

### III

#### THE MYSTERY OF THE PROTOCOLS

FIRST of all, then, what do we actually know about the origin of these protocols? In the year 1903 a book was published at Solotarevo in Russia, entitled *The Great in Little*. The reputed author of the book was one Prof. Sergei Nilus, concerning whom we have no absolutely reliable information. Author of a book which has made an enormous sensation in many lands and become the subject of furious controversy, he is quite unknown. No responsible person in or out of Russia has ever positively identified Nilus, so far as I have been able to discover. From what he says of himself it is practically certain that he was in the service of the infamous Secret Police Agency of the late Tsar Nicholas II. For reasons

#### THE MYSTERY OF THE PROTOCOLS

which will presently appear, I am disposed to believe that the very un-Russian name Nilus is really a pseudonym.

In a second edition of his book, published in 1905, Nilus gives a brief autobiographical account of himself. He says that he was born in 1862 of Russian parents who held liberal opinions, and that his family was well known in Moscow, its members being educated people who were firm in their allegiance to the Tsar and the Greek Church. This is hardly what a Russian of the period would describe as holding "liberal opinions," but let that pass. Nilus claims to have been graduated from Moscow University and to have held a number of civil-service posts, all of them, so far as his specifications go, connected with the police and judicial systems. He went to the government of Orel, where he became a landowner and a sort of petty noble. He entered the Troitsky-Sergevsky Monastery, near Moscow, or so he says. Although numerous efforts have been made

## THE JEW AND AMERICAN IDEALS

in Russia to find this Sergei Nilus, none has succeeded.

It is true that a number of persons have testified to the existence of Sergei Nilus, but in each case a different person has been referred to, though Nilus is not a Russian name or commonly found in Russia. The present writer learned of two men, father and son, each bearing this very unusual name. First information led to the belief that at last the mysterious author had been discovered. The father was of about the right age and was said to be a writer interested in religious subjects. Further inquiry elicited the information that this man had died in 1910, whereas the Nilus we are interested in was alive as late as 1917. Greatly enlarged editions of his work, with new personal matter added, appeared in 1911 and 1917. Obviously, therefore, the man who died in 1910 was not our author. The anonymous editor of an edition of the protocols issued in New York toward the end of 1920 says that "a returning traveler

## THE MYSTERY OF THE PROTOCOLS

from Siberia in August, 1919, was positive that Nilus was in Irkutsk in June of that year." No clew is given to the identity of the editor who makes this statement. And here let me remark in passing that it is a remarkable fact that *all* the editors of the numerous editions of the protocols, both here and abroad, are very shy persons and hide under the mask of anonymity. Nor is any clew given to the identity of the traveler from Siberia. Another report, also by a traveler returned from Siberia, who may possibly be the same person, makes it appear that the Nilus who was at Irkutsk is the son of the man who died in 1910, and is himself too young to fit the autobiographical sketch of the man born in 1862. I can only add to the foregoing, which represents all that I have been able to find out about Nilus, that there was an edition of the protocols published in Kishinev in 1906, the name of the author of the book in which they appeared being given as Butmi de Katzman.

## THE JEW AND AMERICAN IDEALS

Now with respect to the protocols. No reference to these documents appeared in the first edition of the book in 1903. If the reader will kindly bear this fact in mind it will help to an understanding of what follows. A second edition of the book, greatly enlarged, appeared at Tsarskoye-Selo, near Moscow, in 1905, the added matter being given the title, "Antichrist a Near Political Possibility." This additional matter consisted of (1) an introduction written by Nilus himself, (2) twenty-four documents purporting to be disconnected portions of the report of a secret conclave of an organization of Jews called the Elders of Zion, and (3) some commentaries thereon by Nilus. Now, it is very significant that Nilus himself has given different accounts of the history of these documents—accounts which differ so radically that they cannot be reconciled.

