of Jewish pogroms and massacres in Russia between 1881 and 1920. In 1881 alone, angry Christians violently lashed out against Jews in 160 cities in reaction to the assassination of Alexander II on March 13, because one of his assassins was a Jewish girl.¹⁵ Many of the pogroms during this era were not random acts of violence, but took lots of careful planning and organization. Often *pogromshchskis* were police, private individuals, and journalists who would enter a community with the intent of starting a riot leading to a Jewish massacre.

An example of a famous *pogromshchski* is the story of Pavolachi Krushevan, a journalist who organized an anti-Semitic group in Kishinev to help start a pogrom. In 1902, a Christian boy was murdered and his body thrown into a well. Krushevan publicly blamed the murder as the work of a Jew making a ceremonial sacrifice to the Anti-Christ. His plan was unsuccessful, however, because the real killer, a non-Jew, was found. Luckily for Krushevan, another boy was murdered a year later around Easter, and this time the true killer was not identified. The public believed Krushevan's lies, and he declared that the town should "execute bloody justice during the three days of Easter." He distributed copies of *The Rabbi's Speech* and claimed that there had been an international Jewish conspiracy meeting in the Kishinev synagogue before Easter. A massive pogrom took place. The Russian police raided the Jewish community, destroying property and murdering innocents as they pleased. They burned homes, leaving over 10,000 individuals in a state of destitute impoverishment. There was one account of two policemen who raided a home, raped two young Jewish girls, and then shot them. When the violence ended 45 Jews were dead and hundreds were injured; there were no Christian injuries. This was only one of hundreds of orchestrated pogroms.¹⁶

Written in 1905, the *Protocols of the Elders Of Zion* provided justification for the massive wave of pogroms, gave an explanation for the new movement toward social equality, and blamed recent tragic events on a Jewish plot—including the assassination of

Alexander II, and the disastrous war with Japan. At the time it was written, the *Protocols* were just another adaptation of *The Rabbi's Speech*. Commissioned by Piotr Rachkovsky, Chief of the Paris office of the *Okhrana* (the Russian secret police) the *Protocols* were written by a Russian propagandist and member of the secret police, Mathieu Golovinsk, who ironically later switched sides to become a Bolshevik propagandist during the Revolution in 1917. The man thought to be most responsible for the *Protocols*, however, is its editor and publisher Sergey Nilus, who appended the earliest version of the *Protocols* to his own book, *The Great and the Small*. The *Protocols* combined the *Rabbi's Speech* with elements from a half-century-old French satirical piece on Napoleon III, *Dialogue aux Enfers entre Machiavel et Montesquieu ou la Politique au xixe Siècle*. This pamphlet said nothing about the Jews, but instead made sardonic commentary on Napoleon III's aspirations for world domination. The *Protocols* differ from the *Rabbi's Speech* in that they were not one continuous monologue, but 26 separate sections—the protocols themselves.

Around the time that the *Protocols* were produced, there was great pressure for fundamental reforms in the Russian government including the establishment of a national assembly, freedom of speech, and guarantees of individual liberty. In 1905, Czar Nicolas II reluctantly issued a statement promising the creation of a constitution based on the modern ideas of liberalism and representative government. These liberal changes were not well received by Russia's conservative right wing, and in reaction that same year, Russian extremists exercising their freedom of association founded the Union of the Russian People, better known as the Black Hundreds. With the newly crafted *Protocols* as their main weapon, the Black Hundreds became the most prominent anti-Semitic organization in the world. Founded by a doctor, A. Dubrovin, and a politician V. M. Purishkevich, who graduated from Kishinev (the site of the infamous pogrom of 1903), the aim of the Black Hundreds was clear. As Cohn puts it: "to fight the liberalization of Russia by presenting it as a Jewish plot, and to get Jews massacred to show how real the plot was."¹⁷ When the Russian national congress, the Duma, was created, the Black Hundred

focused on discrediting it as another Jewish method of controlling the masses. The Russian government supported the Union of the Russian People to the fullest extent, donating an estimated 2,500,000 rubles per year (\$88,000 U.S.). Members were granted free pardons for any crime committed during a pogrom. Czar Nicolas himself was even a member and publicly praised the Hundreds for being an outstanding example of justice and order. The Hundreds also played an influential part in foreign policy. For example Count Lamsdorf, Russian Minister of foreign affairs, initiated a secret communication with both Germany and the Vatican, suggesting that they combine their efforts to form a united force against the clandestine Jewish plot. Although the project was put to an abrupt halt by Lamsdorf's successor, the Czar himself wrote in the memorandum's margin "Negotiations must be started at once. I entirely share the opinions expressed here."¹⁸ On the topic of the *Protocols*, however, the Czar did not share this same enthusiasm. Upon his first reading, Nicolas II had been ecstatic, writing in the margin "What depth of thought!—What foresight!—What precision in the realization of the programme!"¹⁹ After Minister of the Interior Stolypin ordered two officers of the *gendarmes* to look into the authenticity of the *Protocols*, the Czar was presented with the disappointing and appalling realization that they were indeed a forgery. He promptly responded "Drop the *Protocols*. One cannot defend a pure cause by dirty methods."²⁰ Precursors to the Nazis, the Black Hundreds saw the Jews as a "social virus" that needed to be eradicated. In 1911, a member of the Hundreds prophesized in the Duma what would later come to be known as the Holocaust: "all the Yids, down to the very last, will be killed!"²¹

