

About the Protocols of the Elders of Zion

Anti-Masonry And Anti-Semitism

By León Zeldis

The Protocols of the Elders of Zion is probably the most notorious hoax to yoke anti-Masonry and anti-Semitism. More than once in the course of the last two centuries, anti-Masonry has been fused with an older hatred, anti-Semitism. Probably, the irrational nature of both phobias facilitates their juxtaposition. Today, we are witnessing an increasing wave of both anti-Semitic and anti-Masonic propaganda. Possibly, the paradigmatic work of this class of "literature" is titled The Protocols of the Wise Men of Zion, sometimes also known as The Protocols of the Elders of Zion. This is one of the most notorious literary falsifications in history. It was based on plagiarism and fraud from the very beginning of its gestation. Nevertheless, this swindle has captivated the imagination of many people who are sensible in other respects, and it has been transformed into a source of indispensable information for all anti-Semites and anti-Masons. This article* will examine the history of this lethal hoax and look at the lamentable consequences it has had in modern history, as much from the point of view of the Jewish people as of Masons around the world.

The Protocols appeared for the first time in 1905 at Tsarskoe Selo, a summer resort near Saint Petersburg, in imperial Russia under the government of Czar Nicholas II. The author, indicated in the first editions, was a person who was successively a lawyer, judge, and Greek Orthodox monk called Sergei Alexandrovich Nilus (1862–1930).

Originally, the Protocols appeared as a simple appendix in the second edition of a book by Nilus entitled Velikoe v Malom (The Great Thing in the Small Thing). In the several editions that followed (1911, 1912, 1917, and 1919, always in Russian), Nilus offers different explanations for how the manuscript of the Protocols had arrived at his hands, stressing that he only had made the translation into Russian. Other editions and translations, published by other people, related different stories on the origin of the document.

One of the most frequent explanations is that the Protocols are the "secret minutes" of the First Zionist Congress held in Basel in 1897, summoned by Dr. Theodor Herzl. The argument developed in the document is that the Jews conspire to control all governments, destroy Christian civilization, and become masters of the world. The Protocols provide details on the methods to be used to reach these objectives. Freemasonry would be the main tool used by the "Elders of Zion" to deceive and dominate humanity.

Let me begin by making clear that an organization like the "Wise Men of Zion" or the "Elders of Zion" never existed. Nevertheless, and without a shred of evidence to prove it,

it has been stubbornly maintained that these Protocols were the minutes of this fictitious organization.

Let us examine the form of the Protocols. The first thing that draws the attention of the objective reader is that this text does not have any similarity to any protocol that was read. Protocols are minutes, that is to say, the relation of what happened in a meeting. It mentions a place, the date, the hour in which the meeting starts, who presides over it, generally the names of those who are present and of those who excused their absence, and briefly the description of the debates, who intervened and – sometimes in very summarized form – what was said and what resolutions were approved. Finally, there is a time of closing of the meeting and the signatures of those who guarantee the veracity of the minutes.

None of these exist in the so-called Protocols. The only "signature" is simply a line that says "Signed by the representatives of Zion of Degree 33." Furthermore, one hears only one voice in the Protocols. These are monologues or lectures, harangues we could say, without making any attempt to make it appear as a debate or the intervention of several people. It is a sad commentary on the credulity or the malevolence of those readers who have been ready to accept a text of this nature as real protocols, the minutes of a meeting.

Going into the content, the absurdity of a supposed criminal plan prepared by a group that pretends to control the mass media of the entire world – but is incapable of preventing the repeated publication of its plans – is laughable. The immediate objective of the Protocols was to undermine the political influence and the position of Count Witte, at that time the most important minister of the czarist government. Witte was a person of great culture and amplitude of views, a confidant of the czar who yearned to introduce an enlightened and modern imperial policy. Because the wife of Witte was of Jewish origin, the generalized opinion was that he favored the Jews of Russia, who had undergone persecutions and discrimination during centuries.

The political opponents of Witte, headed by Grand Duchess Isabel, did everything possible to discredit him before the leading class and the royal family. She and her group ferociously fought against Count Witte's attempt to introduce the gold standard in Russia, to attract foreign investments, and to form an alliance with France. Also, it was well known that Count Witte wanted to improve the conditions of life of the Jews in Russia and to cancel certain repressive laws. The publication of the Protocols was intended to undermine his influence on the czar and the royal family.

