

## CHAPTER IV

# Secret Police and Occultists

### 1

AFTER Hitler came to power in Germany the *Protocols* were promoted and distributed throughout the world both by German Nazi associations and by Nazi sympathizers in other countries. A vigorous response to this provocation came from the Jewish communities of Switzerland, which brought an action against the leadership of the Nazi organization in Switzerland and against certain individual Nazis. The charge was of publishing and distributing improper literature; but the case, which was heard in Berne partly in October 1934 and partly in May 1935, became in effect an inquiry into the authenticity or spuriousness of the *Protocols*. Incredible as it may seem nowadays, this inquiry attracted world-wide attention and was covered by journalists from all parts of the world.

Much of the interest of the proceedings at Berne lies in the light which they threw upon the activities of the tsarist secret police – the Okhrana – and their possible connexion with the *Protocols*.<sup>1</sup> The plaintiffs called as witnesses several Russian émigrés of liberal views. One of these was Professor Sergey Svatikov, a former Social-Democrat of the Menshevik wing. Under the Provisional Government which ruled Russia during the six months between the Tsar's abdication and the Bolshevik

<sup>1</sup> The Okhrana was founded by imperial decree after the assassination of Alexander II in 1881, for the 'protection of public security and order'. ('Okhrana' means 'protection' in Russian.) Previously the chief organ of the secret police had been the Third Section of the Imperial Chancellery, which was founded after the Decembrist revolt of 1825. The Okhrana had branches in all the principal towns of Russia, as well as a foreign service centred on Paris. Like the rest of the police forces, the Okhrana was subordinate to the Minister of the Interior.

revolution in 1917, Svatikov was sent to Paris to dissolve the foreign branch of the Russian secret police, which had its headquarters there. One of the agents he interviewed was Henri Bint, a Frenchman of Alsatian origin who had been in the service of the Russians ever since 1880. According to Bint, the *Protocols* had been concocted on instructions from the head of his organization, Pyotr Ivanovich Rachkovsky. Another witness, the celebrated journalist Vladimir Burtsev, gave evidence pointing in the same direction. He claimed to have been told by two former directors of the Department of Police, Lopukhin and Beletsky, that Rachkovsky was involved in the fabrication of the *Protocols*.<sup>1</sup>

A great deal is in fact known about Rachkovsky, the sinister and gifted head of the Okhrana outside Russia. 'If ever you meet him in society,' wrote a Frenchman who knew him, 'I very much doubt whether you will feel the slightest misgivings about him, for nothing in his appearance reveals his sinister function. Fat, restless, always with a smile on his lips . . . he looks more like some genial, jolly fellow on a spree. . . . He has one rather noticeable weakness – that he is passionately fond of our little Parisiennes – but he is the most skilful operator to be found in the ten capitals of Europe.'<sup>2</sup> A Russian compatriot gave his impression in equally striking terms: 'His slightly too ingratiating manner and his suave way of speaking – which made one think of a great feline carefully concealing its claws – only dimmed for a moment my clear perception of what was fundamental in this man – his subtle intelligence, his firm will, his profound devotion . . . to the interests of imperial Russia.'<sup>3</sup>

Rachkovsky started life as a minor civil servant, and he even cultivated relations with students of more or less revolu-

<sup>1</sup> Mimeographed copies were made of the verbatim report of the proceedings at Berne, under the title *Stenographisches Protokoll der Verhandlungen . . . vor Richteramt V von Bern in Sachen Schweizerischer Israelitischer Gemeindegemeinschaft und Israelitische Kultusgemeinde Bern gegen die Gauleitung des Bundes National-Sozialistischer Eidgenossen sowie gegen Unbekannte*. A copy is available in the Wiener Library, London. Svatikov's and Burtsev's evidence are items iii and iv.

<sup>2</sup> Papus, in *Echo de Paris*, issue of 27 October 1901.

<sup>3</sup> de Taube, *La Politique russe d'avant-guerre et la fin de l'Empire des sars (1904-1917)*, Paris, 1928, p. 26.

tionary leanings. The turning-point in his career came in 1879, when he was arrested by the secret police and charged with activities prejudicial to the safety of the state. An attempt had been made on the life of the Adjutant-General Drentel; and although Rachkovsky was merely a friend of a man who was accused of sheltering the would-be assassin, this was sufficient to land him in the hands of the Third Section of the Imperial Chancellery – the future Okhrana. As so often happened in such circumstances, Rachkovsky found himself faced with the alternative of banishment to Siberia or else of a lucrative career in the secret police itself. He chose the latter course, and it led him to a position of great power.

By 1881 Rachkovsky was active in the right-wing organization, the Holy Druzhina, an early attempt at what was later to become the Union of the Russian People. In 1883 he was adjutant to the head of the security services at St Petersburg. The following year he was in Paris, in charge of the operations of the entire secret police outside Russia. In this position he was brilliantly successful, and he retained it for eighteen years (1884–1902). He organized a network of agencies in France and Switzerland, London and Berlin; as a result he was able to keep a close check on the activities of Russian revolutionaries and terrorists, not only abroad but in Russia itself. Soon he was revealing an extraordinary talent for intrigue. In 1886 his agents – Henri Bint among them – blew up the printing works of the Russian revolutionary group Narodnaya Volya (The People's Will) in Geneva – and at the same time made it look as if this was the work of traitors among the revolutionaries themselves. In 1890 he 'unmasked' an organization which was supposed to be manufacturing in Paris, bombs to be used for assassinations in Russia. In Russia itself the Okhrana was able, as a result of this *coup*, to arrest no less than sixty-three terrorists. It was only nineteen years later that the journalist Burtsev – the same who was to give evidence before the court at Berne – discovered and revealed the truth about this affair: that the bombs had been planted by Rachkovsky's men, acting on Rachkovsky's instructions.

The 1890s were the time when bombs were being made – and thrown – in western Europe as well as in Russia; it was the golden age of the anarchists and 'nihilists'. In 1893 Vaillant

threw his rather harmless bomb, full of nails, into the French Chamber of Deputies; in 1894 a whole series of much more dangerous bombs were thrown at Liège. It is certain that Rachkovsky deliberately provoked and organized the latter outrage, and highly probable that he was behind the former also. In all this the wily Russian was playing at high politics. Never satisfied with his job as a security chief, he tried to influence the course of international affairs. His motive in arranging outrages in France and Belgium was to force a *rapprochement* between the French and Russian police as a first step towards the Franco-Russian military alliance on which he had set his heart – and which indeed he did much to bring about.

Rachkovsky also built up a fortune by speculation on the stock exchange, and this enabled him to live in great style. He cultivated personal relationships with leading French politicians, including President Loubet himself, and with Russian dignitaries, including some who stood close to the Tsar. But he was ruthlessly ambitious, and it is remarkable how many of those who in any way obstructed his ambition – from General Seliverstov, who was sent to inquire into his activities in Paris in 1890, to the Minister of the Interior Plehve, who recalled him from Paris in 1903 – were assassinated by his subordinates in the secret police.

This born intriguer delighted in forging documents. As head of the Okhrana outside Russia his main concern was to cope with Russian revolutionaries who had taken refuge abroad. One of his favourite methods was to produce a letter or pamphlet in which a supposed revolutionary attacked the revolutionary leadership. In 1887 there appeared in the French press a letter by a certain 'P. Ivanov', who claimed to be a disillusioned revolutionary, asserting – quite falsely – that the majority of the terrorists were Jews. In 1890 there appeared a pamphlet entitled *Une confession par un vieillard ancien révolutionnaire* (*A confession by an old man who was once a revolutionary*), accusing the revolutionaries who had taken refuge in London of being British agents. In 1892 a letter appeared over the famous name of Plekhanov, accusing the leadership of Narodnaya Volya of having published this 'confession'. A few weeks later came a further letter, in which

Plekhanov in turn was attacked by other supposed revolutionaries. In reality all these documents were written by the same man, Rachkovsky.