After the Bolshevik Revolution (which the Black Hundreds blamed on the Jews), the *Protocols* were finally publicly proven false in 1921 by Phillip Graves of the London *Times*. Finally, a journalist had made the connection between the *Protocols* and the French satirical piece, *Dialogue aux enfers*. The headline of the paper was "Jewish World Plot: An Exposure; The Source of the *Protocols*; Truth at Last."²² Graves' article was widely accepted around the world, and the *Protocols* disappeared momentarily

from the limelight for a few years, until it had its most devastating comeback when it was used by the Nazi Party.

As in Russia, Germany had a history of anti-Semitism long before the *Protocols* came to be, dating back to long before France conquered Germany in the Napoleonic wars. With the bitterness of having been conquered, much anti-French sentiment arose in Germany. Because the French were the creators and most ardent practitioners of modern democracy in Europe, the new German identity that was developing included a mindset against liberal reform, a concept that Jews are eternally linked to. Therefore, more than 100 years before the Nazi party came to power, Jews began to be thought of not just as a religious enemy, but as the “age old antagonist of the German peasant” bent on undermining the German way of life.²³

Later in the 19th century, the essence of German anti-Semitism began to take shape as the hatred of the Jewish religion transformed into a hatred of the Jewish “race.” In 1873, the probable author of the term “anti-Semitism,” Wilhelm Marr, wrote a book, *The Victory of Jewry over Germandom Considered from a Non-Denominational Point of View*. In 1881, Eugen Dühring wrote *The Jewish Question as a Question of Race, Morals, and Civilization*. These books and others like them saw Jews not as just evil in the practice of religion and culture, but inherently evil as a race, their wickedness running through their blood. Author Paul Botticher, under the penname Paul de Lagarde in his *German Writings* on a unified German people, or *volk*, wrote about “realizing divine intention for the world,” and that a “new order” could be achieved if the *volk* were to fight against the evils of modernity, personified by the Jews, staying true to the traditions of the glorified past. He foresaw a physical struggle between Germans and Jews and proclaimed that they must be “exterminated like bacilli.” In the 1890s Theodor Fritsche “proved” Jewish inferiority through “science,” claiming that anti-Semitism helped both to advance the human race and begin a glorious new era in human history. Englishman Houston Stewart Chamberlain (who considered himself a German) saw human history as a struggle between the German (Aryan) race, which represented spirituality, and the Jewish race, which symbol-

ized materialism.²⁴ All other races were considered to be of impure breed, a “chaos of peoples.”²⁵

In the years before World War I, this *volkisch*-racist movement, although very popular in the middle class, played little part in politics. Anti-Semitic radicals tended to focus more on general ideology than on practical daily issues. Nevertheless, fearing that they would eventually be plowed under by the industry of the modern world, the student and artisan population needed to find a scapegoat. In Austria, the Cult of the Swastika was founded, a fanatic group which foretold that “someday Jews would be castrated and killed under the aegis of the ancient sun symbol.” Schools also became increasingly anti-Semitic during this period, “teaching” the evils of the Jewish people in their curriculums.²⁶

The devastating outcome of WWI, the treaties of Versailles and St. Germain, and the subsequent widespread financial ruin brought the *volkisch*-racist movement to mainstream politics. Now deprived of the prospect of future imperial expansion and deep in war debts, the German peoples saw new appeal in the simple explanation that the source of their problems lay in the Aryan race’s struggle with the Jewish people. It was said that the defeat in the war was not due to “superior adversaries and poor military and political decision-making,” but to the betrayal of insubordinate fifth column members in league with Jews.²⁷ The anti-Semitic German National People’s Party, and the Pan-German Association under Heinrich Class, demanded that the German government deprive Jews of their citizenship, double their taxes, and prevent them from holding political office, practicing trade and law, and owning land.²⁸