Let us examine these various accounts very briefly. In the introduction to the edition of 1905 Nilus tells us that in 1901

## THE MYSTERY OF THE PROTOCOLS

he came into possession of the alleged protocols. He says that at the close of a series of secret meetings of influential leaders of this conspiracy, held under Masonic auspices, a woman stole from "one of the most influential and most highly initiated leaders of Freemasonry" certain documents which turned out to be disconnected portions of the *procès-verbaux* of lectures or reports made at the aforesaid meetings of the Elders of Zion. He says that the protocols were "signed by representatives of Zion of the Thirty-third Degree," but he does not give the names of such signatories. This is of itself a suspicious circumstance, but a close reading of the text reveals that it is only one of several equally suspicious facts. Nilus does not claim to have seen the actual stolen documents, the original protocols. On the contrary, he tells us that what he received in 1901 was a document which he was assured was an accurate translation of the stolen documents. His own words are: "This document came into my possession

## THE JEW AND AMERICAN IDEALS

some four years ago (1901) with the positive assurance that it is a true copy in translation of original documents stolen by a woman from one of the most influential and the most highly initiated leaders of Freemasonry." Nilus has not seen the original manuscript, nor has any other known person. We have only the word of Professor Nilus that somebody gave him assurance that certain manuscripts were true and accurate translations of stolen documents of great international importance. So far as Nilus himself knew, or cared, apparently, the manuscript given to him might well have been a forgery.

We do not even know the date of the alleged secret meetings of the Elders of Zion at which the lectures or reports, or whatever they were, recorded in these protocols were made and, presumably, considered. We do not know the name of the "most influential and most highly initiated" leader of Freemasonry from whom the documents were said to have been stolen.

## THE MYSTERY OF THE PROTOCOLS

Neither do we know the name of the thief. We do not know the name of the author of the alleged protocols, though obviously it would make all the difference in the world whether these are summaries of statements made by a responsible leader of the Jewish people or the wild vaporings of such a crank as infests practically every conference and convention. We do not know who translated the alleged protocols, nor in what language they were written. Moreover, not one word of assurance does Professor Nilus give on his own account that he knows any of these things. He does not appear to have made any investigation of any kind. In view of the rest of his work we may be quite sure that had he done so he would have told us. He does not even tell us, in this edition of 1905, that the person from whom he acquired the "translation" was known to him as a reliable and trustworthy person. He does not profess to know anything more than I have already quoted from him. No one knows Nilus

## THE JEW AND AMERICAN IDEALS

himself. So much for the explanation of 1905.

Before I pass on to consider a later and different explanation made by the mysterious Nilus, a few brief observations upon the story now before us may not be out of place, especially since the *Dearborn Independent* has accepted it and made it the basis of its propaganda. How is it possible for any person possessing anything approaching a trained mind, and especially for one accustomed to historical study, to accept as authentic, and without adequate corroboration, documents whose origin and history are so clouded with secrecy, mystery, and ignorance? And how can men and women who are to all appearances rational and high-minded bring themselves to indict and condemn a whole race, invoking thereby the perils of world-wide racial conflict, upon the basis of such flimsy, clouded, and tainted testimony? No decent and self-respecting judge or jury anywhere in the United States would, I dare believe, convict the

## THE MYSTERY OF THE PROTOCOLS

humblest individual of even petty crime upon the basis of such testimony. Serious charges made by a complainant who does not appear in court and is not known to the court, an alleged translation of an alleged original, not produced in court, alleged to have been stolen by an anonymous thief not produced in court, from an alleged conspirator not named nor produced in court, and not a scintilla of corroborative evidence, direct or circumstantial—was ever a chain of evidence so flimsy? By comparison, the discovery of the *Book of Mormon* is a well-attested event.

