

# 1 Introduction

## Hate and absurdity: the impact of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*<sup>1</sup>

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As a forgery and a construct of antisemitism, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (hereafter, the Protocols<sup>2</sup>) has attracted the interest of politicians and academicians, and generated extensive research. Attempts have been made to identify the roots of the document, analyze it in a historico-political context, and examine its abiding reception and dissemination, as well as its influence and exploitation.<sup>3</sup> Yet, an enigmatic aspect remains, and in spite of the many critical studies the questions raised by historian of antisemitism Richard Levy are still valid: “Why has the Protocols seized the imagination and informed the political judgment of men and women throughout the twentieth century? Why did it survive to the present day and what are the sources from which it draws its strength?”<sup>4</sup> To these one can add others: Why is “the abstract Jew” such an ideal instrument for conspiracy theories in so many languages and diverse cultures – ranging from Europe to Japan and from North America to the Arab/Muslim world? What significance do the Protocols have today in mainstream worldviews? Are they gaining in importance? Are they still today a warrant for genocide or merely a reflection of xenophobic nationalism? Can they be fought by logical argumentation?

This volume, which comprises a compilation of papers presented at a conference held in October 2004 at Tel Aviv University, in collaboration with the Zentrum für Antisemitismusforschung in Berlin to mark the one hundredth anniversary of their publication in Russia, does not pretend to answer all these questions. Rather, it is an attempt to understand the Protocols’ continuing popularity, over a century after their first appearance, in so many diverse societies and cultures. In his monumental analysis of the Protocols, Pierre-André Taguieff suggests four approaches toward their study: within the framework of a history, typology, and psycho-sociology of conspiracy theories connected to the phenomenon of modern secret societies both as fact and myth; the history of antisemitism and the development of anti-Jewish ideologies in the modern age; the history of forgeries linked to police falsifications; and the history or anthropology of devil worship and Satanism.<sup>5</sup> Since the following chapters are written mostly by historians, they adopt in the main a historical approach for reassessing the dissemination of the Protocols and the social conditions that facilitated their diffusion before and after World

War II, as well as examining their significance, centrality, and impact in different periods of time and place.

It is still not certain who wrote this antisemitic pamphlet, but the evidence suggests that it was cobbled together from pre-existing sources by agents of the Russian secret police (*Okhrana*) working in France during the years of the Dreyfus affair (1894–1906). The accusations against Jews in the Protocols were commonplace in popular French publications in the 1890s, and the authors of the tract plagiarized numerous sources. In particular, Maurice Joly's anti-authoritarian *A Dialogue in Hell: Conversations between Machiavelli and Montesquieu about Power and Right* (1864) provided the nucleus for at least nine of the twenty-four chapters. If the plot ascribed to Jews in the Protocols has a pronounced Machiavellian character, it is because the authors put the words of Joly's fictional Machiavelli into the mouth of the Grand Rabbi (also known as the Jewish Elder), whose address to a secret conclave in a cemetery in Basel, Switzerland, forms the core of the book. The conceit of the Grand Rabbi's delivery derives from another of the Protocols' sources, an 1868 novel titled *Biarritz*, by the German antisemite Hermann Ottomar Friedrich Goedsche (1815–78), known by his pseudonym Sir John Retcliffe.<sup>6</sup>

The Protocols were in part a reaction to contemporary events. A real Jewish gathering, the first Zionist Congress, was in fact held in Basel in 1897. A financial crisis did arise in Russia in 1898. And there were powerful Jewish financial families such as the Rothschilds, who at times exercised a measure of influence over the western political scene. But the Protocols were less a response to any real-world event than they were a product of the Jew-hatred that was rampant at the time, evidenced in the Dreyfus affair in France and the frequent murderous assaults on Jews in Russia, such as the Kishinev pogrom of 1903.

By the outbreak of World War I, several versions of the Protocols had appeared in Russia. The most well known was the adaptation by Sergei Nilus (1862–1929) in his devotional book *The Great within the Small and Antichrist, an Imminent Political Possibility*, first published in 1905 as an appendix to the second edition of a 1903 book.<sup>7</sup> In 1917, the year of the Russian Revolution, Nilus published an expanded edition of the book, re-titled *He Is Near, He Is Hard by the Door!* warning of an imminent apocalypse initiated by the Jews. The Protocols were interpreted as an uncanny predictor of the revolution, offering a simple explanation for what had happened and absolving the defenders of the *ancien régime* from their failure to prevent or reverse it. The revolution was construed as the product of an irresistible, centuries-old global Jewish conspiracy to wreak havoc upon the gentile nations through financial manipulation and theories such as rationalism, materialism, and atheism, in order to overthrow legitimate and divinely appointed monarchs like the tsar and subjugate the world to a Jewish dictatorship. Beyond Russia's borders the Protocols remained unknown until after the 1917 revolution.

The first, anonymous English translation of the Protocols appeared in 1920 under the title *The Jewish Peril*. It was published by the respected house

of Eyre and Spottiswoode, which had also issued the Authorized Version of the Bible and the Prayer Book; it thus bore the stamp of His (or Her) Majesty's Printers, which gave the volume an imprint of authority. That same year, Victor Marsden, Russian correspondent for the British newspaper *Morning Post*, produced another translation, and it was this one that became the standard English edition. German and American versions also appeared in 1920.<sup>8</sup> In the United States, the automobile magnate Henry Ford, who published the Protocols in 1920 under the title *The International Jew*, made the tract truly famous. Under pressure, Ford renounced the Protocols in 1927, but with his backing they had achieved prestige and staying power.<sup>9</sup>

*The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* is a barely coherent, self-contradictory collection of twenty-four supposed "lectures," purportedly delivered by the Grand Rabbi to Jewish Elders of the "twelve tribes of Israel" assembled in the aforementioned Basel cemetery for one of their periodic conclaves to plot the conquest of the world. The essence of the Grand Rabbi's "lectures" is that world history has been manipulated for centuries by a secret Jewish cabal whose only aim is ruthless self-aggrandizement. Accordingly, the Jews, who scheme indefatigably, with supernatural cunning, to transform humanity into docile cattle, have invented every evil known to humanity, including capitalism, communism, liberal democracy, and mindless popular culture as diverse means to a single nefarious goal: the enslavement of the world and the establishment of a Jewish world government.

In Germany the Protocols found fertile soil in the Völkisch nationalist movement. Emerging in the course of the nineteenth century out of Social Darwinist, Germanic, and antisemitic thought, the Völkisch movement developed into a nationalist and racist ideology on the eve of World War I. Propagating the alleged right of the stronger, its proponents strove to establish its dominance in eastern Europe. With the radicalization of the Völkisch movement after the war, this ideology paved the way for National Socialism. Ultranationalist aspirations joined forces with racist notions of superiority and antisemitic delusions to form a political creed which, ever defiant and resolutely obstinate because of its irrational basis, had no hold in reality.

After World War I, which became a national trauma for the Germans, the doctrine of "the Jews' goal of world dominion" was taken up avidly by those disappointed and embittered by the outcome of the war. With their illusions and ambitions swept away by defeat, they were forced to seek explanations for German misfortune that lay beyond the bounds of rationality, because any rational explanation for the military and political demise of the Wilhelminian Reich would have called into question their own position, power, and political aspirations, as well as their self-perception as members of a superior nation and "race." Rooted in Social Darwinism of the nineteenth century, pervaded by the belief in the necessity of extending the Germanic people's "living space," and deeply convinced of the doctrines of antisemitism that racially stigmatized the Jews as inferior and held them responsible for all of

the world's troubles, the Völkisch movement was the ideal vehicle for adopting and disseminating the messages of the Protocols.