When the *Protocols* reappeared in Germany under the Nazi regime, the result was catastrophic, ending with the Holocaust. The *Protocols* provided the inspiration and justification for the Nazi policy of genocide. Before his trial in 1946, Dieter Wisliceny, an SS captain, explained that the basis of the Nazi mindset was a “mystic and religious view which sees the world as ruled by good and bad powers.” The Jews represented the main force of evil and the “blond, blue-eyed people” represented the good force, eternally

engaged in war against the world of evil, whose plans were laid out in the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. Wisliceny explained that the Nazis' view of World War II was that it would be the final, deciding battle between these two rival forces. Adolf Hitler was himself completely obsessed with this view of the world, dating back to his early political career. In 1919, he wrote a letter to one of his superiors expressing his thoughts of "the danger which Jewry today represents for our people," and called them "the racial tuberculosis of the peoples," concluding that the solution to this problem must be "the removal of the Jews altogether."²⁹

If it were not for Hitler's own personal endorsement of the *Protocols*, they would not have played such a large role in Nazi propaganda. His own fanatic belief in the *Protocols* fueled Hitler's anti-Semitic hatred and inspired him to pursue the Nazis' genocidal Holocaust. By the time Hitler became a major political figure in 1923, the *Protocols* were already Hitler's main source of anti-Semitic inspiration. He claimed that the great post-war inflation was part of the Jewish plot: "According to the *Protocols of Zion* the peoples are to be reduced to submission by hunger. The second revolution under the Star of David is the aim of the Jews in our time."³⁰ The next year, Hitler wrote *Mein Kampf*, in which he blames Jews outright for the invention of Capitalism, Liberalism, and Democracy, which are all used, he imagined, to incite the lower class to rebel against the middle class, and for the middle class to overthrow the aristocracy. The source of his claims was of course the *Protocols*, despite the fact that Phillip Graves had already proved them a forgery in 1921. Hitler met this issue by stating that having so often been called false was "proof" that they were true!, and then insisting that the actual origin of the *Protocols* was irrelevant, their content all-important:

[T]he *Frankfurter Zeitung* moans and screams once every week: the best proof that they are authentic. What many Jews do unconsciously is here consciously exposed. And that is what matters. It is completely indifferent from what Jewish brain these disclosures originate; the important thing is that with terrifying certainty they reveal the nature and activity of the Jewish people and expose their inner contexts as well as their ultimate final aims.³¹

The extent to which the *Protocols* played a major role in the Nazis' beliefs and policies is almost entirely due to Hitler, because his own fervent endorsement of the *Protocols* was not shared by his friends and colleagues. In 1939, Herman Rauschning, a close personal friend of Hitler's, published the book *Hitler Speaks* documenting several conversations between the two men. In one of these conversations, Hitler blames the Jews for a current economic crisis because "[it] was the Jews, of course, who invented the economic system of constant fluctuation and expansion that we call capitalism." He goes on to explain that the world's economy was under the "exclusive control" of the Jews' "super-state." He continues, "I have read the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*—it simply appalled me. The stealthiness of the enemy, and his ubiquity! I saw at once that we must copy it—in our own way, of course....It is in truth the critical battle for the fate of the world." Rauschning, who was more skeptical on the authenticity of the *Protocols*, responded:

'Don't you think,' I objected, 'that you are attributing rather too much importance to the Jews?'

'No, no, no!' exclaimed Hitler. 'It is impossible to exaggerate the formidable quality of the Jew as an enemy.'

'But,' I said, 'the *Protocols* are a manifest forgery....It is evident to me that they can't possibly be genuine.'

'Why not?' grunted Hitler.

He did not care two straws, he said, whether the story was historically true. If it was not, its intrinsic truth was all the more convincing to him....³²

To Hitler, the *Protocols* revealed the Jewish plot that he believed had existed since the beginning of human history. Hitler felt that human history, as part of nature, follows the same natural laws as the rest of the universe. In nature there is no equality. Lesser forces give way to greater forces; there is a natural hierarchy of power. Hitler applied this law to human nature, insisting that a natural society consists of one superior race dominating an inferior. Any divergence from this structure, Hitler thought, was a disruption of nature, and he blamed on the Jews any trend toward egalitarianism that undermined this natural order. For example, the enslavement of Jews in ancient Egypt was in a "natural" society which was

disrupted by Moses, the “first Bolshevik” and precursor to Lenin, who incited the lower class of slaves to rise up and revolt against the Egyptians. Hitler even saw Christianity itself as part of the Jewish plan to disrupt the natural hierarchy of society. He blamed Paul (not Jesus, because Jesus was supposedly an “Aryan,” not a Jew) for the creation of Christianity, which promotes pacifism and equality among human beings. By doing so, the Jews undermined the power of the Roman Empire, which relied on its authoritarian, hierarchical, and military iron fist. According to Hitler, Jews had used this method of undermining the social order repeatedly up through modern times, from the Reformation (which weakened the Catholic Church) to the French and Russian Revolutions.³³