Now let us consider another very different story told by Nilus. In January, 1917—the date is important—another edition of the book, so greatly enlarged and rewritten as to be almost a new book, appeared in Russia bearing the name of the mysterious and unknown Nilus. The title of this book is *It Is Near, at the Door*. It was published at Sergeiev, near Moscow, at the Monastery of Sergeiev. I have said that the date of the

## THE JEW AND AMERICAN IDEALS

appearance of this volume is important, and here is the reason: The overthrow of tsarism occurred in March, 1917. Toward the end of 1916 the revolutionary ferment was already apparent. What else could be expected than that the provocative agents of the Tsar's Secret Police and the Black Hundreds should strive to divert the attention of the people to some other issue? And what more natural than that they should conclude that a widespread movement against the Jews, great pogroms over a wide area, would best suit their purpose? The first publication of the alleged protocols took place in 1905, also at the beginning of a popular revolution, and it did have the effect of creating a considerable anti-Jewish agitation which weakened the revolutionary movement. The trail of the Secret Police and the Black Hundreds is plain. And now for the new version of the history of the protocols. On page 96 of this new book, which is a violent diatribe against the Jews, Nilus says:

## THE MYSTERY OF THE PROTOCOLS

In 1901 I came into possession of a manuscript, and this comparatively small book was destined to cause such a deep change in my entire viewpoint as can only be caused in the heart of man by Divine Power. It was comparable with the miracle of making the blind see. "May Divine acts show on him."

This manuscript was called, "The Protocols of the Zionist Men of Wisdom," and it was given to me by the now deceased leader of the Tshernigov nobility, who later became Vice-Governor of Stavropol, Alexis Nicholaievich Sukhotin. I had already begun to work with my pen for the glory of the Lord, and I was friendly with Sukhotin because he was a man of my opinion—*i.e.*, extremely conservative, as they are now termed.

Sukhotin told me that he in turn had obtained the manuscript from a lady who always lived abroad. This lady was a noblewoman from Tshernigov. He mentioned her by name, but I have forgotten it. He said that she obtained it in some mysterious way, by theft, I believe. Sukhotin also said that one copy of the manuscript was given by this lady to Sipiagin, then Minister of the Interior, upon her return from abroad, and that Sipiagin was subsequently killed. He said other things of the same mysterious character. But when I first became acquainted with the contents of the manuscript I was convinced that its terrible, cruel, and straightforward truth is witness of its true origin from the "Zionist Men of Wisdom," and that *no other evidence of its origin would be needed.*

## THE JEW AND AMERICAN IDEALS

Is it necessary, I wonder, to waste words in exposing this pious fraud? His own statement comes pretty close to convicting him of being, as I have suggested above, a hireling of the Secret Police, an *agent provocateur*. Sukhotin, from whom he now claims to have received the manuscript, was a notorious anti-Semite and a despot of the worst type. Sipiagin, to whom, it is alleged, the manuscript had been previously given, was also a bitter anti-Semite and one of the most infamous of Russian bureaucrats. He was notoriously corrupt and unspeakably cruel while he was Minister of the Interior. He was assassinated by Stephen Balmashev, in March, 1920. Even if we credit this revised version of the way in which he came into possession of the manuscript, Nilus is closely identified with the secret agencies of the old regime. Let us take note, however, of other peculiarities of the canting hypocrite, Nilus. He names Sukhotin and Sipiagin only after they are dead and denial by them is impossible; he has "forgotten" the

## THE MYSTERY OF THE PROTOCOLS

name of the "noblewoman from Tshernigov," the person alleged to have stolen the original documents; he suggests that the documents need no other evidence than their own contents. Truly, a very typical criminal is the mysterious, elusive, unknown "Prof. Sergei Nilus"!

Now let me call attention to two other very interesting facts in connection with this story of 1917. The first is that Nilus omits the very important statement made in the edition of 1905 that the alleged protocols were "signed by representatives of Zion of the Thirty-third Degree," without offering the slightest explanation of that most important omission. The second fact is even more conclusive as evidence of the man's absolute untrustworthiness. Having told us in the edition of 1905 that the friend who gave him the protocols assured him that they had been "stolen by a woman," and in 1917 that it was Nicholaievich Sukhotin from whom he received the documents, who not only told him that they had been stolen

## THE JEW AND AMERICAN IDEALS

by a woman, but told him also the name of the thief (which he has forgotten, unfortunately), he proceeds, in the Epilogue of the 1917 edition, to tell a very different story. He says in this Epilogue that the protocols "were stealthily removed from a large book of notes on lectures. *My friend* found them in the safe of the headquarters offices of the Society of Zion, which is situated at present in Paris."