The Völkisch movement comprised groups and organizations such as the Alldeutscher Verband (Pan-German league), the antisemitic Reichshammerbund, the secret society of the Germanenorden, and the Deutsch-völkischer Schutz- und Trutzbund (German-nationalist union for defense and defiance), one of the precursors of, as well as an organization parallel to, the National Socialist Party. The Lebensreformer and agrarian romantics, supporters of social-reactionary utopias, also belonged to the Völkisch movement. National egoism, persecution mania, fundamentalism, and the inability to rationally come to grips with existing political, social, and economic conditions, characterized Völkisch supporters who, in a diffuse expectation of salvation, sought to escape reality and restore their sense of self-esteem through the exclusion of minorities, which they blamed for their woes.

The reception of the Protocols in Germany began in these Völkisch and nationalist circles. The Protocols were published in July 1919 by the Völkisch publishing house Auf Vorposten and edited by Gottfried zur Beek, whose real name was Ludwig Müller von Hausen. The book went through eight impressions by 1923, and the ninth came out in 1929 from the publishing house of the NSDAP, which had acquired the rights of Beek's translation. In 1924, the antisemitic publisher Hammer-Verlag issued another edition edited by Theodor Fritsch. Discussing the issue of authenticity of the Protocols in the preface, Fritsch expressed doubts that "the gullible, naïve, and credulous German" would believe them and that an "Aryan mind" could even imagine such a vile system. Fritsch concluded that as the Protocols arrogantly proclaim, international Jewry has ruled and continues to rule nations for centuries, steering their fates using every possible means, including cunning, deception, witchcraft, and financial machinations. Describing the Jews as the sworn enemy of decent humanity, he blamed them for all the disasters and misery suffered by nations, including the horrific crime of the Great War. The Nazi ideologue Alfred Rosenberg published another version, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion and Jewish World Policy*, with the Deutsche Volksverlag Dr. Ernst Boepple (an antisemitic Völkisch branch of the Munich publishing house J. F. Lehmann) in 1923, dating its origins to Basel in 1897. Rosenberg's tract quickly underwent several reprints, reaching 25,000 copies by the autumn of 1933. Such sales demonstrate the extent to which the Protocols became integrated into the canon of National Socialist doctrine.<sup>10</sup>

Hitler adopted the Protocols as a textbook for global conquest, and it was required reading under the Nazis. Not only was the supposed existence of an unscrupulous Jewish conspiracy to destroy Germany widely accepted among the German people, who made the extermination of the Jews and elimination of the threat they allegedly posed a sacred national mission, but the Protocols became a model that Hitler and the Nazis diligently sought to follow. Indeed, as Hannah Arendt points out, the Protocols

presented world conquest as a practical possibility [and] implied that the whole affair was only a question of inspired or shrewd know-how, and that nobody stood in the way of a German victory over the entire world but a patently small people, the Jews, who ruled it without possessing instruments of violence – an easy opponent, therefore, once their secret was discovered and their method emulated on a large scale.<sup>11</sup>

In *Mein Kampf*, claimed renowned German scholar of antisemitism Wolfgang Benz in his lecture presented at the Tel Aviv University conference, Adolf Hitler used the Protocols as a building block in his antisemitic program. He attributed to the text – which already served as a basis in Germany for reaching a consensus about “the Jews” – a dual function: proof of the existential falseness of “the Jews,” and a weapon against them. One need not read the text in order to regard it as authoritative, just as one need not read *Mein Kampf* in order to be a National Socialist, or to declare one’s support for Hitler’s movement and promote the aspirations of the Nazi party, he added. German writer and anti-war activist Arnold Zweig considered the Protocols the “core of the Völkisch persecution psychosis.” Their reception by the right-wing political spectrum, which found in it confirmation of their assumptions, as well as their certainty of the text’s authenticity, indeed demonstrates psychotic antisemitic demagogy.<sup>12</sup>

Explaining in *Mein Kampf* that what many Jews unconsciously wished to do was clearly set forth in the Protocols, Hitler praised them for being absolute proof of the constitutive evilness of the Jews and their aspirations for world domination. “With an almost terrifying precision” the essence and actions of the Jewish people are revealed, he states; then, in an impelling reversal of reality, he claims that the repeatedly furnished proof of forgery, especially by *Frankfurter Zeitung*, a liberal newspaper banned in 1943, was evidence of the document’s authenticity. Hitler further alluded to events that were currently unfolding as the best way of judging the authenticity of the document. If the historical developments that had taken place within the last few centuries were studied in the light of the Protocols, he claimed, the incessant repudiations and denouncements would be clearly understood.

*The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* is the wellspring of antisemitism worldwide, asserted Benz. No other text about a supposed Jewish world conspiracy has had a greater impact than this one, simply because the public wanted to believe its pithy explanation of how the world works. The murderers of German foreign minister Walter Rathenau on June 24, 1922, were familiar with the tract and believed their victim to be “one of the 300 Elders of Zion.”<sup>13</sup> After the National Socialists seized power, the Protocols were included in the official curriculum of German schools, in line with a decree issued by the Reich minister for science and national education, on October 13, 1934. The question of their authenticity was irrelevant to antisemites, since its propaganda effect rendered such an issue to be secondary. The arguments and evidence used to prove that the pamphlet was indeed a forgery had long

been an integral element in its dissemination. Using methods that the deniers of Auschwitz would later apply – paranoid fantasy and a refusal to accept reality – the conspiracy theory elaborated in the Protocols was continually reinforced with new fictitious notions.

In the US, the text fascinated Henry Ford, who found in it archaic meaning. Reading the Protocols revealed to him “the terrible completeness of the World Plan.” Besides the tasks they looked forward to doing, the Jews announced the deeds they had done and were in the act of doing. The evidence that Ford provided to demonstrate that the intentions and plans of world Jewry had already been executed was just as vague and nebulous as the arguments put forward by other antisemitic authors purporting to prove the authenticity of the Protocols. Their common claims have been, first, that it is obvious the Protocols are genuine because of their content; and second, that, in any event, this question is basically irrelevant because, after all, they are the very embodiment of a higher truth, namely the Jewish world plan.<sup>14</sup>

In seeking to identify an adequate image for this type of textual exegesis, Benz likened it to the alchemists’ search for the legendary philosopher’s stone, the *lapis philosophorum*. Believing in its existence for centuries, alchemists were convinced that this matter transformed base metals into gold and silver and that it could serve as a life-extending and rejuvenating elixir (*aurum potable*). There are sound arguments for drawing a comparison between antisemites who propagate the Protocols as a fundamental document, and alchemy, a pseudo-science which from late antiquity to the seventeenth century focused on the elements and substances of life, he said. Both alchemy and the ideology of antisemitism are secret “arts” and their activities stem from a *weltanschauung* that represents a conglomeration of religion, philosophy of nature, esotericism, and magic, in anticipation of salvation.

As to why the Protocols have exerted such a long and sustained effect, the observation that we are dealing with an absurd construct born of hate is of little help, he asserted. The absurdity of the conspiracy myth is not an objection, but one of the ingredients ensuring its effect. He cited political theorist Carl Schmitt who stated that no line of argumentation, no matter how clearly articulated, can match the power of genuine mythical images. Ideologues and demagogues have always exploited this power – whether the tsarist secret police, National Socialists, or Muslim agitators, for whom the myth of a Jewish world conspiracy is welcome ammunition in their struggle against Israel, Christian fundamentalists in Eastern Europe intent on settling the score with communism, or anti-American agitators in Japan who seek to explain capitalism. All these groups have used the stereotyped image of the Jewish people striving for world hegemony.