The ultimate goal of the Jews, in Hitler’s troubled mind, was not only to conquer the world, making slaves of all gentiles, but something far worse: the eventual de-purification of all races. Hitler explained “this most terrible of all crimes against mankind” in his untitled second book which was uncovered decades after his death:

[The Jew’s] ultimate goal is the denationalization, the promiscuous bastardization of other peoples, the lowering of the racial level of the highest people as well as the domination of this racial mish-mash through the extirpation of the folkish intelligentsia and its replacement by members of [the Jew’s] own people.³⁴

Hitler saw the Jewish race as a disease in society and often referred to the Jewish people themselves as *bacilli*: “The discovery of the Jewish virus is one of the greatest revolutions that has taken place in the world.” He declared in 1942 in the early stages of his extermination camps, “We shall regain our health by exterminating the Jew.”³⁵ The most horrific belief of Hitler’s, and the heart of his evil, was that he did not see the Jewish people as human beings, and was convinced that their rule over the world would be the end of the human race. A most frightening passage in *Mein Kampf* reads, “his crown will be the dance of death for mankind, and as once before, millions of years ago, this planet will again sail empty of all human life through the ether.”³⁶ This is his justification for the extermination camps and the six million Jews murdered during the Holocaust. Hitler truly felt that Jews were not

human but “demonic creatures” disguised as humans, bent on the complete annihilation of the “pure” Nordic races, and that by “resisting the Jew,” Hitler felt he was “fighting the Lord’s battle.”³⁷

Throughout the years of World War II, Hitler saw to it that his propaganda would be disseminated through his Third Reich to the fullest extent. Between 1919 and 1923, Alfred Rosenberg, the official ‘ideologist’ of the Nazi party, distributed countless articles and five major pamphlets on the international Jewish conspiracy portrayed in the *Protocols*. This propaganda was distributed to the civilian public and to soldiers on the furthest Eastern front. With each newly published edition of the *Protocols* came a new preface by Rosenberg praising the German Reich for fighting against the evils of the Jewish people, one declaring that it was “the duty of every German to study the terrifying avowal of the Elders of Zion...and then...to see to it that this book comes into the hands of every German.”³⁸ In his studies of Nazi war criminals, psychologist Bruno Bettelheim concluded that SS guards at the concentration camps were completely convinced that there was an international Jewish conspiracy.³⁹ By the summer of 1944, when up to 22,000 Jews were gassed a day at Auschwitz, the myth of the *Protocols* had been ingrained so much in the minds of the Nazis, that there was no longer any need to use the text as evidence. With the help of this one document, Hitler had succeeded in turning an age-old myth into a full-fledged cultural belief.

It could easily be said that no man had greater hatred for the Jewish people than Adolf Hitler. Nevertheless, even he had his anti-Semitic role model. In Hitler’s office at Nazi Party Headquarters in Munich hung a life-sized portrait of none other than America’s own famous automobile millionaire tycoon, Henry Ford.⁴⁰ When asked by the *Detroit News* in 1931 of his feelings toward the man, Hitler replied, “I regard Henry Ford as my inspiration.”⁴¹ Remembered for revolutionizing American big business and industry, Ford, an American hero of the 20th century whose picture was found on a postage stamp, was also likely the most outspoken anti-Semitic American who ever lived. Like Hitler, he somehow believed that the world was in the secret control of a

Jewish super-state, and like Hitler, blamed everything he found wrong with the modern world on the Jews. They also shared the same favorite book: the *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*.⁴²

Although his direct impact on American Anti-Semitism was fairly insignificant, Ford is likely the reason that the *Protocols* ever made an appearance in the United States at all. Apart from his automobile empire, Ford spent most of his life supervising his privately owned anti-Semitic newspaper, the *Dearborn Independent*, containing articles which he later condensed into a full length text called *The International Jew* which sold an estimated 10 million copies in America,⁴³ and has been translated into 16 languages and distributed in Europe, South Africa, and the Middle East.⁴⁴