Rachkovsky also did much to develop a technique which, half a century later, was to be employed on a massive scale by the Nazis. This was, to present the whole progressive movement, from the most moderate liberals to the most extreme revolutionaries, as being a mere tool in the hands of the Jews. His object here was simultaneously to discredit the progressive movement in the eyes of the Russian bourgeoisie and proletariat and to direct against the Jews the widespread discontent engendered by the tsarist régime. Among the materials presented by the plaintiffs at the Berne trial was a letter sent in 1891 by Rachkovsky in Paris to the Director of the Department of Police in Russia, announcing his intention of launching a campaign against the Russian Jews.

And then there is the book *Anarchie et Nihilisme*, published in Paris in 1892 over the pseudonym of Jehan-Préval. *Anarchie et Nihilisme* was quite certainly inspired by Rachkovsky – it even contains one of his own notorious forgeries – and in places it reads like a sketch for the *Protocols*. It tells how, as a result of the French Revolution, the Jew has become ‘the absolute master of the situation in Europe . . . governing by discreet means both monarchies and republics’. The one remaining obstacle to Jewish world-dominion is presented by ‘the Muscovite fortress’; to overthrow it, an international syndicate of extremely rich and powerful Jews, bestriding Paris, Vienna, Berlin, and London, is preparing to hurl a coalition of nations against Russia. And it is with a shock of recognition that we come across a phrase that appears in innumerable apologies for the *Protocols*: ‘The whole truth is to be found in this formula, which provides the key to a host of disturbing and seemingly insoluble riddles’. From all this a practical lesson is to be drawn: that a Franco-Russian league must be formed forthwith to combat the ‘mysterious, occult, irresponsible power’<sup>1</sup> of the Jews.

In 1902 Rachkovsky actually tried to bring such a league into being, and nothing could be more typical of the man than the method he adopted. He distributed in Paris an appeal to

<sup>1</sup> Jehan-Préval, *Anarchie et Nihilisme*, Paris, 1892, pp. 202–7.

## 3

Barruel's fantasies and the Simonini letter found little echo in the first half of the nineteenth century. Antisemitic propaganda, though it existed, was neither abundant nor influential at that time, and the myth of the Judeo-Masonic conspiracy in particular passed into oblivion even among antisemites. Indeed the first important reference to the idea appears not in antisemitic propaganda but, in the form of a rather naughty joke, in Disraeli's novel *Coningsby*, which appeared in 1844. In Chapter XV of Book III there is a passage where the rich and aristocratic Jew Sidonia describes how, when raising a loan for the Russian Government, he travelled from country to country – Russia, Spain, France, Prussia – and in each capital found that the minister concerned was a Jew. And he ends his tale with the comment: 'So you see, my dear Coningsby, that the world is governed by very different personages from what is imagined by those who are not behind the scenes.' It is a passage which was later to be quoted by innumerable antisemitic writers – for did it not after all come from a famous Jew who was later himself to be prime minister? What was not mentioned, and was perhaps seldom realized, is that the various ministers named – who include Napoleon's marshal, Soult, and the Prussian Count Arnim – were not in fact Jews.

It was around 1850 that the myth of the Judeo-Masonic conspiracy reappeared – this time in Germany – as a weapon of the extreme right in its struggle against the growing forces of nationalism, liberalism, democracy, and secularism. Writing under the immediate impact of the risings of 1848, the publicist E. E. Eckert describes how the Freemasons are organizing not only all revolutionary movements but also the situations that produce revolutionary movements – how they deliberately plunge the masses into moral barbarism and religious despair and finally into economic desperation. This points forward unmistakably to the *Protocols*, save that Eckert makes no mention of Jews. The gap was filled by the Catholic periodical *Historisch-politische Blätter*, of Munich, which in 1862 published a protest signed 'A Berlin Freemason' but which was manifestly not written by a Freemason at all.

the Nazis. All in all, it is not surprising that Gottfried zur Beek, the editor of the first foreign translation of the *Protocols*, should have asserted that Rachkovsky, who died in 1911, was murdered on orders from the Elders of Zion.

There are, then, very good grounds for suspecting Rachkovsky of instigating the forgery that resulted in the *Protocols*. The evidence of Svatikov and Burtsev, the book *Anarchie et Nihilisme*, Rachkovsky's activities as a militant antisemite and organizer of pogroms, his taste for forgery and for immensely complicated deceptions – all this seems to point to him. That being so, it is worth noting that at the very time when he was trying to create his antisemitic 'Russian Patriotic League', in 1902, Rachkovsky became involved in a court intrigue in St Petersburg which also involved the future editor of the *Protocols*, Sergey Nilus. It was an intrigue against a Frenchman called Philippe who, like Rasputin after him, established himself at the imperial court as a faith-healer and became the idol and guide of the Tsar and Tsaritsa.<sup>1</sup> Rachkovsky and Nilus both took part in the intrigue against him, and on the same side.

The man always called himself Philippe, though his full name was Philippe-Nizier-Anthelme Vachod. He was born in 1850 into a family of poor peasants in Savoy. When he was six the local priest regarded him as possessed by devils; at thirteen he began to practise faith-healing; later he set up at Lyons as a 'mesmerizer'. As he possessed no medical qualifications he was forbidden to practise as a doctor and was three times prosecuted for doing so; but he managed to go on treating patients nevertheless. It seems certain that he really had exceptional intuitive gifts and was able, by means of suggestion, to perform some remarkable cures.

When the Tsar and Tsaritsa visited France in 1901 Philippe was presented to them by the two 'Montenegrin princesses' Militsa and Anastasia – daughters of Prince Nicholas of Montenegro, but married to Russian dukes and wholly intent on ingratiating themselves with the imperial couple. Now the Tsar, a weak and timid mediocrity who suffered a good deal

<sup>1</sup> It is a mystery how the form Tsarina, which is a cross between the Russian *Tsaritsa* and the German *Tsarín*, ever came into the English language, and there seems no good reason for perpetuating it.

under the burden of autocratic power, yearned for some holy man who could act as intermediary between him and the God whose indubitable but woefully inadequate representative he felt himself to be. And the Tsaritsa was a hysteric whose instability was constantly aggravated by the conspiracies which surrounded her and her husband at court as well as by the terrorists with their bombs; she too was quite ready to submit to any quack who could offer her solace and at least some semblance of security. Above all Tsar and Tsaritsa, though they had four daughters, had no son, and they desperately needed one. Any medicine-man who claimed to know the answer to this problem could hope to dominate them – just as, later, Rasputin was able to build his career on their need to keep their haemophilic son alive.

No wonder that Philippe was invited to Tsarskoe Selo and loaded with honours. Already in France the Tsar had addressed a personal request to the French Government that this unqualified practitioner should be awarded a medical diploma. This of course was unthinkable for the French – but in Russia, where he was master, the Tsar made the St Petersburg Military Medical Academy appoint Philippe doctor to the army. He also appointed him a Counsellor of State with the rank of general. But if Philippe was cherished and flattered and almost worshipped by the imperial couple and by the 'Montenegrin princesses' and their husbands, he also had powerful enemies – in fact he found himself in much the same controversial and dangerous position as came to be occupied by Rasputin. In the circles around two formidable ladies – the Dowager Empress Maria Feodorovna and the Grand Duchess Elizaveta Feodorovna – he was resented and hated. To break Philippe these people turned to Rachkovsky.