Insights into how myths function are therefore far more helpful in understanding the appeal of the Protocols, Benz contended. Myths are used to place symbolic signs in the political and communicative process. They create orientation, and supply codes for explaining unresolved predicaments. In myths, symbols and beliefs replace reality and rationality and transform facts

into fiction or fiction into facts. French intellectual Roland Barthes<sup>15</sup> analyzed the origins and effect of everyday myths and formulated basic insights that are valid for the Protocols. Myth, he explained, does not deny things; on the contrary, its function resides in speaking of them. However, it does not speak of things as they are but reverses them and gives them a new meaning which endows them with a lucidity that is not one of explanation but of conclusion. Normally, a historical event, such as the French Revolution with its ideas of freedom and equality, or the resistance to National Socialism, is the starting point of a myth. As the Protocols demonstrate, however, fiction can also serve as the source of a myth and gain validity through incessant quoting and association. The imagined is ultimately perceived and recognized as a real event. As a myth, the Protocols, a thoroughly anti-enlightenment document, have attained a persuasive power and become “proof” of a Jewish world conspiracy.

National Socialist ideologue Alfred Rosenberg established articles of faith that came to represent valid “truths” that brooked no rational discussion. He sought to found a new pagan religion based on racism and entitled his programmatic work *The Myth of the Twentieth Century*, clearly underlining his claim to furnish an ultimate explanation of the world. The fact that his book, like Hitler’s *Mein Kampf*, was more quoted and referred to than actually read does not reduce its significance. What is decisive is how the myth is constructed as a narrative that addresses emotions, possesses symbolic value, and offers an easily comprehensible explanation for the connections steering the fate of the world, but at the same time both defies reality and makes logical sense. This description can be applied to the Protocols, albeit in an especially perfidious way: first, by simulating a manuscript that initially received its title through the type of text it purportedly represented (a “protocol”), then through tradition and dissemination, and above all through its mythical quality as a “secret document,” filled with alleged revelations and accusations as a way of stigmatizing the Jews. Thus, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* has become a code for antisemitism that can be employed arbitrarily in any cultural context.

Representing the Protocols as a myth that has struck deep roots in world consciousness is no doubt a plausible way to explain their reception and resilience. However, a vast body of work on conspiracy theories from the mid-1960s on and particularly originating in the US, could provide additional perspectives and methods that shed light on various aspects of the Protocols and may provide some answers to the questions raised at the beginning of this chapter. An examination of the Protocols was not always included in these studies and, in fact, many of the early publications did not mention them at all, or only in passing. Similarly, they did not relate to works done in other parts of the world, including the Arab one. This lacuna has been filled since the mid-1990s with research by Michael Barkun, Daniel Pipes, Chip Berlet, Stephen Bronner, and others, who explored the links between conspiracy theories and the Protocols. Marouf Hasian Jr. even asserted that

study of the origins of the Protocols helps in understanding the development of conspiratorial rhetorics built on earlier fragments and selective interpretations of historical moments.<sup>16</sup>

Belief in conspiracy theories has become a topic of interest for sociologists, psychologists, historians, political scientists, and researchers of cultural studies, communications studies, and folklore. They examine the extent to which belief in conspiracies is a generalized ideological trait; the likelihood that people who believe in one conspiracy will believe in others; the origins of conspiracy theories; the characteristics of human nature that drive people to create alternative worlds peopled by shadowy figures; the depth of conspiratorial thinking in society; the impact of conspiracy theories on the course of historical events; and the degree of their effect on democratic systems.

There is no comprehensive definition of conspiracy theory but scholars have offered various characterizations and typologies. Generally, the term is used to refer to any fringe theory which explains a historical or current event as the result of a secret plot by conspirators of almost superhuman power and cunning.<sup>17</sup> British scholar of cultural studies Clare Birchall defines conspiracy theory as “a narrative that has been constructed in an attempt to explain an event or a series of events to be the result of a group of people working in secret to a nefarious end.”<sup>18</sup> In his pioneering work on conspiratorial thinking, acclaimed historian Richard Hofstadter coined the term the “paranoid style,” describing its central preconception as the existence of “a vast and sinister conspiracy, a gigantic and yet subtle machinery of influence set in motion to undermine and destroy a way of life ... whole worlds, whole political orders, whole systems of human values.”<sup>19</sup> The typical conspiracy theory, wrote Seymour Lipset and Earl Raab, is international in scope, extends both in space and time, dates back in history, and is destined to endure forever. The second element, flowing indispensably from the same moralistic approach, is “the manipulation of the many by the few.”<sup>20</sup> American studies scholar Peter Knight quoted Karl Popper’s definition of conspiracy theory as “the view that whatever happens in society – including things which as a rule people dislike, such as war, unemployment, poverty, shortages – are the results of direct design by some powerful individuals or group.”<sup>21</sup>

More pithily, historian Daniel Pipes described conspiracy theories as “fears of nonexistent conspiracies,”<sup>22</sup> and pointed to several recurring assumptions in them: Power is the goal; benefit indicates control; conspiracies drive history; nothing is accidental or foolish; appearances deceive.<sup>23</sup> Political scientist Michael Barkun explains conspiracy theory as “the belief that an organization made up of individuals or groups was or is acting covertly to achieve some malevolent end.” A conspiracist worldview implies a universe governed by design rather than by randomness, he says, and identifies three principles found in virtually every conspiracy theory: Nothing happens by accident; nothing is as it seems; and everything is connected.<sup>24</sup> Conspiracism, he argues, is first and foremost, an explanation of politics.<sup>25</sup> Chip Berlet, a senior analyst at Political Research Associates (PRA), a non-profit group that tracks

right-wing networks, considers it “a distinct narrative form of scapegoating that uses demonization to justify constructing the scapegoats as wholly evil, while reconstructing the scapegoater as a hero.”<sup>26</sup>

Barkun divides conspiracies into three categories: *event conspiracies*, responsible for a limited, discrete event or set of events; *systemic conspiracies*, which have broad goals, usually conceived as securing control over a country, a region, or even the entire world; and *superconspiracies* – multiple conspiracies linked together hierarchically.<sup>27</sup> Pipes speaks of two types: *petty* and *grand* conspiracies,<sup>28</sup> which correspond with Barkun’s event and systemic conspiracies, respectively.

There is tacit agreement among researchers that conspiracy theories serve an important social function and fill various psychological needs. Conspiracy theories, including the Protocols, provide their believers with a prism with which to understand complex local and global events. They make intricate historical patterns comprehensible by oversimplification, and claim to identify the underlying or hidden source of human misery.<sup>29</sup> The appeal of conspiracism, explained Barkun, is threefold. First, conspiracy theories claim to explain what others can’t. They appear to make sense out of a world that is otherwise confusing. Second, they do so in an appealingly simple way, by dividing the world sharply between forces of light and forces of darkness. They trace all evil back to a single source, the conspirators and their agents. Finally, conspiracy theories are often presented as being extraordinary, containing secret knowledge, or unappreciated by others.<sup>30</sup> They are “part of the response to impersonal forces and diffuse structures generated by contemporary societies ... They give meaning to occurrences, to equivocal or dramatic situations [and] ... are attempts to find a narrative for the contradictions and transformations that are animating the world.”<sup>31</sup> They draw their strength from deep-seated needs and emotions, not from ideology, and impose a sense of order and coherence on the world at the expense of accuracy.<sup>32</sup>

Fears of a petty conspiracy – a political rival or business competitor plotting to harm you – are as old as the human psyche, wrote Pipes, but fears of a grand conspiracy go back only 900 years and have been “operational” for just two centuries, since the French Revolution. Like Pipes, Levy considers the French Revolution of the eighteenth century, as well as the English Revolution of the seventeenth century, as the periods when conspiracy was frequently regarded as the most convincing explanation for real events. Conspiracy theories then developed with the rise of Hitler and Stalin until World War II.<sup>33</sup> American anthropologist George Marcus attaches great importance to the Cold War era as a crucial context for the current atmosphere of fear and suspicion, since it was “defined throughout by a massive project of paranoid social thought and action that reached into every dimension of mainstream culture, politics, and policy.” Furthermore, interventions, subversions, and intimidations pursued in the interests of global conspiratorial politics of the superpowers shaped the thinking of client states and most regions, thus turning the paranoiac

mindset and conspiracy theories into “an eminently reasonable tendency of thought for social actors to embrace.”<sup>34</sup> This culture of paranoia, which has pervaded American political history since its inception, spread to other regions of the world.