Although he was perhaps a genius in business, Ford was by no means an intelligent man. For example, Ford was under the impression that sugar was unhealthy because it was a crystal, and crystals are sharp; therefore he thought that when you swallowed sugar, the sharp edges would cut up your insides. When one of Ford's chemists attempted to demonstrate that sugar dissolves in water, Ford became furious and refused to talk to the chemist for two weeks.⁴⁵ On another occasion he claimed to have voted for Garfield in 1884; it was later brought to his attention that Garfield had been assassinated in 1881.⁴⁶ The *Chicago Tribune* declared Ford an "ignorant idealist" and said that "the man is so incapable of thought that he cannot see the ignominy of his own performance."⁴⁷ Ford declared this statement libel and sued for \$1 million. Unfortunately for Ford, the trial did not make him look any smarter. During his cross-examination, the *Tribune's* lawyer asked if Ford knew anything about the American Revolution. His answer: "I understand that there was one in 1812." The attorney inquired about the one in 1776. "I didn't pay much attention to such things, he replied." When asked, "Who was Benedict Arnold?" Ford guessed, "A writer?" Ford won the case, but instead of the \$1 million, he was awarded a mere six cents in damages.⁴⁸ However, the embarrassment he suffered while on the stand during this case would instill in Ford a fear of appearing before a court—a fear that later contributed to the end of his more public anti-Semitism.

Ford began publicly voicing his views in an interview with J.J. O'Neil of the *New York World* in 1920, in which he claimed: "International financiers are behind all war. They are what is called the international Jew: German Jews, French Jews, English Jews, American Jews. I believe that in all those countries except our own the Jewish financier is supreme...here the Jew is a threat."⁴⁹ Even before this interview, however, Ford's friends knew him to be an anti-Semite. In the months before his first public attack on the Jews, he had been testing out his prejudicial attitudes on his friends.⁵⁰ On a camping trip with some of his closest friends, he spoke often of the "Jewish capitalists" whom he blamed for the recent war. Biting into a candy bar he claimed that it did not taste as good as it once had because "The Jews have taken hold of it. They've cheapened it to make more money."⁵¹ It was clear that whatever the source of his bias was, he was obsessed by and devoted to it. He purchased the local *Dearborn Independent* in 1920 solely as a forum to express his personal beliefs and values: "I have definite ideas and ideals that I believe are practical for the good of all," he said upon his purchase of the newspaper, "and intend giving them to the public without having them garbled, distorted or misquoted."⁵²

The *Independent* fulfilled its purpose. In its year of Ford's ownership, Ford's belief that the world was secretly controlled by Jewish financiers was restated over and over again, and yet these first ten anti-Semitic articles were only a minor feature of the newspaper, and they lacked the evidence necessary to make an effective point. It wasn't until J.J. O'Neil, the same reporter who had recorded Ford's first public display of anti-Semitism in *New York World*, was called upon for advice, that the *Independent* really became noticed. O'Neil suggested, "Let's have some sensationalism," recommending the Ford put out an entire Jew-baiting series, hoping that "one single series may make us known to millions."⁵³ Taking O'Neil's advice, Ford promptly began assembling the best team of journalists he could find, including the top eight employees of the *Detroit News*. After only the first year of Ford's anti-Semitic series, six out of the eight quit the *Independent* in disgust over Ford's views. One of these men, Edwin G. Pipp, who had been the editor-

in-chief in Detroit, left Ford's team to start his own paper, *Pipp's Weekly*, to counter Ford's racist *Independent*.⁵⁴ Of the men Ford recruited for his new anti-Semitism series, the most important was probably Boris Brasol, who introduced Ford to the *Protocols*. Hired by Ford as a journalist in 1920, Brasol had been a prominent member of the Black Hundreds in czarist Russia, and after fleeing the country during the Revolution had served as a secret agent for the U.S. Army Military Intelligence division in 1918. After his work at the *Independent*, he would become an agent of the Nazi party. The *Protocols*, which Brasol sold to Ford, provided exactly what the newspaper needed, proof to support Ford's claims. The *Protocols* soon made appearances in almost every issue, although strategically it was never printed in its entirety. Instead, only excerpts were used, in addition to newspaper articles to provide backing for the *Independent's* claims, which gave the *Protocols* a more "legitimate" feel than if it had been presented in the full-length version.⁵⁵

With the aid of the *Protocols*, throughout the years of the *Dearborn Independent* Ford blamed any element of society that he disliked or saw as immoral on the Jews. He claimed that Jews created amusement parks, which the *Independent* deemed "the centers of nervous thrills and looseness." Somehow Jazz music became "Yiddish moron music" in the eyes of Ford. Social luxuries such as "sports clothes and flashy jewelry" were means of Jewish corruption. The *Independent* claimed that Jews had taken over Hollywood, and had degraded the moral integrity of film: "The reels were reeking of filth. They are slimy with sex plays." He also claimed that Jews controlled all news media, kept secrets from the public and fabricated their own stories. Jews had taken over baseball and transformed it from the great American pastime to a gambling enterprise. The liquor business was also controlled by Jews, who had replaced high-quality whisky with "blended" cheaper quality whisky in order to make more money. Apparently all crime was tied to a secret Jewish Mafia.⁵⁶ Although the *Protocols* were proven a fake in 1921, this did not hinder their use in the *Independent*. Ford's personal secretary Erenest Liebold responded to critics by stating, "If you will carefully read our articles, you will find we have at no time guaranteed their authenticity. We have

merely stated what they contain and have paralleled this with what actually took place and are leaving it to the mind of the public to judge.”⁵⁷ Ford, in defense of the *Protocols* said, “The only statement I care to make about the *Protocols*, is that they are sixteen years old, and they have fitted the world situation up to this time.”⁵⁸