Rachkovsky was asked for information about Philippe's past. Thanks to the relations he had cultivated with the French police he was able to draw up a detailed and, no doubt, suitably distorted report, which he brought with him when he visited St Petersburg early in 1902. The first person to whom he showed it, the Minister of the Interior, Sipyagin, advised him to throw it on the fire which was burning in the hearth. But Rachkovsky persisted: he took his report to the commandant of the imperial palace and it seems he even wrote the Dowager



Empress a personal letter denouncing Philippe as an instrument of the Freemasons. But Sipyagin's misgivings proved justified. Although the Tsar did in the end yield to pressure and refrain from inviting Philippe to take up permanent residence in Russia, he was furious. In October 1902 Rachkovsky was recalled from France, the following year he was dismissed, retired without a pension, forbidden to return to France – and there is no doubt that if this was partly due to his manoeuvres with his imaginary Patriotic League, it was also due to his campaign against Philippe. Even later, when Philippe had returned to France for good and he himself was living in Russia as a private person, Rachkovsky used his connexions with the French police to persecute the unfortunate faith-healer. Vindictive and merciless as ever, he pursued the unwitting cause of his downfall until in the end he harried him to death. Watched day and night by police spies, his letters opened, slandered in the press, Philippe died in August 1905 – just one week before Rachkovsky, restored to favour, reached the height of his career with his appointment as Assistant Director of the Department of Police.

The intrigue against Philippe also involved Sergey Alexandrovich Nilus. A Frenchman, Alexandre du Chayla, who lived many years in Russia and who saw quite a lot of Nilus in 1909, gave an account of these developments in an article in *La Tribune Juive* in May 1921. He tells how Nilus, a landowner who lost his entire fortune while living in France, returned to Russia and adopted the life of a perpetual pilgrim, wandering from monastery to monastery. Around 1900 he wrote a book describing how he had been converted from an atheistic intellectual into a fervent believer in Orthodox Christianity and a mystic. The book – it was the first edition of *The Great in the Small*, without the *Protocols* – received favourable reviews in conservative and religious newspapers and so came to the attention of the Grand Duchess Elizaveta Feodorovna. The Grand Duchess was a woman of deep piety (she later became a nun), but she was deeply suspicious of the mystical adventurers and faith-healers whom the Tsar collected around him. She blamed this state of affairs on the Archpriest Yanishev, who was confessor to the Tsar and Tsaritsa, and set

out to replace him by a man whom she regarded as a genuine mystic and unshakably orthodox: Sergey Nilus.

Nilus was accordingly brought to Tsarskoe Selo. It was the end of 1901 or the beginning of 1902, and the immediate task was to oust Philippe. The clique of Philippe's enemies hit on the following plan: Nilus was to be ordained priest and he was also to be married off to one of the Tsaritsa's ladies-in-waiting, Yelena Alexandrovna Ozerova.<sup>1</sup> Then a concerted effort would be made to impose him on the Tsar and Tsaritsa as their confessor; if it succeeded, there would be no more room for Philippe or for any similar 'holy men'. It was an ingenious stratagem, but Philippe's supporters were able to counter it. They drew the attention of the ecclesiastical authorities to certain facts concerning Nilus's life that precluded ordination (presumably these concerned his love-life, which was always colourful). Nilus fell into disgrace and had to leave court. Some years later he did indeed marry Ozerova, but his chance of becoming the Tsar's confessor had gone for ever.

Were the *Protocols* used in the intrigue against Philippe, and if so, were they used at Rachkovsky's instigation? According to du Chayla the answer to both questions is yes. Nilus, he tells us, was convinced that the original 'discoverer' of the *Protocols* was Rachkovsky – 'a fine man, very active, one who in his time has done much to deprive Christ's enemies of their sting' and who 'had fought with much self-sacrifice against Freemasonry and the Satanic sects', as Nilus put it.<sup>2</sup>

And du Chayla goes on to explain what Rachkovsky could have hoped to achieve by sending the *Protocols* to Nilus. The *Protocols* claims to reveal a devilish plot by Freemasons as well as by Jews – or rather by Freemasons identified with Jews. Philippe was a Martinist, i.e. a member of an association which claimed to follow the teachings of the eighteenth-century occultist Claude de Saint-Martin, 'the unknown philosopher'. The Martinists were not really Freemasons, but the Tsar could hardly be expected to realize that. If the Tsar could be persuaded that Philippe was the agent of a conspiracy such as

<sup>1</sup> Priests in the Russian Orthodox Church are required to be married.

<sup>2</sup> A. du Chayla, 'Serge Alexandrovitch Nilus et les Protocols des Sages de Sion (1909-1920)', in *La Tribune Juive*, Paris, issue of 14 May 1921, pp. 3-4.

that portrayed in the *Protocols*, he would certainly send him packing. By the peculiar standards of the Okhrana the calculation was a perfectly sound one, and it was just the kind of calculation that fascinated Rachkovsky.

How reliable is du Chayla? He makes occasional slips, as when he says that Nilus published a first edition of the *Protocols* in 1902, but on the whole he shows himself very well informed. In his article of 1921 he states, for instance, that in 1905 Nilus published an edition of the *Protocols* at Tsarskoe Selo, under the imprint of the local Red Cross organization. That is perfectly accurate: the book in question is the second edition of *The Great in the Small*, which contains the *Protocols*. What is more, he remarks that it was Yelena Ozerova who made this edition possible – and years later, when the Soviet authorities sent photostats of documents to the court at Berne, this proved to be accurate also. Among these documents are several letters to and from the Moscow Censorship Committee, which show quite clearly how Ozerova used her position as lady-in-waiting to secure publication for the book of her fiancé and future husband.

These documents reveal something else as well – and something of which du Chayla cannot possibly have been aware. They contain an item, so elusive that it has hitherto escaped notice, which suggests that Rachkovsky had had some contact either with Nilus or with the manuscript copy of the *Protocols* in Nilus's possession. The Moscow Censorship Committee, at its session of 28 September 1905, received a report from State Counsellor and Censor Sokolov which quotes the following phrase as being attached by Nilus to his manuscript of the *Protocols*: 'Naturally the head of the Russian Agency,<sup>1</sup> the Jew Efron, and his agents, who are also Jews, have not reported on these matters to the Russian Government.'<sup>2</sup> The committee, in authorizing publication, stipulated that all proper names must be removed from the manuscript – that of Efron among them. The name was duly removed before the book was printed, but one can identify the passage where it was to have

<sup>1</sup> In Paris.

<sup>2</sup> A photostat of the report of the Censorship Committee was sent by the Soviet authorities to Berne. German translation in the Wiener Library (file 'Russische Urkunden des Berner Prozesses').

appeared – it is in the epilogue to the *Protocols*. This epilogue also appears in all the other early Russian editions of the *Protocols*, that in *Znamya* and those of Butmi. None of these editions was subjected to the stipulation concerning proper names – indeed the *Znamya* version had appeared two years before the Moscow Censorship Committee made the stipulation – and yet none of them contains any reference to Efron. We can only assume, therefore, that the reference to Efron was specially inserted into Nilus's manuscript. And it can only have been done or prompted by some enemy of Efron.

Who then was Efron, and who can his enemy have been? Akim Efron, or Effront, was the secret agent in Paris of the Russian Ministry of Finance. When he died in 1909 the French press referred to him as the director of the political agency attached to the Russian embassy. He certainly did not belong to Rachkovsky's organization but employed his own agents and sent his own reports back to St Petersburg. One could assume that this would suffice to earn Rachkovsky's hatred, but as it happens there is no need to assume, for we have proof. One thing that is known about Efron is that during the International Exhibition in Paris in 1889 his face was publicly slapped in the Russian pavilion for attempted blackmail. In other words, Efron must have been the person whom Rachkovsky described, in his forged appeal for the 'Russian Patriotic League', as bearing on his cheeks the marks of the slaps which he received in 1889 for attempted blackmail.<sup>1</sup> As for the statement in the same appeal that Efron was one of Rachkovsky's own men, it was a deliberate lie, and just the tortuous and malicious kind of lie that most delighted Rachkovsky. So the mention of Efron in Nilus's manuscript does suggest that some link, direct or indirect, existed between the persecutor and the rival of Philippe.