Explaining disturbing events or social phenomena by means of conspiracy theories has another common factor: deflecting responsibility and transferring it to another party. Criticizing this prevailing tendency in the Arab world to explain events, Mshari al-Zaydi wrote in *al-Sharq al-Awsat* that “the entire issue is reduced to saying that there are conspiracies that no one knows about except those in the know, but we are a perfect nation with a healthy society, culture, and civilization.” Knight also considered conspiracy tropes as being “crucial not only in organizing questions of blame, responsibility and agency, but also in linking the personal and the political in one transcending metaphor.”<sup>35</sup>

Most researchers agree that while in the past conspiracy theories tended to fizzle out when the sense of crisis passed, “today’s unsettled climate – dominated by scandal, economic turmoil, war, and intense partisan conflict – stimulates a search for explanations that often reach extremes.”<sup>36</sup> These have come to constitute a central feature of political discourse since the 1960s with the assassination of President Kennedy. They have become “a way of understanding power that appeals to both marginalized groups and the power elite,” and they fashion both the right and the left wing with the same vigor. Political exigencies and historical moralism are behind the need of right- and left-wing extremism to invoke conspiracy theories. However, in non-western countries, Pipes observes, they lose their association with left or right and become much more virulent.<sup>37</sup> The communications revolution has allowed the spread of conspiracy theories more widely and quickly than ever before, and most recently the internet has emerged as a major new medium for their dissemination.

In view of these definitions and classifications, the Protocols may be seen as the quintessence of a conspiracy theory. They exploit “this all-too-human need in an unoriginal, yet powerful, manner,”<sup>38</sup> and constitute “an extreme form of conspiracy theory, one that is fully linked to a fascist racism,” claims expert on legal and cultural theory Mark Fenster. Berlet sees them as “the Protocols of conspiracism.”<sup>39</sup> They conform to the category of systemic conspiracies, attributing to the Jews the goal of achieving world domination and perceiving them as the source of all evil. They combine two distinct motifs: the conspiratorial and the antisemitic, encapsulating “the historical legacy of antisemitism and reflect[ing] its transformation.”<sup>40</sup> Evolving from a religious and social concept into a new political phenomenon from their first publication in 1903, they were

meant to serve a political function, to influence powerful individuals or mobilize large groups of people to think or act in particularly destructive and self-deluding ways. Over time, the political agendas of the publishers

of the Protocols have changed, but the sowing of hatred and the urge to self-defense against the “enemy of mankind” have remained common to them all.<sup>41</sup>

Tracing the origins of the myth of a Jewish world conspiracy to the Christian perception that the Jews were demons in human form, Norman Cohn, Taguieff, and Pipes consider the Protocols a modern adaptation of this ancient demonological belief. According to Pipes, the West developed two traditions of grand conspiracy, a mainly right-wing version concerned with Jews and a largely left-wing one fearful of secret societies:

Anti-Semites trace a single conspiracy beginning with Herod and including the Sanhedrin, medieval rabbis, Karl Marx, Theodor Herzl, Sigmund Freud, and the ‘Elders of Zion’. Secret society theorists trace an alternate tradition that includes such names as the Assassins, Templars, Jesuits, Freemasons, Illuminati, Jacobins, Rosicrucians, Philosophes, Carbonari, Catholics, and the Council on Foreign Affairs.<sup>42</sup>

The popular reception of the Protocols cannot be understood without referring to “the way that modernity is experienced by those whose material existence and existential self-identification are both threatened by it.”<sup>43</sup> They are “a particularly degraded and distorted expression of the new social tensions which arose when, with the French Revolution and the coming of the nineteenth century, Europe entered on a period of exceptionally rapid and deep-going change,” explained Norman Cohn. “It was a time when traditional social relationships were shaken, hereditary privileges ceased to be sacrosanct, age-old values and beliefs were called in question.”<sup>44</sup> These assertions also prove viable for an understanding of the willing reception of the Protocols in the Arab and Muslim worlds, where conspiratorial thinking became entrenched in the political culture as a result of their traumatic encounter with the western world and incapacity to match it militarily, scientifically, economically, socially, and politically since the eighteenth century.<sup>45</sup>

The Protocols exploited strategies of antisemitic politics. Characteristics of other conspiracy theories too – religious fanaticism, national rivalry, hatred of aliens, economic and social competition, scapegoating, and demonization – converge on a single group, the Jews. Lipset and Raab considered that the Protocols have proved so effective throughout the years because they are associated with the Jews.<sup>46</sup> But, the question remains, why the Jews, and why do they flourish even where there are no Jews?

Several explanations may be given, all seeming to derive from similar conditions that kept antisemitism alive for centuries. “The Jews, on the one hand, remained an exclusive community, but on the other hand, were a symbol of the modern world for those who most detested that world.”<sup>47</sup> Modernity and idealism are the two outstanding characteristics, added Pipes,<sup>48</sup> and hence any new ideology – democracy, liberalism, secularism, socialism, communism,

capitalism, globalization, the new world order – was portrayed as the work of the Jews, a way of making them suspect in the eyes of a growing but ill-educated electorate. The Jews are perceived as “a threat to the status quo and the continuity of the established world order.”<sup>49</sup>

Levy attributed their success, at least in part, to the tract’s literary qualities. “By pretending the book was of Jewish authorship, an ‘authentic’ document that had luckily fallen into the hands of the intended victims of Jewish plotting, the authors skirted the issue of their own motives and relieved themselves of the necessity of proving their horrific charges.”<sup>50</sup> The ambiguity of the Protocols meant that they could be appropriated “by liberals, moderates, and reactionaries who wanted to legitimate a number of repressive political and social policies,” and were searching for conspiratorial explanations for the massive national, industrial, and urban changes that were taking place around them. Thus, they could be easily adopted by other cultures and adapted to their own needs. Unlike the Russian version of the Protocols, for example, “which focused on the political and the religious shortcomings of the Jews, the Ford conspiracy concentrated attention on the social and economic perils that threatened the United States.”<sup>51</sup> Pipes also agrees that their vagueness – almost no mention of names, dates, or issues, their purportedly Jewish authorship, and their inherent contradictions: accusing Jews of using all available tools for their advancement, including capitalism and communism, philosemitism and antisemitism, democracy and tyranny, Zionism and Nazism – contributed to their success and wide appeal to both rich and poor, right and left, Christian and Muslim, American and Japanese.<sup>52</sup>

Despite the Holocaust, the Protocols continued to exercise fascination after World War II. Moreover, a new postwar variation of the Jewish conspiracy theory emerged, in which Zionists and Jews are accused of “inventing” the Holocaust.