Was ever perjurer more confused? First we have an unknown woman stealing the documents from "one of the most highly initiated leaders of Freemasonry"; next, we have a "noblewoman of Tshernigov" as the thief and Sukhotin as the intermediary through whose hands they reached his friend Nilus. Now, finally, Nilus says that his friend—*i.e.*, *Sukhotin*—was the thief, and not a woman at all! Instead of being stolen from the person of "one of the most highly initiated leaders of Freemasonry," they are "found" in a safe in Paris! The woman has disappeared; the highly initiated Free-

## THE MYSTERY OF THE PROTOCOLS

mason has disappeared. Now it is Sukhotin who is identified as the thief, and he is pointed out as having robbed a safe in Paris. So much for the perjury of Nilus. I may add that I am assured—though I cannot vouch for the statement—that Sukhotin was not outside of Russia between 1890 and 1905.

But it may be argued, as it has been argued in the *Dearborn Independent*—following the suggestion of Nilus—that the authenticity of the protocols, and the reality and seriousness of the Jewish conspiracy, are sufficiently demonstrated by internal evidence. I confess that I do not find in the documents any reason for reaching such a conclusion, though I have studied them with all the patience and care I could command, and have read the principal arguments made in their defense. I find not a scrap of evidence to show that there exists, or ever has existed, such a body of men as "The Elders of Zion," or "The Men of Wisdom of Zion," or any similar secret body



## THE JEW AND AMERICAN IDEALS

of Jews. *That such a secret conspiratory body exists has been charged from time to time during more than a century, yet not a particle of evidence to sustain the charge has ever been produced.* I am quite well aware of the capacity of the human mind to believe whatever accords with preconceived prejudices, suspicions, or impressions, even in the face of evidence to the contrary, and, correspondingly, to reject the most conclusive evidence when it runs counter to such prejudices, suspicions, or impressions. Laying upon my own mind the warning implied by this knowledge, and guarding myself against the danger of rejecting, or ignoring, or undervaluing unpleasant and unwelcome facts, I am bound to say that those who find in these alleged protocols a sufficient basis for bringing the Jewish race under indictment seem to me to have brought preconceived suspicion and fear of the Jew to their study of the documents themselves. Personally, I can find nothing in them which suggests any highly organized intelligence,

## THE MYSTERY OF THE PROTOCOLS

such as the leaders of the Jewish race represent and command in abundance; rather, they seem to me to clearly indicate the disordered mind and distorted vision of a very common type of monomaniac, the genus "crank."

I believe that historical study is not one of Mr. Ford's strong points, but, even so, he must be aware of the fact that it is one of the commonest things in history to encounter charges of conspiracy directed against religious and political sects, supported by more or less plausible arguments and believed by considerable numbers of people. Were it necessary to my purpose, and did time permit, I could quite easily fill a considerable volume with illustrations of this fact. For example, there exists a great literature devoted to the object of proving that the Vatican is the headquarters of such a conspiracy to bring about or to attain world domination. Thousands of books and pamphlets have been written to convict the Jesuits of such a conspiracy, many of

## THE JEW AND AMERICAN IDEALS

them far more convincing than these protocols. Pamphlets aiming to convince the American people that the Knights of Columbus is an organization aiming at the overthrow of the American Republic and the establishment of the temporal sovereignty of the Pope over the United States have been circulated by the million. It is a matter of court record that this charge has been supported by the publication of what purported to be exact copies of oaths pledging the members of that organization to the end stated. Let me say at once that I do not credit these sensational stories and charges. I have confined myself to charges made against one of the two great sections of Christianity for reasons which seem to me peculiarly cogent. The charges made against the Jews have produced the most terrible results in the countries where the Roman Catholic Church is strongest, and no leader of the Christian religion has such strong reason for denouncing such appeals to prejudice and hatred as the head of that Church.