## 2

We have seen what kind of man Rachkovsky was and it seems worth while to take a look at Nilus too. We possess a good deal of information about him, some of it very odd indeed. Again

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 82.

it is Alexandre du Chayla who has left the fullest account.<sup>1</sup> He tells how, wishing to study the inner life of the Orthodox Church, he made his way in January 1909 to the famous monastery of Optina Pustyn, a couple of miles from the town of Kozelsk in what was then the government of Kaluga. In the nineteenth century Optina Pustyn had played an important part in Russian intellectual life; the figure of Father Zosima in *The Brothers Karamazov* is modelled on one of its leading personalities; Tolstoy also often visited the monastery and at one time even lived there. Near the monastery were a number of villas occupied by laymen who wished to withdraw to some extent from the world. Du Chayla set up house in one of these villas. The day after his arrival the Father Superior, the Archimandrite Xenophon, introduced him to one of his neighbours, who was Sergey Nilus.

Nilus, who was then aged forty-seven, is described by du Chayla as 'a man of truly Russian type, big and strong, with a grey beard and deep eyes – blue, but with a veiled, somewhat troubled look. He wore boots, and a Russian shirt with a belt which had a prayer embroidered on it.' He and his dependents occupied four rooms in a large villa; and rest of the villa was employed as a home for cripples, idiots, and mentally sick people, who lived there in hope of a miraculous cure. The whole establishment was supported by the pension which the imperial court paid to Ozerova as a former lady-in-waiting. Ozerova, otherwise Mme Nilus, struck du Chayla as being absolutely submissive to her husband. She even had the most amiable relations with Nilus's former mistress, who lived in the same villa and, having lost her own fortune, also on Mme Nilus's pension.

During the nine months he passed at Optina Pustyn, du Chayla learned a lot about Nilus. A former landowner in the government of Orel, he was an educated man who had graduated in Law at the University of Moscow; he spoke excellent French, German, and English and had a good grasp of contemporary European literature. But in character he was capricious, unruly, and despotic – so much so in fact that he had been obliged to resign from the position of magistrate which he had held in Transcaucasia. He had also tried his

<sup>1</sup> In *La Tribune Juive*, loc. cit.

hand at managing his estate in Orel, but had had no success with that either. Finally he had gone abroad with his mistress and had lived at Biarritz – until one day he heard from his steward that he was ruined.

This news produced a major emotional crisis in Nilus and altogether changed his outlook on life. So far he had been a theoretical anarchist with a cult of Nietzsche. Now he became a convert to Orthodox Christianity and an ardent champion of the tsarist autocracy, he fancied himself a mystic and also a heaven-sent defender of Holy Russia. He had always repudiated modern civilization; now he saw it as a conspiracy of the powers of darkness. He became a systematic anti-rationalist. Science, technological progress, democracy, even the application of reason to religious and philosophical questions – all these features of modern civilization, says du Chayla, were rejected by Nilus as ‘the abomination of desolation in the holy places’ and as portents of the coming of Antichrist. It is an attitude which, in one form or another, we shall meet again and again among the devotees of the *Protocols*.

In a couple of pages which deserve a place in any anthology of religious eccentricity du Chayla has shown just what the *Protocols* meant to their most celebrated editor:

Nilus took his book from the shelves and began to translate into French the most remarkable passages of the text and of his own commentaries. At the same time he watched the expression on my face, for he assumed that I would be dumbfounded by this revelation. He was rather upset himself when I told him that there was nothing new for me in all this and that the document must be closely related to the pamphlets of Edouard Drumont. . . .

Nilus was shaken and disappointed by this. He retorted that I took this view because my knowledge of the *Protocols* was superficial and fragmentary, and because their effect was weakened by the oral translation. It was absolutely necessary that I should feel the full impact. And it would be easy for me to get to know the *Protocols*, because the original was in French.

Nilus did not keep the manuscript of the *Protocols* in his house for fear lest it should be stolen by the Jews. I recall how amused I was by his perturbation when a Jewish chemist of Kozelsk, taking a walk with a friend in the monastery forest and trying to find the quickest route to the ferry, happened to stray into Nilus’s garden.

Poor Sergey Alexandrovich was convinced for a long time that the chemist had come to carry out a reconnaissance.

Later I learned that the note-book containing the *Protocols* was deposited until January 1909 with the priest and monk Daniel Bolotov (a portrait-painter who was quite well known at St Petersburg).<sup>1</sup> After his death it was deposited at the hermitage of St John the Baptist, a third of a mile from the monastery, in the keeping of the monk Alexis, a former engineer.

Some time after our first conversation about the *Protocols*, one afternoon about four o'clock, one of the patients from Nilus's home for the sick brought me a letter: Nilus was asking me to come and see him on an urgent matter.

I found Sergey Alexandrovich in his study. He was alone, his wife and Mme K. having gone to vespers. Dusk was falling but it was light, for the earth was covered in snow. I noticed on his writing-table something like a rather large envelope, made of black material and decorated with a big triple cross and the inscription: 'In this sign you shall conquer'. A little picture of St Michael, in paper, was also stuck on to the envelope. Quite clearly all this was intended as an exorcism.

Sergey Alexandrovich crossed himself three times before the great icon of the Mother of God . . . and opened the envelope, from which he took a leather-bound note-book. I learned later that the envelope and the binding had been prepared in the monastery workshop under the personal supervision of Nilus, who carried the manuscript to and fro himself, for fear of its being stolen. The cross and the other symbols had been drawn by Yelena Alexandrovna,<sup>2</sup> according to her husband's instructions.

'Here it is,' said Nilus, 'the charter of the Kingdom of Antichrist.'

He opened the note-book. . . . The text was written in French by various hands and, it seemed to me, with different inks.

'You see,' said Nilus, 'during the sessions of the secret Jewish government, at different times, various people filled the office of secretary. Hence the different handwritings.'

Clearly Sergey Alexandrovich regarded this peculiarity as proving that the manuscript was an original document. Yet he had no fixed views on this matter, for on another occasion I heard him say the manuscript was only a copy.

After showing me the manuscript, Sergey Alexandrovich placed

<sup>1</sup> The same monk figures, in a somewhat dubious role, in Mme Kashkina's account. See below p. 95.

<sup>2</sup> Ozerova.

it on the table, opened it at the first page and, settling me in his armchair, said: 'Well, now read!'

While reading the manuscript I was struck by certain peculiarities in the text. There were some spelling mistakes and above all some expressions which were not French. It is too long ago for me to be able to say that the text contained 'Russianisms', but one thing is beyond doubt: the manuscript was written by a foreigner.

It took me two and a half hours to read the document. When I had finished Nilus took the note-book, replaced it in its envelope and locked it up in the drawer of his writing-table. . . .

Sergey Alexandrovich wanted to know what impression my reading had produced on me. I told him straight out that I stood by my previous judgment; I didn't believe in the 'Elders of Zion' . . .

Nilus's face clouded. 'You really are under the Devil's influence,' he said. 'Satan's greatest ruse is to make people deny not simply his influence on the things of this world but even his very existence. What will you say now if I show you how what is said in the *Protocols* is being fulfilled, how the mysterious sign of the coming of Antichrist appears on all sides, how the imminent advent of his kingdom can be felt everywhere?'

Sergey Alexandrovich got up and we all went into his study. He took his book and a file, and he also brought from his bedroom a small chest, which I came later to call 'the Museum of Antichrist'. He began to read bits from his book and from material he had prepared for publication. He read everything that in any way expressed the eschatological expectations of contemporary Christianity: the dream of the Metropolitan Philaret, quotations from an encyclical of Pius X, the sermons of St Seraphim of Sarov and of Roman Catholic saints, fragments of Ibsen, Solovyev, Merezhkovsky.