Denial of the Holocaust depicts the Jews as a sophisticated and powerful world organization, capable of talking the entire world into believing in a hoax which they invented ... The story of the Holocaust as the Jews present it is the best possible proof that the world is indeed in their hands, because this baseless horror story rewards them with money and sympathy ... Denying the Holocaust also implies that the Jews have a sick and morbid imagination able to invent gas chambers, mass murders and indescribable tortures – in itself a pinnacle of evil.<sup>53</sup>

Chip Berlet argues that conspiracy theories are on the upswing both in volume and influence, and are moving from the fringe to the mainstream. Other analysts agree that they have grown in numbers but consider their impact on government policies to be very limited.<sup>54</sup> The Protocols, too, continue to circulate as part and parcel of antisemitic literature, which began to escalate in quantity and intensity after 1989 with the collapse of the Soviet

Union and the rise of the notions of globalization and a New World Order. Global crises such as 9/11 and the subsequent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the 2008 economic crisis, as well as natural disasters such as the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, perpetually feed them with new meaning. In the Arab and Muslim worlds especially they have penetrated the mainstream, initially through indoctrination and later through popularization in the media and the internet. According to Barkun, not all conspiracy theories are antisemitic, but contemporary conspiracy theories manifest a dynamic of expansion and can develop from event conspiracy through systemic conspiracies to superconspiracies. As this progression occurs, he contends, “the villains who populate ... [them] tend to multiply.” Ufologists, for instance, may begin with conspiracy theories that have nothing to do with antisemitism, yet in some cases end up testifying to the veracity of the Protocols.<sup>55</sup>

At the conclusion of his lecture, Benz asserted that refutations were useless from the outset, and only contributed to the success of the forgery because they generated publicity and confirmed the suspicion that “where there’s smoke there’s fire.” This first became evident during the dissemination of the Protocols in Great Britain. After their publication in July 1920 by the conservative *Morning Post*, and later that same year in a book edition, the *Times* took up the case and demanded an official inquiry into the origins of the work. The newspaper’s Istanbul correspondent Philip Graves came across a copy of Maurice Joly’s book from 1864, which, as noted, had formed one of the text’s sources, and wrote a series of articles proving they were a forgery.<sup>56</sup> By that time, however, hundreds of thousands of copies were already being sold.

German Jewish intellectual Benjamin Segel subtitled his critique of the Protocols, first published in Berlin in 1924, “A Disposal” (*Eine Erledigung*). However, its impact was insignificant because it was issued by a Jewish publishing house, a fact that antisemites seized on in order to defame it as serving Jewish interests, cynically casting the study as an attempt to limit the damage caused by the tract. Nonetheless, in his insightful preface, Segel pointed to premonitory signs, paraphrased thus by Levy:

Although one might expect the Protocols to raise the gravest doubts in readers, no matter the degree of their sophistication, the book clearly does not always do so. In the 1920s and 1930s, a significant number of people of all social strata believed in the authenticity of the document and took its revelation of a worldwide Jewish conspiracy at face value ... We would be mistaken to dismiss the Protocols as arrant nonsense. We ought instead, to consider the reasons why the book has survived to the present day and examine the sources from which it draws strength.<sup>57</sup>

Barkun adds that precisely because the claims in the Protocols are so sweeping they ultimately defeat any attempt at challenging them.

The result is a closed system of ideas about a plot that is believed not only to be responsible for creating a wide range of evils but also to be so clever at covering its tracks that it can manufacture the evidence adduced by skeptics. In the end, the theory becomes nonfalsifiable, because every attempt at falsification is dismissed as a ruse.<sup>58</sup>

The idea that sinister forces could control the lives of people from behind the scenes only “enhanced the credibility of the ‘Elders of Zion.’”<sup>59</sup>

Moreover, in the era of postmodernism, which accepts all narratives on equal terms, the discourse on conspiracy theories has become a form of knowledge-production, whether stigmatized, informal, popular, or illegitimate,<sup>60</sup> alongside official, verified, and legitimate knowledge, thus legitimizing it, too. This trend encompasses the Protocols, facilitating their popularization and proliferation. Clare Birchall speaks of popular knowledge “shaped within and by different (para)institutional contexts.”<sup>61</sup> Such knowledge circulates by way of mouth, television, talkback radio, the internet, tabloids, and magazines, among others, rather than by verified, peer-reviewed academic journals, books or more “serious” or “elitist” forms of cultural output. Knight and Marcus contend that the culture of paranoia is in tune with a postmodern distrust of final narrative solutions, and with the crisis of representation. “The proliferation of narratives about the conspiratorial activities of the authorities has in effect helped undermine the authority of narrative,”<sup>62</sup> they claim. The felt inadequacy over the past decade of metanarratives and conceptual frames to explain the world is generated “not so much by the radicalized intellectual fashion of the critique of knowledge of recent years as by the rapidity and extent of actual changes themselves.” There remains, concluded Marcus, “a healthy respect for facts and evidence, but accompanied also by a high tolerance for speculative associations among them – an impulse to figure out systems, now of global scale, with strategic facts missing that might otherwise permit confident choices among competing conceptions.”<sup>63</sup> In such a climate of thought, it is no wonder that 9/11 is represented as an American or Zionist conspiracy and the Protocols continue to flourish unchallenged. In the 1920s and 1930s, a significant number of people among all social strata believed in the authenticity of the document at face value, and found in its pages a credible explanation of world events. The following chapters demonstrate that in the twenty-first century this forgery still prevails as a handy interpretation of local and global events.

The hidden, imaginary power of the Jews as exemplified in *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* continues to bedazzle antisemites around the world, whether Right or Left wing, religious fundamentalist or secular, whether resident in the West, the East, or the Third World. From Russia and eastern Europe, through the Middle East to north and south America, the notion of Jews striving for global domination still finds adepts and believers.<sup>64</sup>

This volume consists of four sections that deal with prominent issues pertaining to the Protocols in different countries, and provides a comprehensive examination of the uses and abuses made in their name from their origins until today. Its main aim is to draw the broad contours of their dissemination and throw light onto why such a blatant fabrication is still, to this day, believed by so many. The issues discussed cover various periods and regions. Yet, they prove repeatedly that the Protocols resist geographical or cultural boundaries. In each place and time similar constellations of historical conditions enabled their reception and absorption. All the chapters indeed show that the myth continues to thrive, spreading even to countries without Jews.

Written by acclaimed scholars, the chapters in the first section revisit the origins of the Protocols in nineteenth-century Russia. Lev Aronov, Henryk Baran, and Dmitri Zubarev explore the identity of the daughter of a Russian general, Mademoiselle Iustin'ia Glinka, the lady who supposedly translated the Protocols into Russian and brought them to Russia, and introduces new documents and letters relating to the alleged French original of the tract from which her translation was made. The dearth of reliable data on Glinka is a lacuna common to the literature on the Protocols as a whole. Most scholars have not thought it necessary to look at either the period press of the late nineteenth–early twentieth centuries, including the short-lived French-language newspaper published by Glinka herself, or archival sources, be they western or Russian. The authors of this chapter have located several hundred letters by Glinka to several individuals of various social ranks, including one to Emperor Alexander III, which sheds new light on the role which its writer attempted to play in Russian political life during the 1880s, and touches on themes that appear in far greater detail in the Protocols.

Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern tentatively reconstructs the pre-natal period of the Protocols. He emphasizes the necessity of embracing the wider European context and broadly conceived history of culture, not infrequently ignored by students of antisemitism in general and of the Protocols in particular. Petrovsky-Shtern argues that one hundred years before their publication, Russian conservative sensibilities intersected with Russian anti-Jewish perceptions, producing a document that should be placed toward the bottom of the genealogical tree, if not at its root. Moreover, he seeks to prove that long before the document equated what it presented as the two most destructive entities, world Jewry and the French bourgeois revolution, the two met on the Russian political scene in one and the same political drama, finding themselves partners in time, place, and action. This unexpected encounter shaped the Semitic profile of Napoleon Bonaparte (1804–14) and informed the destructive image of European Jewry in the Russian cultural imagination. The study illuminates how and why this happened. It traces the unfolding of an antisemitic and anti-Jewish paradigm in nineteenth-century conservative Russian mentality from the early 1800s to the early 1900s, when the arch-conservative Pavel Krushevan (1860–1909) first published *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* in *Znamia*, his notorious antisemitic newspaper.

The second section includes four chapters that tackle the impact and dissemination of the Protocols since the 1920s till the end of World War II in Germany and the Americas. Wolfram Meyer zu Utrup revisits the question of the sources and essence of Nazi ideology and genocidal policies. He claims that after World War I Germany was already disposed to absorb the Protocols and explain political events in terms of conspiracy theories. He examines their role in Nazi antisemitism, their exploitation as a means for mass mobilization, and their impact on the persecution of the Jews. Emphasizing the unique structure and message of National Socialist antisemitism, zu Utrup attempts to explain how and why it differed from antisemitism in countries such as France or Russia, which did not pursue genocidal policies, and contends that Nazi policies were supported or approved by a large majority of German society. Yet, he rejects the notion of “eliminationist antisemitism” as being part of the German national character.

Yaakov Ariel returns to Christianity in the New World, focusing on developments in the attitudes of American Christian fundamentalists toward the Jews and the Protocols from the late nineteenth century to the 1940s. His chapter highlights the ambivalence that existed among those who supported the adoption of antisemitic notions alongside positive sentiments toward the Jews and their historical role. Ariel contends that while fundamentalist Christians came to regard the Jews as heirs to the Covenant between God and Israel and the object of biblical prophecies, they also considered them to be morally and spiritually lacking, thus retaining negative cultural stereotypes. The fundamentalist leaders’ endorsement of the Protocols and their wide circulation in fundamentalist circles were due to the manner in which they corresponded with their worldview. By the late 1930s, fundamentalist Christians began omitting the Protocols from their exegetical and polemical writings, and since the 1940s the Protocols have become a litmus test indicating where groups stand in relation not only to Jews but to the American mainstream as a whole.

In South America, Graciela Ben-Dror profiles the influential Argentinean writer and politician Hugo Wast in order to examine the attitude of the Catholic Church in Argentina toward the Jews. In the course of her inquiry she asks whether his philosophy represented the norm of the times among Argentina’s Catholic hierarchy, or whether it was a deviation. Was he accepted by Church circles, and if so, was he instrumental in shaping the attitude of the religious public toward the Jews? Or was he, perhaps, part of a small group of intellectuals whose extreme antisemitic stance made them pariahs? She reaches the conclusion that in the pervading atmosphere of the 1930s and 1940s, during which the main concern was maintaining Catholic cultural homogeneity, Wast’s writings and theories on the Jews articulated the views of highly reputed members of the Church establishment whose influence extended far beyond Argentina’s borders.

In 1930s’ and 1940s’ Colombia Jewish residents numbered fewer than 7,000 out of a total population of nearly 9 million. Notwithstanding, Thomas

J. Williford shows how antisemites believed that Jewish influence was all-pervasive and that some groups and institutions – such as liberal political parties, Masonic lodges, secular schools, leftist labor unions, and the free press – were organized or controlled internationally by the so-called Elders of Zion. During those years, militant politicians and clerics associated with the Conservative Party seized upon the rhetoric of the Protocols in order to depict the leaders of the ruling Liberal Party as linked insidiously to an international Jewish conspiracy, finding proof in the fact that many prominent Liberal politicians were also Freemasons. Certain Liberal policies, especially those that attempted to separate Church and state, were cited as further evidence of a Judeo-Masonic plot set on destroying the ageless Catholic traditions of the Colombian homeland (*patria*). Demonstrating how such inflammatory language combined with conspiracy theories provided a pretext for the assassinations and massacres of nearly 200,000 during the long civil conflict, *La Violencia* (1946–64), this study further corroborates Norman Cohn’s definition of the myth of a Jewish world conspiracy as a “warrant for genocide.”

The third section presents several case studies, including four groundbreaking essays on the Arab world, Turkey, and Iran, to further demonstrate the successful dissemination of the Protocols after World War II, in spite of the Holocaust and the grave consequences of their exploitation. The student protests and the “anti-Zionist” campaign in Łódź, the second largest city in Poland, known as the “March events” of 1968, serve Beate Kosmala as a test case for examining the prevalence of the Protocols and various Jewish conspiracies in Poland. She traces the roots of these notions to the early postwar years, when Łódź party activists published the first Polish reprint of the antisemitic *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, and intermittently exploited anti-Jewish agitation to advance their goals. The 1968 anti-Zionist campaign in Poland was aimed at an imagined anti-Polish plot concocted by “Zionism,” seen as a demonic organization with links around the globe. The masterminds were the modern “Elders of Zion” and their “fifth column” in Poland. She claims that this campaign was executed particularly aggressively and unscrupulously in Łódź, partly because ambitious Łódź party committee functionaries feared that they would have to abandon the fiction of a model proletarian city and renounce control; hence, they sought to prove to Party headquarters that they had reined in the city’s “red workers.”

Juliane Wetzel’s chapter, covering the contemporary period, explores the internet as a source of knowledge and its impact, especially on youth in Europe. Assuming that cyberspace continues to be a source of fascination for youth, she examines the content of internet sites and identifies them ideologically over a period of five years, from 2000, when the Second Intifada (low-intensity war launched by the Palestinians against the Israeli occupation) broke out, until 2005. Focusing in particular on Islamist and right-wing sites, she attempts to establish the relationship between the two ideological camps, while demonstrating how the Protocols were exploited by both for

their respective political goals. She also claims that their antisemitic thought patterns connect almost seamlessly into positions adopted by the radical left and by opponents of globalization, and points to the entanglement of young people in a web-like environment characterized by a self-perpetuating, enclosed view of the world, which is extremely difficult to penetrate.

Japan serves as a case study for David Goodman's chapter, which shows that this country has not been exempt from the penetration of conspiracy theories, including the Protocols. The Japanese also had their own indigenous conspiracy theory that held that a band of alien coreligionists was plotting to destroy them and take over their country. The anti-Christian polemics of the early and mid-nineteenth century bear a strong resemblance and served as precursors to the anti-Jewish theories of the Protocols during the early 1920s. Goodman briefly reviews the history of the Protocols in Japan, introduces several authors who have exploited the tract, and analyzes their prevalence in the country. Ever since the *New York Times* reported in 1987 that books claiming to reveal a global Jewish conspiracy had become best-sellers in Japan, there has been concern about the popularity of the Protocols there. Particularly disturbing has been the spread of suspicions about and animosity toward Jews – and, by extension, the State of Israel – in a non-western country with virtually no Jewish population or historical contact with Jews. Goodman offers explanations for this phenomenon and analyzes its implications.