## THE MYSTERY OF THE PROTOCOLS

Belief in widespread conspiracies directed against individuals or the state is probably the commonest form assumed by the human mind when it loses its balance and its sense of proportion. I venture to hazard the opinion that of all the cranks who have pestered Mr. Ford since he has attained a conspicuous position, those who imagined themselves to be the victims of conspiracies have outnumbered all the others. These protocols are either preposterous forgeries deliberately wrought for the purpose of fostering anti-Semitism in Russia, or they are the pitiable ravings of a familiar type of monomaniac.

Concerning the authorship of the protocols, there has been much conjecture, especially on the part of those who have seriously regarded them as an authentic expression of Jewish opinion. It has been whispered in those places where the so-called Jewish question is discussed, that they are the work of the well-known Zionist leader, Dr. Theodor Herzl. This is the theory which Nilus him-

## THE JEW AND AMERICAN IDEALS

self advances in the introduction to the edition of 1917. He says:

. . . my book has already reached the fourth edition, but it is only definitely known to me now and in a manner worthy of belief, and that through Jewish sources, that these protocols are nothing other than the strategic plans for the conquest of the world under the heel of Israel, and worked out by the leaders of the Jewish people . . . and read to the Councils of Elders by the "Prince of Exile," Theodor Herzl, during the first Zionist Congress, summoned by him in August, 1897, in Basle.

This is the first time Nilus has so much as hinted at the date of the alleged secret conclave of the Elders of Zion, at the close of which, according to the story of 1905 so elaborately contradicted in 1917, the protocols were stolen by a woman. It is perhaps as well to remark in passing that the first Zionist Congress was held in the open and its proceedings freely reported in the press. Now, Herzl stands among the foremost of the intellectual Jews of modern times. All his known work is characterized by clear, clean-cut reasoning and direct and forceful

## THE MYSTERY OF THE PROTOCOLS

statement. All his known writings are characterized by these qualities. Whatever we may think about Zionism, it must be admitted that the great Austrian journalist and critic never lacked the courage of his convictions, as may be seen by anybody who will take the trouble to read his writings or the evidence delivered by him before the British Royal Commission on Alien Immigration, in 1902. If Herzl wrote these documents he adopted the disguise of the style and method of a much inferior mentality.

Unless we are to believe that he deliberately adopted a style of writing and method of reasoning entirely unfamiliar and unlike his publicly acknowledged work, for the express purpose of hiding his authorship of the protocols—which, if we credit the story that they were presented to a secret conference of the leaders of the alleged conspiracy, is an impossible hypothesis—we are warranted in saying that, whoever wrote them, it was not Theodor Herzl. It would be as reasonable to ascribe a Walt Whitman

## THE JEW AND AMERICAN IDEALS

chant to Emerson, or a Bernard Shaw satire to Jonathan Edwards, as to ascribe these crude, meandering pages to the crystalline intellect of Theodor Herzl. I do not find in them any suggestion of the trained mind of a scholar and writer of Herzl's attainments; rather, they seem to me to belong in about the same intellectual category as the ordinary propaganda literature of the numerous sects, ancient and modern, based upon peculiar interpretations of Biblical prophecies. Since the outbreak of the World War in 1914, and throughout the whole chapter of revolutionary events following thereupon, there has been a steady flood of such literature. Even the much-discussed forecast of Bolshevism does not in any material respect differ from many similar "prophecies" that have appeared in recent years.

It cannot be denied that Bolshevism actually conforms in a notable degree to the specifications contained in the protocols, which I have already summarized in the preceding chapter. Shall we, then, conclude

## THE MYSTERY OF THE PROTOCOLS

that the charge is proven and declare the case closed, or is it necessary to examine the evidence further and more critically? I think that a very brief period of honest reflection will convince any fair-minded and intelligent person of the injustice of the rendering of a verdict holding the Jews responsible for Bolshevism upon the basis of such evidence. Let me direct the attention of my readers to a coincidence of dates which once more directs suspicion against Prof. Sergei Nilus and against the alleged stolen protocols. I have already pointed out that in 1903, in the first edition of his book, Nilus did not use the alleged protocols, though he claims that they had been in his possession for two years prior to that time. That this is a suspicious circumstance will, I think, be readily conceded by the open-minded. In 1903 the Russian Social Democratic party was split into two factions, and the word "Bolshevism" came into use as the designation of the policy of one of these factions. In 1905 the first Russian revolution took

## THE JEW AND AMERICAN IDEALS

place. In the period between the split in the Social Democratic party in 1903 and the outbreak of the revolution in 1905 the leaders of the Bolsheviki had been active in formulating and propagating their theoretical and political views. During the revolution a sharp conflict occurred between the Bolsheviki and other factions of the Russian Socialist movement, and the Socialist press gave much space to the controversy.