Ford published his anti-Semitic articles in the *Independent* for seven years, until 1927, when he was sued for \$1 million for libel by Jewish California farm cooperative organizer Aaron Sapiro, whose farmers co-op was accused in the *Independent* of being part of the Jewish conspiracy. Sapiro was the third individual to have sued Ford for libel in the *Independent*'s seven years, the first of the three to have a trial. The last time Ford had been on the witness stand was in 1920 during the infamous *Chicago Tribune* trial when he had made an idiot of himself, so naturally Ford wanted to avoid testifying. He evaded a subpoena for weeks until finally a young attorney disguised as a newsman snuck up on Ford as he was watching planes take off from the seat of a Lincoln convertible at the Ford Airport. The lawyer dropped the subpoena and the five-dollar witness fee in Ford's lap, who, horrified, yelled, “No, no, take it away!” The next day Ford's attorneys argued that the man in the convertible was not Henry Ford but in fact his brother John. The lead prosecution attorney then threatened to charge Ford with contempt of court, so Ford's lawyers backed down and agreed to an appearance. However, Ford was not to be outdone.⁵⁹

The very night before he was to appear in court, Ford was admitted to a Detroit hospital having suffered heavy injuries in a car accident. His story was that two men in a Studebaker, who had suspiciously waved to Ford, had sideswiped Ford's model T Coupe and knocked him off the road to come crashing into a tree, just stopping him from falling into the Rouge River. Headlines read that there had been an assassination plot, and even informed at one point that Ford had died. Ford spokesmen soon dispelled these rumors. Although he did suffer real injury (his back and sides were bruised and he had passed some blood through his kidneys), this lucky accident gave Ford the break he needed. Deemed unable to testify, Ford managed to postpone his testi-

mony for weeks upon weeks. During this time, jury member Cara Hoffmen, who had already lied in court about her husband's occupation (she said he was a plumber when he really ran a speakeasy), made an even greater mistake by revealing bias in a *Detroit Times* interview: "It seems to me that someone is trying to keep this case away from the jury." The trial had to be postponed for another six months, giving Ford the perfect opportunity to settle with Sapiro out of court. Three conditions were agreed on for the \$140,000 settlement. First, Ford had to publicly apologize to Sapiro. Second, he had to make a statement to the press withdrawing any charges he had made against the Jewish people. Third, Ford was required to fire his two most prominent anti-Semitic writers at the *Dearborn Independent*. Ford suggested that he turn the *Independent* into an internal company newspaper, but instead he abandoned it altogether in December of that year.

Ford agreed to these terms and released a public statement written by his attorneys. Ford refused to read the statement, or have it read to him. The humiliating statement retracted his years of anti-Semitism, swearing "nobody can accuse me of being hostile to the Jewish people as a race." He denounced the *Independent* and his *International Jew*, claiming that he was unaware that "Jews generally...not only resent the publications as promoting anti-Semitism, but regard me as their enemy." He mentioned the *Protocols* specifically saying:

I confess I am deeply mortified that this journal, which is intended to be constructive and not destructive, has been made the medium for resurrecting exploded fictions, for giving currency to the so-called *Protocols of the Wise Men of Zion* which have been demonstrated, as I learn, to be gross forgeries.⁶¹

Thus ended Henry Ford's career in anti-Semitism. For the remainder of his life he remained anti-Semitic, however, his ideas were never again published. Later in life, he also blamed World War II on the Jews.⁶² He died in 1947. Although anti-Semitism had already existed in America prior to Ford, his use of the *Protocols* had given the text new life when he introduced it to a new population. His *International Jew* is still one of the most popular anti-Semitic books and can be found in countries around the world.

Although created almost a century ago and proven to be a fraud, the *Protocols* still play a part in an important conflict which is occurring today. For more than a century, Muslims and Jews in the Middle East have been in conflict, and in the past half-century or so since the formulation of the State of Israel, the *Protocols* have become increasingly prominent in anti-Jewish and anti-Israeli circles. Terrorists today feel that they are protecting the world from a secret Jewish plot the way the Nazis did. Today, the *Protocols* pose a bigger threat than they have for the past 50 years, and the text's popularity is currently on the rise.