Since some writers insist on attributing the Protocols to the first Zionist Congress, summoned by Dr. Theodor Herzl, it is not out of place to give some explanations about this congress, its true object, and its resolutions, all of which are amply documented. The Zionist movement, founded by Herzl and a few supporters, was simply a call to the Jewish people to return to their ancestral fatherland, Judea, which by the end of the 19th Century still was part of the Ottoman Empire. The main objective of the Congress was to solve the "Jewish problem" of the European countries, especially, by means of the emigration of the Jews. In their historic homeland, the Jews would return to work in agriculture, building, and other activities that had been forbidden to them during hundreds of years in their places of dispersion.

The first worldwide Zionist Congress took place in the Swiss city of Basel, August 29–31, 1897. The true resolutions of the Congress were the creation of the World Zionist Organization to implement the Zionist program, the creation of a National Fund to buy land, dry marshes, construct roads, and plant forests.

The truth regarding the Protocols was first revealed in 1921 by a journalist of the Times newspaper of London, Philip Graves. In Istanbul (then Constantinople) he found a worn copy of a French book entitled *Dialogues in Hell Between Machiavelli and Montesquieu, or the Policy of Machiavelli in the 19th Century*. Printed in Brussels in 1864 by an anonymous author, the book had actually been written in 1858 by Maurice Joly, an anti-Semitic French lawyer and monarchist from an old Catholic family. In his novel, in the form of a dialogue beyond the grave between Montesquieu and Machiavelli, Joly attacked Napoleon III of France. Joly was promptly imprisoned for 15 months.

Graves immediately realized the extraordinary similarity between these *Dialogues* and the Protocols of Nilus. There were whole paragraphs that had been copied literally. In three long articles, published in the Times of London on August 16, 17, and 18, 1921, Graves demonstrated that Nilus had simply plagiarized the dialogues of Joly, changing the original and adding anti-Semitic material to serve his purpose. Later studies confirmed this assertion.

Although the Catholic Church has not been generally characterized by its affection for either Masons or Jews, it is a remarkable fact that one of the revelations of the absolute falsification of the Protocols was written by the Reverend Father Pierre Charles, Society of Jesus, published in the *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* of Belgium in January 1938. Note the date. Europe was on the eve of World War II. The totalitarian regimes of Hitler, Franco, and Mussolini triggered violent anti-Semitic and anti-Masonic campaigns. All who followed the development of these events realized that war was imminent and that the German military power would squash its neighbors, including Belgium.

Father Charles must have been a man of exceptional courage, integrity, and love of his fellowman to dare publishing his rebuttal of the Protocols at that time. Also, his superiors, who authorized the publication, displayed a sense of justice and humanity very scarce in the Europe of those years.

Altogether, there are more than 160 passages in the Protocols, corresponding to 40% of the total text, evidently based on passages in Joly. In nine of the chapters, the copied text reaches to more than half.

"Protocol No. 15" is perhaps most interesting from the Masonic point of view. It contains sentences such as "we will create and multiply free Masonic lodges in all the countries of the world.... We will put all these lodges under a central administration known only to us.... Between the members of these lodges will be almost all the international and national police agents." Here are all the elements of conspiracy theories, and it is not worth the trouble to try to discuss these assertions with someone who is ready to believe such nonsense. They have no knowledge of or desire to know of the strong independence of Grand Lodges worldwide or the fact that the secret police of all totalitarian regimes count themselves among the most rabid enemies of Freemasonry.

The Protocols, translated into many languages, spread like wildfire. In the British Museum of London, 43 different editions are conserved. Especially in the 1930s, the time of expansion for fascism and Nazism, we find no less than 28 editions and translations printed in the four corners of the world. The Protocols became the "Bible" of anti-Semites and anti-Masons. Adolf Hitler used them as justification for his policy of racial persecution that culminated in the "Final Solution," the mass murder of millions of Jewish men, women and children for their only "crime," being Jewish. The Holocaust itself gave proof, in possibly the most tragic and concrete form, of the absolute nonsense of the presumed plans of worldwide domination described in the Protocols. Clearly, anti-Semitic and anti-Masonic hatreds have no relation to logic, only to psychopathology.

Tragically, anti-Semitic and anti-Masonic propaganda continues to appear today without respite. New editions of the Protocols have appeared recently in the United States, Estonia, Slovakia, Ukraine, Iran, and Denmark. A translation into Greek was even published in Australia. In countries of long democratic tradition, like England and the United States, anti-Masonry has flowered again and is reaching new levels of fanatical activity. Anti-Semites and anti-Masons have quickly taken the opportunities offered by electronic technology – especially the Internet.

The Protocols and their history underline the adage that vigilance is the price of freedom and truth. Freemasonry must be ever ready to counter lies and assert the truth. May we never forget this mission or abandon the high principles of our Craft.

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