He read for a long time. Then he proceeded to the 'exhibits in the case'. He opened his chest. Inside there were, in an indescribable state of disorder, detachable collars, india-rubbers, household utensils, insignia of various technical colleges, even the cipher of the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna and the cross of the Légion d'honneur. On all these objects he detected, in his hallucination, the 'seal of Antichrist', in the form of a triangle or of two superimposed triangles. . . . If an object bore a trade-mark even vaguely suggesting a triangle, that was enough to secure it entry to his museum. And nearly all these examples were included in his 1911 edition of the *Protocols*.

With increasing excitement and anxiety, in the grip of a sort of mystical terror, Nilus explained to me that the sign of 'the son of



perdition' is now contaminating all things, that it shines even from the designs of church ornaments and from the scrolls of the great icon behind the altar in the church of the hermitage.

I felt a sort of fear. It was nearly midnight. The gaze, the voice, the reflex-like gestures – everything about Nilus gave me the feeling that we were walking on the edge of an abyss and that at any moment his reason might disintegrate in madness.<sup>1</sup>

Later du Chayla tells how, when the 1911 edition of his book was published, Nilus sent to the eastern patriarchs, to the Holy Synod, and to the Pope an epistle urging that an ecumenical council be summoned, with the task of working out common measures for the defence of Christendom in view of the imminent coming of Antichrist. And he began to preach on the same subject to the monks of Optina Pustyn – and so effectively that he was asked to leave the monastery for good.

Clearly, then, Nilus really believed in the Jewish world-conspiracy. Yet, with that curious capacity for double-think so characteristic of fanatics, he was sometimes prepared to admit that the *Protocols* themselves might be spurious. One day in 1909 du Chayla asked him whether Rachkovsky might not have been deceived and whether Nilus might not be working with a forgery. Nilus replied: 'You know my favourite quotation from St Paul? – "The power of God works through human weakness." Let us admit that the *Protocols* are spurious. But can't God use them to unmask the iniquity that is being prepared? Didn't Balaam's ass prophesy? Can't God, for the sake of our faith, change dog's bones into miracle-working relics? So he can put the announcement of truth into a lying mouth!'<sup>2</sup>

Another neighbour of Nilus has also recorded her recollections. On 1 June 1934, when preparations for the Berne trial were under way, Maria Dmitrievna Kashkina, *née* Countess Buturlin, made a statement which has not previously been published, but which certainly deserves publication, and not only for the light it throws upon the personality of Sergey Nilus. Anyone who probes into the world of the *Protocols* must at times feel suffocated by the miasma of superstition, gullibility, and quackery which it exudes. It is good to be reminded, for once, that even in tsarist Russia there were people – and

<sup>1</sup> A. du Chayla in *La Tribune Juive*, pp. 3–4.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

not urban intellectuals either, but country folk, landowners and peasants – who were capable of healthy scepticism and knew craziness and roguery when they saw them. The most relevant parts of the statement read as follows:

In 1905 I married Kashkin, who owned an estate in the Kozelsk district in the government of Kaluga. . . . Our estate was about 2½ miles from Optina Pustyn – the monastery was built on land donated by my husband's ancestors. . . . I met Nilus soon after my arrival on the estate and knew him throughout the years I lived there. . . . All those years he lived at the monastery . . . He was known to be a writer; he gave his book *The Great in the Small* to everyone he met. The Abbot was the Archimandrite Xenophon, a good and honest man but quite uneducated. He was impressed by Nilus and was still more impressed when Nilus promised to dedicate to him his forthcoming history of the monastery; from then on Xenophon quite melted and opened all his archives to Nilus. And he didn't only allow him to use the archives, often he simply gave him the documents. . . . My husband got to know about it and was indignant. 'Nilus will loot the whole archive,' he used to say. . . . Altogether, my husband regarded Nilus as a very tricky and shady character, who ought to be very carefully watched. Of course this opinion was based not on Nilus's love for documents from the archives but on much worse things.

It should be said here that in those years Optina Pustyn was a centre for all sorts of 'holy idiots'. Outstanding among them was 'the barefooted Mitya Kozelsky'. . . . A butcher by trade, he came from the town of Kozelsk. . . . He was a big, strong fellow but he could hardly utter recognizable words, he was a real idiot. It was impossible to understand him. Nevertheless he had the reputation of being able to cast out devils. . . . His methods . . . were more than peculiar: he hit his patients with his fists, mainly in the stomach, he pushed them into barrels, and so on. People said that his cures sometimes worked. He became famous after curing the widow of a rich merchant – I seem to remember her name was Ivanova and she came from Moscow. Mitya diagnosed that there were seven devils in her – and he drove them all out by his methods. The grateful widow married him. Her fortune was substantial. Now Mitya was washed and clothed and kept his own horses – I remember vividly seeing him, sitting well back in his carriage, stretching his legs, every inch a conqueror. . . .

Nilus frequented these circles. . . . His own private life gave rise to many misgivings. In a little house adjoining and belonging to

the monastery there lived with him, apart from his wife, *née* Ozerova, his first wife, who was not officially divorced, and also part of the time yet another woman, always ailing, with a girl of eleven or twelve. The girl was said to be Nilus's daughter. In the circle around Nilus she was used as a medium in spiritualist séances. She stayed with Nilus, when her mother left. . . . They could be seen going for walks, all of them together. Nilus walked in the middle, with his long white beard and usually dressed in a white peasant's shirt, with a monk's cord as a belt. On either side of him walked his wives, the first and the second, as a supporting audience, gazing into his eyes, hanging on his every word. The little girl and her mother walked a little way behind. When they reached the wood they would settle down under the trees. Ozerova would begin to sketch something – she had a little artistic ability. The first wife . . . might do some needlework. Nilus himself would lie down – and it was rare for him to say anything.

I was told that the peace that reigned in Nilus's family had not been achieved at once – that at first, at the beginning of her marriage, Ozerova had tried to rebel. There were scenes – something, in particular, concerning the little girl. I don't know the details. But Ozerova soon gave in. . . . Nilus could control her easily enough. . . . The whole family lived on her pension. . . .

Nilus circulated amongst the odd beings who clustered around the monastery. . . . In particular, he took a lot of trouble to cultivate Mitya Kozelsky, whom he tried to introduce into the higher spheres of society. As Ozerova's husband Nilus had connections with the imperial court . . . and he used these to advance Mitya. One of Nilus's friends at the monastery was a monk called Daniel – a rather dubious personality but a fair painter. Certainly with Nilus's knowledge and possibly at his instigation, this Daniel painted a picture. It showed the Tsar, the Tsaritsa and their son enveloped and supported by clouds. . . . These clouds were full of devils with horns, tails and hoofs, who were all trying to get at the Tsarevich, reaching for him, sticking out their tongues at him. But through this throng of devils there strides, with sure step, Mitya Kalyada,<sup>1</sup> the fearless fighter against the Satanic powers, coming to save the Tsar's son . . . With Nilus's help this canvas was sent to St Petersburg. One can guess at the kind of publicity that Nilus must have made there for Mitya. Anyway, Mitya was summoned to St Petersburg and presented to the Tsar and Tsaritsa. Nilus went with him, as interpreter of the incomprehensible sounds he uttered;

<sup>1</sup> Kalyada was the real surname of 'Mitya Kozelsky', or Mitya of Kozelsk.

already before that he had established himself in this capacity. Mitya travelled first class.

You can imagine what sort of impression this journey of Mitya's made on our local population. There was no great esteem for the monks there, particularly not among the peasants. Those who saw the monks at close quarters knew that there was little place for holiness in their lives – not far from the monastery there was a whole hamlet populated with 'the monks' sins'. The local population distrusted especially all those 'holy beggars' and 'fools of God' – they considered them, with rare exceptions, a lot of loafers and charlatans. And then suddenly it turned out that the Tsar had extended an invitation to that charlatan Mitya. I myself heard some of the steadiest and most thoughtful peasants express their bewilderment. 'What can this mean?' they said. 'Doesn't the Tsar understand? Or is he making fun of us?'