The first Arabic translations of the *Protocols* were published in Jerusalem in the late 1920s, but it was not until 1951, four years after the foundation of Israel, that the *Protocols* started to grow in popularity with the first translation by a Muslim. In the 20 years that followed, nine different editions were published, and there have been more since. One of these editions published in 1961 included an introduction by a famous author, Abbas Mahmud al Aqqad. Another edition from 1968 was translated by Abd al-Nasir, the brother of Egyptian president Gamal Abdul Nasser (Nasir), who was one of many Middle Eastern heads of state to publicly endorse and recommend the *Protocols*. Others include former President Sadat of Egypt, former President Arif of Iraq, Colonel Quadafi of Libya, and former King Faisal of Saudi Arabia, who throughout his life made a habit of handing out anti-Semitic literature such as the *Protocols* or *The International Jew* to guests and foreign diplomats (even Henry Kissinger). Quotes from the *Protocols* were included in Egypt's 1960 official cultural journal, written by a senior government officer.⁶³

The *Protocols* have been popular in the Middle East for a few reasons. First of all, they make the Jews out to seem what Middle Eastern anti-Semites want them to be: greedy, money-hungry, but most of all vicious imperialists who want to force other races into submission. The *Protocols* "prove" that the Jews are in fact the perpetrators and the villains of this conflict. Another very important factor in the *Protocols*' popularity is that in the Middle East, proof coming from the West that they were false could not be read in the Middle East, due to the language barrier. According to

renowned historian Bernard Lewis, writing in 1986, “until a few years ago, the reader with access only to Arabic would not have known that the authenticity of the *Protocols* had ever been called in question, the sole discordant voice coming from the Marxist critics who reject personal explanations of history, such as those relied upon in the *Protocols*, but still without indicating they are a fabrication.”⁶⁴ Lewis does note, however, that in recent years there has been more awareness of the *Protocols* as a forgery, but Arab writers still somehow maintain a “curious reluctance” to give them up.⁶⁴ As was stated in *al-Ahram*, nowadays it is almost universally known that “the prevailing opinion at the present times is that the *Protocols* are a forged document,” but whether the majority of people believe that is open to question.⁶⁵

In recent decades, the first Palestinian *intifada* movement of the late-1980s once again gave the *Protocols* new life. In 1988, Hamas, the most prominent Palestinian terrorist organization (founded in 1987), made public its belief in the *Protocols* when they were specifically mentioned in the official Hamas Charter, which still exists today. This was the first time an official militant organization had used the *Protocols* as justification for violent acts since the Nazis:

Hamas is calling upon the Arab and Islamic peoples to act seriously and tirelessly in order to frustrate that dreadful scheme and to make the masses aware of the danger of copping out of the circle of struggle with Zionism. Today it is Palestine and tomorrow it may be another country or countries. For Zionist scheming has no end, and after Palestine they will covet expansion from the Nile to the Euphrates. Only when they have completed digesting the area on which they will have laid their hand, they will look forward to more expansion, etc. Their scheme has been laid out in the *Protocols* of the Elders of Zion, and their present (conduct) is the best proof of what is said there.⁶⁶

The fact that Hamas uses the *Protocols* without once questioning their authenticity has dangerous implications. Unlike the anti-Semitic rantings of Henry Ford, armed terrorists who not only believe in the *Protocols*, but also have a pre-existing hatred of Jews, contribute all the more to the bloody conflict in the Middle East that takes place to this day. In 2001, the *Protocols* made headlines around the world when the Egyptian TV network “Dream Satellite

Channel” began airing a new show “Knight Without a Horse,” a 41-episode series taking place around the turn of the 20th century about a man fighting against Turkish, British, and Zionist occupiers of Egypt. Containing heavily anti-Semitic themes, this show features the *Protocols* as factual, portraying Jews as the villains. Although the show’s star, Mohammed Sobhi, claims that the media misrepresents the extent to which the *Protocols* influence the show, Jewish groups in Israel and the U.S. have been in an uproar, and even tried to prevent the show from airing, to no avail. The show has tremendous popularity in the Middle East, and is also run on the Egyptian State TV channel. The shows creator claims that 19 of the 26 *Protocols* have already been implemented, and we can expect the rest to follow.⁶⁷

The single most powerful medium perpetuating the *Protocols* in the Middle East, and in fact all over the world, is the Internet. For the past decade, the Internet has served as the perfect forum for hate propaganda, due to its massive audience and complete lack of censorship. Today, the *Protocols* are more accessible than ever before; anybody with access to the World Wide Web can view a copy for free, in almost any language—one site translates it into 11. In 2003 there were an estimated 604 million people on the Internet.⁶⁸