Moving to the Middle East, Esther Webman's chapter focuses on Arab perceptions of the Protocols and their exploitation in the discourse on the Arab-Israeli conflict, Zionism, and Jews from the 1920s to 2006. It provides a comprehensive survey of Arab editions of the Protocols, as well as an analysis of the discussion that arose around them. Seen as an integral part of Jewish heritage, they were translated into Arabic a few years after their first appearance, and as in other countries, they continuously assumed new life, meaning, and relevance. Webman claims that their adoption and internalization prove that there were no linguistic or cultural barriers to their reception, despite the different political, cultural, and religious conditions of the new environment. Moreover, she shows that traditional historic perceptions of Muslim–Jewish relations were reconstructed and remolded according to the spirit of the text, presenting the Jewish people as a threat not only to Arabs and Muslims but to humanity at large.

Orly R. Rahimiyan explores the defining features of the Protocols as published in Iran, and reviews the historical context of each new edition and the manner in which they reflected important socio-political developments in the modern era. She also examines the Protocols in the Iranian media, and the reasons for their enthusiastic reception by Iranians, who perceived the tract as definite proof of a Jewish–Zionist plot to conquer the entire world and establish a global Jewish government. Finally, the chapter demonstrates the similarities between the Protocols and other forgeries disseminated in Iran, especially anti-Baha'i polemical works.

Rifat N. Bali examines the publication of the Protocols since the establishment of the Turkish state in 1923 and links the rise of Islamist power after 1945 to proliferation of the tract. Until the end of the war they were published only three times by sympathizers of the Nazis, whereas from 1946 until 2008, they were issued 102 times. Bali claims that the tract was not widely circulated in the early years of the republic because in their attempts to secularize the state and society, Atatürk and his colleagues severely repressed the Islamic movement. After World War II, the implementation of multiparty democracy became a springboard for the infusion of populism into politics, allowing the dissemination of the Protocols. Bali demonstrates that the publishing cycles of the Protocols are closely related to internal political developments in Turkey, on the one hand, and to the situation in the Middle East, on the other, and that their growth in popularity parallels the development of Islamism and extreme right politics in the country.

Goetz Nordbruch analyzes the works of ‘Abd al-Wahhab al-Masiri, a leading Egyptian expert on Jewish and Zionist affairs who wrote extensively on the Protocols, and belonged to a circle of Arab intellectuals concerned about the spread of conspiracy theories in the Arab world. The chapter focuses on Masiri’s analysis of the Protocols and their function within contemporary society. Masiri challenges the widespread belief in the authenticity of the tract, and rejects the notion of a group of Jews planning to take over the world or a conspiracy by which this control could be achieved. Nordbruch contends that Masiri tried to demystify the Protocols and to rationalize the ideas implied in them. His critique of the Protocols, however, is not intended to acquit Jews of being a source of evil; rather it is aimed at modifying public perceptions of society and re-directing public resistance and anger toward globalization and a generalized “West.” In his writings, he thus integrates his refutation of the Protocols into a critique of western society and globalization, and their influences on the Muslim world. What makes his theory particularly persuasive, according to Nordbruch, is that his analysis is articulated as part of a moderate Islamist worldview that is gaining increasing support.

The fourth and final section consists of three chapters that examine three attempts to bring the Protocols to court in order to refute them and ban their dissemination. Revisiting the Bern trials in light of the emergence of new material, Michael Hagemester contends that they left an ambivalent impression. On the one hand, the narrative employed by the plaintiffs in an attempt to uncover the origins of the Protocols was a dubious construction based on equally dubious witnesses, a fact of which at least some of those involved were aware. On the other, the overall aim: producing historical evidence of the forgery and a court ruling to confirm this, proved to be ineffective weapons in the battle to discredit the tract: the same narrative continues to be told. In the critically acclaimed book *The Plot: The Secret Story of The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (2005) – for which Umberto Eco wrote the introduction and which has been translated into numerous languages – the well-known Jewish cartoonist Will Eisner traces, in good faith, the “true history” of the

Protocols. It is the tale originally told by the “dubious witnesses, Catherine Radziwill, a Russian princess of Polish origin, and Alexandre du Chalya, a French count, and subsequently legitimized by the Bern trials.

Emphasizing the importance of international links among antisemites, the role of individuals, and local circumstances, Milton Shain’s examines both the so-called Greyshirt trial in 1934 and the World Conference against Racism, Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerances (WCAR), held in Durban under the auspices of the United Nations in 2001, and compares the two periods to determine the prevalence of a conspiratorial mindset in South Africa. In the first, the 1930s, the radical white right – more specifically the Afrikaner right and one of its extra-parliamentary movements, the Greyshirts – exerted a strong influence on antisemitic attitudes in society. Seventy years later, radical Muslims linked to global politics and developments in the Muslim world became the main torchbearers of hatred and accusations of conspiratorial Jewish behavior. While the 1930s were marked by economic crisis, political instability, the threat of bolshevism, and the rise of Nazism, events in Durban took place within the context of burgeoning Islamism, an increasingly radicalized South African Muslim community, failed Israeli–Palestinian negotiations, and the birth of a new democratic South Africa.

The last case is Luiz Nazario’s chronicle of the Siegfried Ellwanger Castan trial in Brazil, which began in the 1990s and continued into the twenty-first century. It highlights two key aspects: the new phenomenon of virtual racism that has replaced the publication of printed material by neo-Nazis in their attempt to spread their ideology throughout the world; and the intricacies of the struggle against antisemitism and racism. Castan, a Brazilian citizen of German descent and a senior partner at Editora Revisão (Revision Publishing Company) in Porto Alegre, has been publishing, selling, and distributing racist, antisemitic, and Holocaust-denying books nationally and internationally since the 1980s. The first lawsuit against him was filed in August 1990 by members of the Popular Anti-racism Movement, Mopar, composed of Jewish, black, and human rights activists. Nazario meticulously follows the various phases of the Castan trial, reflecting on the discourse accompanying it in Brazilian society. He contends not only that Ellwanger’s conviction is a first step toward the repression of crimes of racism but it will have an impact on the future of minorities in the country.

## Notes

- 1 Based partly on a lecture delivered by Wolfgang Benz, then head of the Zentrum für Antisemitismusforschung in Berlin, at the conference, “*The Protocols of the Elders of Zion – The One Hundred Year Myth and Its Impact*,” held at Tel Aviv University, October 2004.
- 2 *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* is a document, and, as such, we have italicized it when it appears in full and treated it in the singular. However, for ease of reading, and in order to accommodate its various meanings and permutations, we