The local landowners and civil servants were also shocked. I remember a talk I had with our local police chief, Rakhmaninov. . . . He showed me telegrams from the Minister, asking him to give Mitya every assistance, to provide him with a special compartment on the train, first class, and so on. Of course he did what he was told, but he made no secret of his embarrassment. My husband put the blame for Mitya's journey squarely on Nilus. He didn't hesitate to call him an adventurer and a charlatan. This business was a blow to the Tsar's prestige, and my husband regarded Nilus as wholly responsible for that.<sup>1</sup>

The rather cool accounts supplied by du Chayla and Mme Kashkina can be set alongside a biography of Nilus published in Yugoslavia in 1936. The author of this book, Prince N. D. Zhevakhov, was a fervent admirer of Nilus; in his eyes the *Protocols* were incontestably 'produced by a Jew writing to the dictation of the Devil, who revealed to him the methods for destroying Christian states and the secret of how to conquer the whole world'.<sup>2</sup> It is all the more significant that the biographical data he gives should tally almost exactly with those given by du Chayla. Moreover we discover from him what Nilus had in mind when he was delving among monastic

<sup>1</sup> This statement was taken down by the late Boris Nicolaevsky in Russian in Mme Kashkina's presence and was then read back to her; she approved it in every detail. The Russian transcript is in the B.I. Nicolaevsky Collection at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University, California.

<sup>2</sup> N. D. Zhevakhov, *Sergey Alexandrovich Nilus*, Novi Sad, 1936, p. 11.

archives. One of Nilus's achievements was to edit the diary of a hermit who, according to Zhevakhov, 'described the after-life with extraordinary realism. Thus he tells of a youth who was cursed by his mother and was thereupon lifted up by unknown powers into the airless space above the earth, where for forty days he lived the life of the spirits, mingling with them and being subject to their laws. . . . In short, this diary was a book of exceptional value, a veritable manual of holiness'.<sup>1</sup>

Zhevakhov also tells of the last years of Nilus, at a time when he had quite passed out of the ken of du Chayla and Mme Kashkina and when, all unknown to him, his edition of the *Protocols* was sweeping the world. It seems that after leaving Optina Pustyn Nilus lived on the estates of various friends. It is curious to note that for some six years after the Bolshevik coup d'état, while Russia was convulsed by revolution and civil war, terror, counter-terror, and famine, Nilus and Ozerova lived peacefully somewhere in south Russia, in a house which they shared with a former hermit called Seraphim and which had a chapel constantly overflowing with dozens of pilgrims. It is true that, according to Nilus's letters, some time in 1921 a squad of Red Army soldiers, led by a local bandit, arrived with the intention of murdering the two holy men – but even then, we are told, they were preserved by a mysterious and miraculous night-watchman who disappeared into thin air as soon as he was hit. The leader of the squad was paralysed on the spot and could be cured only by the hermit Seraphim himself.

The Bolshevik authorities, however, having defeated the 'White' armies and liquidated their political opponents, were not to be permanently deterred by a vanishing night-watchman. In the end Nilus and his companions were all evicted. After some years of wandering and two short periods of imprisonment, in 1924 and 1927, Nilus died of heart failure, at the age of sixty-eight, on New Year's Day, 1930.

From the Freyenwald documents at the Wiener Library, London, we learn the fate of some of those who were closest to Nilus. According to a manuscript note by the right-wing Russian known as Markov II, Ozerova was arrested during

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

the great purges of 1937 and deported to the Kola peninsula on the Arctic sea, where she died of hunger and cold the following year. There is also a good deal of correspondence from and concerning a son of Nilus, presumably by his first wife. Sergey Sergeyeovich Nilus, who was a Polish citizen, put himself at the disposal of the Nazis when they were preparing their appeal against the judgement of the Berne court in 1935. A letter which he wrote to Alfred Rosenberg from Poland in March 1940 deserves to be quoted:

I am the only son of the discoverer of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, S. A. Nilus. . . . I can and must not remain indifferent in these times when the fate of the whole Aryan world hangs in the balance. I feel that the victory of the Führer, that man of genius, will liberate my poor country also, and I believe that I could contribute to this in any position. After the brilliant victory of the mighty German army I . . . have done everything to earn the right to take part actively in liquidating the Jewish poison. . . .<sup>1</sup>

This seems an appropriate note on which to close our examination of Sergey Alexandrovich Nilus.

### 3

It is certain that Rachkovsky and Nilus were both involved in the intrigue against Philippe, it is even possible that they conspired to use the *Protocols* for their common purpose. This has led to the assumption, which is to be found in several works on the *Protocols*, that the forgery was carried out for the express purpose of influencing the Tsar against Philippe. Yet this theory is implausible. Philippe was a Martinist and a faith-healer – surely then, if the *Protocols* were forged to help Nilus in his struggle with Philippe, they should contain at least some suggestion that Martinism and/or faith-healing form part of the Jewish plot? As it is, they contain almost everything else, from banking and the press to international wars and underground railways. It is one thing to use a forgery which is already available – and Rachkovsky was certainly not fastidious in his choice of weapons. It is quite another thing to fabricate a whole book which is almost wholly irre-

<sup>1</sup> The letter is in the Freyenwald Collection at the Wiener Library.

levant to the task on hand. Could even Rachkovsky's tortuousness really have gone so far?

It is, then, worth looking at any evidence there may be for the existence of the *Protocols* before 1902. There is in fact a good deal of evidence, some of it from 'White' Russian refugees, but not necessarily worthless on that account. In the first place there is an affidavit sworn by Filip Petrovich Stepanov, formerly procurator of the ecclesiastical synod of Moscow, court chamberlain, and privy councillor, at Stary Futog, Yugoslavia, on 17 April 1927. It reads as follows:

In 1895 my neighbour in the government of Tula, the retired major Alexey Sukhotin, gave me a manuscript copy of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. He told me that a lady of his acquaintance, whom he did not name, when residing in Paris had found this copy at the home of a Jewish friend; and that before leaving Paris she had secretly translated the manuscript and had brought it with her to Russia, where she gave it to Sukhotin.

First of all I reproduced this translation in hectograph jelly, but finding it difficult to read, I decided to have it printed without any mention of date, place or publisher. In all this I was assisted by Arkady Ippolitovich Kelepovsky, who was at that time head of the household of the Grand Duke Sergey. He had the document printed on the press of the district. This took place in 1897. Sergey Nilus inserted these *Protocols* in his work and added his own commentaries.<sup>1</sup>

Save for the passing reference to the lady's 'Jewish friend' this document seems quite useless as propaganda; so Stepanov was probably trying to tell the truth as he remembered it, admittedly after a lapse of thirty years. As it happens there is, or was, very solid evidence to confirm his statement. Although no copy of Stepanov's printed book is known, a copy of the hectograph was still extant at the time of the Berne trial in 1934. At that time it was to be found in the Pashukanis Collection in the Lenin Library, Moscow; and the Soviet authorities sent a photostat of four pages to the court at Berne. The title-page carries no date, but the late Boris Nicolaevsky was convinced, after careful inspection, that this was indeed

<sup>1</sup> A facsimile of the Russian affidavit is in L. Fry, *Waters Flowing Eastwards*, Paris, 1933, after p. 100; a French translation (with some errors) in L. Fry, *Le Juif notre maître*, Paris, 1931, pp. 95-6.

Stepanov's hectograph.<sup>1</sup> The hectograph was made from a hand-written Russian document with the title *The Ancient and Modern Protocols of the Meetings of the Elders of Zion*. Unfortunately it can no longer be inspected – two years of assiduous inquiry extracted nothing from the Lenin Library except a statement that no such manuscript can be traced – but the Wiener Library possesses a German translation of the extracts sent to Berne. This shows that the text must have been practically identical with that later edited by Nilus, which directly or indirectly provides the basis for almost all later editions throughout the world.