Almost anybody can now purchase a hard copy of the *Protocols*, as it is now available through many major online booksellers. It is illegal, however, to own a copy of the *Protocols* in France, Germany, Canada and other countries, as they prohibit hate literature. Such prohibition, despite the good intentions of ending the distribution of books like the *Protocols*, has actually made it sell more. Banning the book has done two things. First, it makes it seem more alluring and mysterious; some people want to do what the government prohibits, and they also just want to see what is worthy of being banned. Second, banning the *Protocols* has conjured up more support for it, just on the basis of free speech principles alone. Although most people may reject the *Protocols*, many think that censoring them is wrong.⁶⁹ One website, “Web Woman for Woman,” mentions the *Protocols* in an article against censorship from a woman’s perspective: “And censorship, even of

images that offend us, can create profound problems as we fight for our rights—for women or any oppressed minority. Amazon.com has come under fire for making copies of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and *Mein Kampf* available for purchase...⁷⁰

On the Internet, however, there is no librarian, editor, or fact-checker. Completely false information like *Protocols* can be presented in a convincing way, as an authentic document. The Internet makes it hard for the average person to distinguish real from fake, let alone children and teenagers who make up a lot of the Internet population. Authors have the liberty of being racist, liars, and even terrorists, without any social or legal repercussions—and they can also remain anonymous. The Internet makes it possible for Carl Klang, writer of his “News Behind the News” song, to become the popular “America’s #1 Christian Patriot Musician” that he is.

The *Protocols* are showing no signs of disappearing. Despite the fact that most people see them as an absurd forgery, they have managed to endure for a century and appear to be as alive as ever. It seems that the *Protocols* go along with anti-Semitism, a force that has been around as long as Judaism itself, and no doubt will unfortunately exist for generations to come. The *Protocols* can make the Jewish people seem to fit any stereotype of scapegoat imaginable, and until those among us who oppose anti-Semitism begin to open their eyes, it is likely that Jews everywhere will continue to suffer prejudice and persecution. The best way to combat the lies of the *Protocols* is through knowledge. The more people know about their history of these slanders, the less potent they will be. We need to teach the younger generations how to tell the difference between real history and false history, especially now that the Internet makes unreliable sources available by the billions. We should not censor the Internet or prosecute those who perpetuate false history, but young people in particular need to be more critical of the information presented everyday in our media. It may be hoped that through education, the belief in the *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion* will slowly but surely dwindle down to nothing, until it is seen as only the vicious myth that it is.

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- ² "What are 'The Protocols of the Elders of Zion'?" Holocaust-History (June 1, 1999) 1/25/2004 [<http://www.Holocaust-history.org/short-essays/protocols.shtml>]
- ³ Jacobs and Weitzman, p. 13
- ⁴ Norman Cohn, Warrant for Genocide (London: Serif, 1967) p. 25
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 26
- ⁶ Jacobs and Weitzman, p. 12
- ⁷ Cohn, p. 26
- ⁸ Jacobs and Weitzman, p. 12
- ⁹ Cohn, p. 26
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 27
- ¹¹ B.E. "Antisemitism," Encyclopaedia Judaica Keter (Publishing House Jerusalem Ltd., 1996) p. 123
- ¹² Sylvia Rothchild, A Special Legacy: An Oral History of Society—Jewish Emigrés in the United States (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985) p. 28
- ¹³ Cohn, pp. 39-42
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 39-42
- ¹⁵ B.E. "Antisemitism" [no page given]
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- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 123
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- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 123
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- ²⁴ Ideas in the paragraph from Cohn, pp. 189-190
- ²⁵ Peter Pulzer, The Rise of Political Anti-Semitism in Germany and Austria (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1964) as in Cohn, p. 190
- ²⁶ Cohn, pp. 191-196
- ²⁷ Jacobs and Weitzman, p. 12

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- ³² Herman Rauschnig, *Hitler Speaks* (London, 1939) pp. 235-236 as in Cohn, pp. 201-202
- ³³ Cohn, pp. 203-204
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14 June 2001, page 24

Robert Messenger on Lionel Casson's

Libraries in the Ancient World

In 642, when Islamic armies captured Alexandria, a Greek scholar asked the commanding general if he might take possession of the famous library.

The request was referred up the chain of command to the Caliph Omar, who replied, "If these writings of the Greeks agree with the Book of God, they are useless and need not be preserved; if they disagree, they are pernicious and ought to be destroyed."

The library's consignment to the flames gave the city's baths fuel for six months.