- have frequently shortened and romanized it to “the Protocols,” accompanied by a plural verb.
- 3 See for example, Norman Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide: The Myth of the Jewish World-Conspiracy and The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (Ciico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981); Benjamin Segel, *Die Protokolle der Weisen von Zion Kritisch Beleuchtet: Eine Erledigung* (Berlin: Philo Verlag, 1924), translated by Richard S. Levy as *A Lie and a Libel: The History of The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (Lincoln/London: University of Nebraska Press, 1995); Stephen Eric Bronner, *A Rumor about the Jews: Reflections on Antisemitism and The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000); Cesare G. De Michelis, *The Non-Existent Manuscript: A Study of the Protocols of the Sages of Zion* (Lincoln/London: University of Nebraska Press, 2004); Hadassa Ben-Itto, *The Lie That Wouldn’t Die: The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (London/Portland, OR: Vallentine Mitchell, 2005).
  - 4 Richard S. Levy, “Introduction: The Political Career of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*,” in Segel, *A Lie and a Libel*, pp. 4–5.
  - 5 Pierre-André Taguieff, *Les Protocoles des Sages de Sion* (Paris: Berg International, 1992) (2 volumes), pp. 18–24.
  - 6 For a comprehensive account of the origins of the Protocols see, Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide*, pp. 60–148; Bronner, *A Rumor about the Jews*, pp. 71–128.
  - 7 For Nilus’ biography, see Michael Hagemester’s article in *Biographical-Bibliographical Church-Encyclopedia*, vol. 21 (Nordhausen: Verlag Traugott Bautz, 2003), pp. 1063–67, available at [http://www.bautz.de/bbkl/n/nilus\\_s\\_a.shtml](http://www.bautz.de/bbkl/n/nilus_s_a.shtml). For a shorter version, see Michael Hagemester, “Nilus, Sergei,” in *Antisemitism: A Historical Encyclopedia of Prejudice and Persecution*, ed. Richard E. Levy, vol. 2 (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-Clio Inc., 2005), pp. 508–10. In the summer of 1903 a series of articles was published in an obscure right-wing newspaper in St. Petersburg and served as the basis of Nilus’ book. “Program for World Conquest by the Jews” [in Russian], *The Banner*, no. 190 (August 28–September 10, 1903); no. 200 (September 7–20, 1903).
  - 8 “‘The Jewish Peril’: A Disturbing Pamphlet. Call for Inquiry,” *The Times*, 8 May 1920; *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*, translated from Sergei A. Nilus’ Russian version by Victor E. Marsden (London: Britons Publishing Society, 1920).
  - 9 Henry Ford, Sr., *The International Jew: The World’s Foremost Problem* (Dearborn, MI: Dearborn, 1920).
  - 10 Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide*, pp. 126–48.
  - 11 Quoted in Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973), p. 360.
  - 12 See also Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide*, pp. 169–215.
  - 13 *Ibid.*, p. 169.
  - 14 *Ibid.*, pp. 158–9; Robert Rockaway, “Henry Ford – No. 1 Antisemite in the US” [in Hebrew], *Kesher*, no. 33 (May 2003), pp. 61–5; Hadassa Ben-Itto, “The Lie That Wouldn’t Die,” *Justice*, no. 34 (Winter 2002), p. 32.
  - 15 Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (France: Editions de Seuil, 1957).
  - 16 Marouf Hasian Jr., “Understanding the Power of Conspiratorial Rhetoric: A Case Study of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion,” *Communications Studies* 48, no. 3 (Fall 1997), pp. 195–214, available at <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=34656496&Fmt=3&clientId=11916&RQT=309&VName=PQD>.
  - 17 [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/cConspiracy\\_theory](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/cConspiracy_theory).
  - 18 Clare Birchall, *Knowledge Goes Pop: From Conspiracy Theory to Gossip* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2006), p. 34.
  - 19 Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics* (New York: Knopf, 1965), p. 29.

- 22 E. Webman
- 20 Seymour Martin Lipset and Earl Raab, *The Politics of Unreason: Right-Wing Extremism in America, 1790–1970* (New York/London: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1970), pp. 14–15.
- 21 Peter Knight, *Conspiracy Culture: From the Kennedy Assassination to the X-Files* (London/New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 9.
- 22 Daniel Pipes, *Conspiracy: How the Paranoid Style Flourishes and Where it Comes From* (New York: Free Press, 1997), p. 1.
- 23 Pipes, *Conspiracy*, pp. 42–8.
- 24 Michael Barkun, *A Culture of Conspiracy: Apocalyptic Visions in Contemporary America* (Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004), p. 3.
- 25 *Ibid.*, p. 178.
- 26 Chip Berlet, “Protocols to the Left, Protocols to the Right: Conspiracism in American Political Discourse at the Turn of the Second Millennium,” a lecture delivered at the conference “Reconsidering ‘The Protocols of the Elders of Zion’ – 100 Years after the Forgery,” held at Boston University, October 30–31, 2005, [http://www.publiceye.org/conspire/paradigm/protocols-2005\\_d\\_files/slided0129.html](http://www.publiceye.org/conspire/paradigm/protocols-2005_d_files/slided0129.html).
- 27 Barkun, *A Culture of Conspiracy*, p. 6.
- 28 Pipes, *Conspiracy*, p. 21.
- 29 See Bronner, *A Rumor about the Jews*, p. 141; Birchall, *Knowledge Goes Pop*, p. 34; Hasian, “Understanding the Power of Conspiratorial Rhetoric”; Naomi Wolf, “A Conspiracy So Immense,” *Guatemala News*, October 30, 2008, [www.guatemalaitimes.com/opinion/syndicated/the-next-wave/483-a-conspiracy](http://www.guatemalaitimes.com/opinion/syndicated/the-next-wave/483-a-conspiracy).
- 30 Interview with Michael Barkun by Chip Berlet, September 2004, [http://www.publiceye.org/antisemitism/nw\\_barkun.html](http://www.publiceye.org/antisemitism/nw_barkun.html), accessed August 2010.
- 31 Cédric Vincent, “Mapping the Invisible: Notes on the Reason of Conspiracy Theories,” *Sarai Reader 2006: Turbulence*, p. 45, available at [www.sarai.net/publications/readers/06-turbulence/06\\_vincent.pdf](http://www.sarai.net/publications/readers/06-turbulence/06_vincent.pdf).
- 32 Yaacov Schul, “Why Do Stereotypes Stick?” in *Demonizing the Other: Antisemitism, Racism, and Xenophobia*, ed. Robert S. Wistrich (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1999), p. 34.
- 33 Daniel Pipes, Review of Michael Barkun, *A Culture of Conspiracy: Apocalyptic Visions in Contemporary America* (University of California Press, 2004), *New York Sun*, January 13, 2004; Levy, Introduction, *Antisemitism: A Historical Encyclopedia of Prejudice and Persecution*, vol. 2 (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-Clio, 2005), p. 6.
- 34 George E. Marcus, ed., *Paranoia within Reason: A Casebook on Conspiracy as Explanation* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1999), pp. 2–3.
- 35 *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, July 19, 2009; Knight, *Conspiracy Culture*, p. 118. See also Shankar Vedantam, *The Washington Post*, June 5, 2006, <http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/washingtonpost/access/1048465121.html?FMT=ABS&F>.
- 36 Peter Katel, “Conspiracy Theories. Do They Threaten Democracy?” *CQ Researcher* 19, no. 37 (October 23, 2009), p. 888, available at [www.cqresearcher.com](http://www.cqresearcher.com). See also Knight, *Conspiracy Culture*, p. 7.
- 37 Vincent, “Mapping the Invisible” p. 42; Pipes, *Conspiracy*, pp. 121–2.
- 38 Levy, Introduction, *Antisemitism: A Historical Encyclopedia*, p. 6.
- 39 Mark Fenster, *Conspiracy Theories: Secrecy and Power in American Culture* (Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), p. 222.
- 40 Bronner, *A Rumor about the Jews*, p. 3.
- 41 Levy, Introduction, *Antisemitism: A Historical Encyclopedia*, p. 4.
- 42 Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide*, p. 22; Taguieff, *Les Protocols*, pp. 32–3; Daniel Pipes, *The Hidden Hand: Middle East Fears of Conspiracy* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1996), p. 133.
- 43 Bronner, *A Rumor about the Jews*, p. 141.
- 44 Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide*, p. 23.

- 45 See a broad discussion on conspiracy theories in the Arab world in *Arab Insight*, no. 2 (Summer 2008), [www.arabinsight.org](http://www.arabinsight.org).
- 46 Lipset and Raab, *The Politics of Unreason*, p. 16.
- 47 Cohn, Warrant for Genocide, p. 24.
- 48 Pipes, *Conspiracy*, pp. 151–3.
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- 64 Wistrich, “The Devil, the Jews, and Hatred of the ‘Other’,” p. 9f.