Among the 'White' Russians there also existed a firm tradition concerning the identity of the lady who brought the handwritten Russian document from Paris and gave it to Sukhotin. She was said to be Yuliana (or, in France, Justine) Glinka.<sup>2</sup> A good deal is known about her too, and again all the evidence fits. Yuliana Dmitrievna Glinka (1844–1918) was the daughter of a Russian diplomat who ended his career as ambassador in Lisbon. She herself became a lady-in-waiting to the Empress Maria Alexandrovna and lived much of her life in great style in St Petersburg, associating with the spiritualists around Mme Blavatsky<sup>3</sup> and indeed squandering her fortune in supporting them. But there was also another and more sinister side to her life. In Paris in 1881–2 she tried her hand at the game which Rachkovsky was to play so brilliantly shortly afterwards – watching and denouncing the Russian terrorists in exile. General Orzheyevsky, who was a prominent figure in the secret police and ended as Assistant Minister for Internal Affairs, had befriended her ever since her childhood; and she sent her secret reports to him. But she was not really gifted for the work, feuded constantly with the Russian ambassador and ended by being unmasked in the left-wing newspaper *Le Radical*.

Glinka continued to spend a good deal of her time in Paris until, on a visit to St Petersburg somewhere around 1895, she

<sup>1</sup> Private communication to the author.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. L. Fry, *Waters Flowing Eastwards*, pp. 87–9.

<sup>3</sup> Yelena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831–91), Russian theosophist and spiritualistic medium. At one time she herself tried – in vain – to find employment in the Russian secret service.



found that she had lost the imperial favour. The Tsar had been deeply offended by a series of books which her great friend Juliette Adam had published in Paris and which contained all kinds of rumours and revelations about the Russian court. Rightly or wrongly he suspected Glinka of complicity and exiled her to her estate in the government of Orel, which bordered on the government of Tula. The natural protector for Glinka in her distress would have been the Marshal of Nobility for the district – and that was Alexey Sukhotin, the same person from whom Stepanov claimed to have received the *Protocols*.<sup>1</sup>

Glinka was exiled only temporarily and in later years she was once more comfortably established in St Petersburg. To judge by an article which the right-wing St Petersburg newspaper *Novoe Vremya* printed in its issue of 7 April 1902, she may have developed a proprietary attitude to the *Protocols*. The well-known journalist M. Menshikov reported how a lady of fashion had invited him to her house to see a document of vast importance. Seated in an elegant apartment (in Paris Glinka had been noted for her fine picture-collection) and speaking perfect French, the lady informed him that she was in direct contact with the world beyond the grave and proceeded to induct him into the mysteries of theosophy (Glinka was a disciple of Mme Blavatsky). Finally she initiated him into the mysteries of the *Protocols*. Of recent years, she explained, the original French manuscript had been kept at Nice, which had long been the secret capital of the Jews; but they had been stolen by a French journalist, who had passed them on to her. In great haste she had translated extracts from French into Russian. Menshikov took one glance at the

<sup>1</sup> There exists in the Freyenwald Collection at the Wiener Library a copy of a statement, dated 13 December 1936, by a female cousin of Alexey Sukhotin. It says that about 1895, when visiting her cousin on his estate, she saw the manuscript of the *Protocols* being copied out by Sukhotin's sister and by another young lady, who is named and who in 1936 was living in Paris. This statement would have little value by itself, but has some as corroboratory evidence. It could even be that they were retranslating the Russian text into French; for the text which du Chayla claims to have seen in Nilus's possession, written in bad French by various hands, was certainly not the original French version; there is no evidence that *that* ever left France.

*Protocols* and immediately recognized them as a forgery of a very familiar type. And he adds that there were other copies in St Petersburg, one of them in the possession of a journalist — one guesses, Krushevan, since his *Znamya* published the *Protocols* the following year.

There are, then, reasonable grounds for thinking that Yuliana Glinka and Filip Stepanov really were involved in the first publication of the *Protocols*. As for the date, internal evidence suggests that in saying he received the *Protocols* in 1895 and published them in 1897 Stepanov was erring no more than is to be expected after thirty years. There is for instance the remark, at the end of 'protocol' 16, that as part of the plan to stupefy the Gentiles one of the Elders' agents, Bourgeois, is advocating a programme of teaching by object lessons. The reference is to Léon Bourgeois, a highly suspect figure in the eyes of the French right wing since, as Prime Minister in 1895-6, he had included nine Freemasons in his cabinet. From 1890 to 1896 he frequently spoke in favour of a system of teaching by object lessons, and in 1897 these speeches were published in a book, *L'éducation de la démocratie française*; in 1898, as Minister of Education, he issued decrees on the subject. A similar reference which points in the same direction is the passage in 'protocol' 10 where the Elders recommend the election of presidents with some 'Panama' in their past. This refers almost certainly to Emile Loubet, who was Prime Minister of France when the Panama scandal reached its climax in 1892. Though certainly not involved in the scandal itself, Loubet showed no eagerness to institute inquiries against those who were; and this made him a suspect figure. In 1895 Loubet was elected President of the Senate, which made him a candidate for the presidency of the Republic, and in 1899 he was elected President of the Republic. The passage in the *Protocols* could have been inspired by either event.

As for the Paris underground, the *Métro*, plans for it were announced in 1894, but it was only in 1897 that the municipal council granted the concession, and it was in 1900 that the first line was opened. In view of the threat in the *Protocols* to blow up capital cities from the underground railways, it is worth noting that in 1897 Drumont's *Libre Parole* was lamenting the number of Jewish shareholders in the *Métro*. Again, it

was in 1896 that the Russian Minister of Finance Sergey Witte first proposed the introduction of the gold-standard in Russia, in place of the gold-and-silver standard then in force; and in 1897 it was in fact introduced. This too figures in the *Protocols* – in ‘protocol’ 19 there is the observation that the gold standard has ruined every state that has adopted it. But, above all, there is the title of the forgery itself. One would normally expect the mysterious rulers to be called Elders of Jewry or Elders of Israel. There must be some reason why they bear the absurd name of Elders of Zion, and there is in fact a very plausible one. As we have seen, the first Zionist congress at Basel was interpreted by antisemites as a giant stride towards Jewish world-domination. Countless editions of the *Protocols* have connected that document with the congress; and it does seem likely that this event inspired if not the forgery itself, then at least its title. The year of the congress was 1897.

All in all it is practically certain that the *Protocols* were fabricated some time between 1894 and 1899 and highly probable that it was in 1897 or 1898. The country was undoubtedly France, as is shown by the many references to French affairs. One may assume that the place was Paris and one may even be rather more precise: one of the copies of Joly’s book in the Bibliothèque Nationale bears markings which correspond strikingly with the borrowings in the *Protocols*. So the job was done in the midst of the Dreyfus affair – somewhere between the arrest of Alfred Dreyfus in 1894 and his pardon in 1899, and probably at the very height of the great debate which so bitterly divided France. And nevertheless the forgery is clearly the work of a Russian and oriented towards the Russian right wing. Can one, then, be certain that it was done at the behest of the head of Okhrana in Paris, the sinister Rachkovsky?