It will be seen from this brief historical sketch that when Nilus published a second edition of his book, late in 1905, he could find in the Russian Socialist press all the materials for such a general description of Bolshevism as that contained in the protocols. Of course, if we believe that the documents are genuine, that they are authentic translations of documents actually stolen in 1896, delivered to Nilus in 1901, and by him first made public in 1905, we have simply a coincidence of dates. I submit, however, that there is not a shred of credible evidence that the documents were so obtained by

## THE MYSTERY OF THE PROTOCOLS

Nilus, or that they existed in 1896, 1901, 1903, or at any date earlier than 1905, the year of their first publication. I submit, furthermore, that it is highly probable that the passages in the alleged protocols which are now hailed as conclusive evidence that the Bolshevik policy had been formulated as early as 1896, were in reality written after 1903 and in the light of already published accounts of Bolshevik theories and tactics. There is not a thing that we know about these documents and their history which does not point directly to the conclusion that they are forgeries.

When I was in London in October, 1920, an English journalist of distinction, well known and influential on both sides of the Atlantic, with great earnestness and evident conviction sought to impress me with the serious importance of these alleged *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. He was quite convinced that the documents were genuine, and that they proved beyond reasonable doubt the existence of a world-wide Jewish conspiracy.

## THE JEW AND AMERICAN IDEALS

With great solemnity and manifest sincerity he sought to enlist my co-operation in defense of what he called "Anglo-Saxon civilization," which he seemed to regard as synonymous with Christian civilization. He was quite astonished when I directed his attention to the fact that a well-known French writer, Louis Martin, had published, as far back as 1895, a book in which he attempted to prove the existence of such a world-wide Jewish conspiracy. My friend honestly believed that the existence of this conspiracy had never been known or suspected prior to the publication of the work of the mysterious Sergei Nilus. He was still more surprised when I told him that in his book, *L'Anglais Est-Il un Juif?*, Martin had attempted to prove that the English people are part of the Jewish race, and that the British government is the principal directing power of the conspiracy; so that the world-wide Jewish conspiracy must, according to Martin, be understood as a secret compact between the British govern-

## THE MYSTERY OF THE PROTOCOLS

ment, as a Jewish organization, and the leaders of Jewry in all other lands. Thus is the theory of a world-wide Jewish conspiracy reduced to absurdity. I confess that at that time I was not aware that in the original Russian of the 1905 edition of the work of Nilus this absurd theory of Martin had been reproduced, but carefully omitted from every English translation published in this country and in England. The reason for the omission is obvious; had the passage been given it would have made a laughing-stock of the protocols. I submit, however, that the omission of such an important passage from the text of Nilus without any reference to or explanation of the liberty taken with the text, places those responsible for the several translations in a very unfavorable light.

In closing this chapter it is perhaps well that some record should be made of the sinister use which was made of these alleged protocols during the World War. Not long after the United States had begun active

## THE JEW AND AMERICAN IDEALS

participation in the war against Germany, it came to my attention that typewritten manuscripts purporting to prove that the war was part of a great conspiracy of international Jews were being circulated. On at least three different occasions, early in 1918, I was asked about this charge. I was told then that the British and American governments were in a special sense the agents of this Jewish conspiracy. In July, 1918, in Paris, a fuller account of the documents was given to me by a loyal Socialist, to whom they had been shown. There was not then, as there is not now, the slightest doubt in my mind that the pro-German propagandists resorted to this trick in order to weaken the morale of the principal Allied nations.