As we have seen, there are very substantial grounds for this view – and nevertheless the question is less simple than it seems. Rachkovsky’s political master and patron was Sergey Witte, the all-powerful Minister of Finance, and Witte’s enemies were also Rachkovsky’s enemies. And there is no doubt that Witte’s enemies had a hand in the *Protocols*. When Witte took office in 1892 he took up the task begun by Peter the Great and largely neglected by later rulers: the transformation of backward Russia into a country as modern

as the countries of western Europe. During the following decade the production of coal and of iron and steel was more than doubled; the construction of railways, which at that time was the surest index of industrial development, proceeded at a rate attained in only one other country, the United States. But this rapid economic development brought grave disadvantages to those classes whose wealth was bound up with the traditional, agricultural order; and in these circles Witte was detested. Moreover in 1898 there came a serious slump which brought heavy losses even to those who had benefited most from the economic expansion. Witte was under heavy pressure to resort to inflation, even if this meant abandoning the newly adopted gold-standard. He resisted, and his unpopularity became still more widespread.

The *Protocols* have all the appearance of a weapon for use in the campaign against Witte. In the *Protocols* it is argued that slumps are used by the Elders as a means of getting control over all money and of fomenting unrest in the proletariat; and as we have seen, it is also argued that the gold-standard ruins the countries that adopt it. Moreover, if one compares the *Dialogue aux Enfers* with the *Protocols* one finds that the only economic and financial reflections which have been preserved from Joly's book are those which applied to developments in Russia under Witte. The intention seems obvious enough: it is to present Witte as a tool in the hands of the Elders of Zion.

The *Protocols* are not the only piece of propaganda directed simultaneously against the Jews and against Witte. There is an even more bizarre document called *Tayna Yevreystva* (*The Secret of Jewry*),<sup>1</sup> which carries a date – February 1895 – and which looks like a first, ham-handed attempt at the *Protocols*. *Tayna Yevreystva* came to light when, on instructions from the Minister of the Interior, Stolypin, in the first year of this century, the police archives were combed for evidence as to the origin of the *Protocols*. It is a ridiculous essay about an imaginary secret religion which, after being held by the Essenes in the time of Jesus, is now supposed to be cherished by the unknown rulers of Jewry. But it is at one with the *Protocols* in warning us that the secret Jewish government is

<sup>1</sup> Text in Yu. Delevsky, *Protokoly Sionskikh Mudretsov*, Berlin, 1923, pp. 138–58. Cf. J. Gwyer, *Portraits of Mean Men*, London, 1938.

now striving to turn Russia from an agrarian, semi-feudal country into a modern state with a capitalistic economy and a liberal middle class. 'Already in the West the latest economic factor, capitalism, served Freemasonry as a weapon, which had now been skilfully appropriated by the Jews. Naturally it was decided to employ the same weapon in Russia, where the autocracy rests entirely on the support of the landed aristocracy, whereas the child of capitalism, the bourgeoisie, is benevolently disposed towards revolutionary liberalism.'<sup>1</sup> And like the *Protocols*, *Tayna Yevreystva* contains an attack on Witte's innovation, the gold-standard.

According to one 'White' Russian tradition, this extraordinary production was sent by Yuliana Glinka to her friend General Orzheyevsky, who passed it to the commander of the Imperial Guard, General Cherevin, who was supposed to pass it on to the Tsar but failed to do so. And there is little doubt that the *Protocols* too were intended to be read by the Tsar, and for a quite specific reason. Compared with his formidable father Alexander III, Nicholas II was a mild and kindly man who in the first years of his reign had been reluctant to persecute anyone – even the Jews – and who moreover had shown a certain willingness to let Russia be modernized, perhaps even slightly liberalized. The ultra-reactionaries were much concerned to cure the Tsar of these disconcerting traits, and the way they set about it was to persuade him that the Jews formed a deadly conspiracy intent on undermining the foundations of Russian society and Orthodox Christianity; and that the Jews' chosen instrument was the great modernizer, Witte.

Who, in the end, forged the *Protocols*? Boris Nicolaevsky and Henri Rollin have argued that much of the *Protocols* could have come from the eminent physiologist and political journalist known as Ilya Tsion in Russia and Elie de Cyon in France.<sup>2</sup> De Cyon certainly was a fanatical opponent of Witte, and many passages in his political writings do resemble those parts of the *Protocols* which are directed against Witte's policies. He even composed one of his attacks on Witte by the

<sup>1</sup> Delevsky, op. cit., p. 155.

<sup>2</sup> Nicolaevsky in a private communication to the author, Henri Rollin in *L'Apocalypse de notre temps*.

very same method employed in the *Protocols*, i.e. by taking an old French satire on a long-dead statesman and simply changing the names. Also, he was a Russian expatriate who lived in Paris and belonged to the circle around Juliette Adam – who in turn was a close friend of Yuliana Glinka. But there is an important qualification to be made: if de Cyon really is the forger, what he forged cannot have been the *Protocols* as we know them today.

It is inconceivable that a person of such seriousness and intellectual calibre as de Cyon should have sunk to writing a crude antisemitic fabrication. Moreover he was himself of Jewish origin, and though converted to Christianity he never turned against the Jews. In his book *La Russie contemporaine* (1892) he shows a lively sympathy with the persecuted Russian Jews, demands equal opportunities for them, bitterly attacks antisemitic propagandists and instigators of pogroms. If de Cyon did indeed have a hand in the concoction we know as the *Protocols*, then somebody must have appropriated his work and transformed it, replacing the Russian Minister of Finance by the Elders of Zion.

And so we come back to Rachkovsky. For in 1897 Rachkovsky and his men, on instructions from Witte, burgled de Cyon's villa at Territet, Switzerland, and removed quantities of papers. They were looking for writings directed against Witte, and it may well be that they found an adaptation of Joly's book. It remains rather puzzling that Witte's devoted servant Rachkovsky should have propagated a document which, even when transformed, is still largely directed against his master's policies. Perhaps his intention was that the book should be generally ascribed to de Cyon? Such a manoeuvre would serve two purposes: antisemites would be able to claim that the Jewish world-conspiracy had been unmasked by someone who was himself of Jewish birth; and de Cyon would be cruelly mortified and at the same time quite unable to defend himself. And when one recalls that in Russia de Cyon was called Tsion – the same word as Zion – the title of the *Protocols* takes on an added meaning as a malicious private joke. All this would be very much in Rachkovsky's style.

All in all, the most likely hypothesis is that Joly's satire on Napoleon III was transformed by de Cyon into a satire on

Witte which was then transformed under Rachkovsky's guidance into the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. But some mystery remains and it is unlikely ever to be cleared up now. The Okhrana archives at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University, reveal nothing; and Rachkovsky's private archives in Paris (now lost) also revealed nothing when Boris Nicolaevsky inspected them in the 1930s. De Cyon's papers, which were kept by his widow in Paris until the Second World War, have disappeared. There is also the riddle of *Tayna Yevreystva*, which can hardly be attributed either to de Cyon or to Rachkovsky. And there one must leave the matter – to be pursued perhaps some day by a specialist in the 1890s with time and energy to spare.

As for the early editors of the *Protocols*, comparison with the fragments of the hectograph in the Wiener Library show Nilus's version to be the nearest to the original, even though it was not the first to be published. Sergey Nilus is in fact the key figure in the launching of the forgery. How it came into his hands remains, like so much else, uncertain. He himself said, in the preface to the 1917 edition of his book, that Sukhotin gave him a copy in 1901; while a letter from Filip Stepanov's son, now in the Freyenwald Collection in the Wiener Library, says that this was a mistake for Stepanov. In any case it is true that in 1901 Nilus was living fairly near to the estates of Sukhotin, Stepanov, and Glinka. But as we have seen, there is also good reason for thinking that Rachkovsky had some contact either with Nilus or with Nilus's copy of the *Protocols*.

Again and again, in trying to unravel the early history of the *Protocols*, one comes up against ambiguities, uncertainties, riddles. There is no need to take them very seriously. It was necessary to glance at the strange vanished world in which, a mere seventy years ago, the *Protocols* were born – the world of counter-revolutionary agents and pseudo-mystics that flourished on the decay of the Tsar's empire.

But what is really important about the *Protocols* is the great influence which – incredibly yet incontestably – they have exercised on twentieth-century history.