



Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

The importance of conspiracy theory in extremist ideology and propaganda

Fink, A.H.

Citation

Fink, A. H. (2020, April 16). *The importance of conspiracy theory in extremist ideology and propaganda*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/87359>

Version: Publisher's Version

License: [Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/87359>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Cover Page



Universiteit Leiden



The handle <http://hdl.handle.net/1887/87359> holds various files of this Leiden University dissertation.

Author: Fink, A.H.

Title: The importance of conspiracy theory in extremist ideology and propaganda

Issue Date: 2020-04-16

Chapter 6: Jew-hatred and the Grand Conspiracy Theory, 1806 - 1870

*"Masonry is Judaism masked under that name. All the Jews are consequently masons or liberals by nature. Many individuals there are, however, who, without being Jews, are Masons... the political object of the Masons and Jews can be no other than to re-establish themselves as a nation..."*¹ - Portuguese propaganda pamphlet, 1824

*"Righteous Jewish publicists warmly believe that the Golden Calf shall not desert the Jews, and they are not without its protection. And their faith is not in vain: the Golden Calf obviously, by his grace, truly had ordered through his priest Rothschild - Yes, let there be darkness everywhere, with the exception of the abodes of the children of Jacob, illuminated by the stock exchange, and all else covered in Egyptian darkness."*² - Jacob Brafman, 1868

"If you let any conspiracy theorist rant long enough, eventually he will start on the Jews."

- A saying

This chapter is not a survey of Jew hatred, but a history and analysis of how anti-Jewish ideas were integrated into different versions of the Grand Conspiracy Theory. This chapter summarize the European history of Jew hatred very briefly and give a few examples for background, but the study of Jew hatred before the French Revolution is beyond the scope of this thesis. Also, the conspiracy theories about "pure" Freemason and Illuminati plots that were partially endorsed by the Roman Catholic church and "pure" anti-Jesuit conspiracy theories embraced by many 19th century French liberals continued to develop in the 19th century, but this chapter will look past these to focus on the anti-Jewish and Judeo-Masonic conspiracy theories that were, in the end, more consequential to history and politics.

This chapter will examine the history of the anti-Jewish versions of these two different types of conspiracy theory: a Western anti-liberal, anti-revolutionary conspiracy theory that involves Jews (derived from the Freemason/Illuminati conspiracy theory) and a Russian anti-Jewish conspiracy theory (derived from the Jesuit conspiracy theory.) The "revolutionary" version envisioned a secret Jewish conspiracy that was planning a sudden overthrow (or a

¹ Original "O Maçonismo DesMascarado," *Gazeta De Lisboa*, Quinta Feira 21, August 1823, No. 197. "O Maçonismo DesMascarado" pp. 1391-1394. Translation from "On the Freemasons, Jesuits, and Jews of Portugal," *The London Magazine*, Vol. I April-July 1828, p. 487.

² Яков Брафман (Jacob Brafman), *Еврейскія Братства мѣстных и воемѣрныхъ*, (Jewish Brotherhoods, Local and Worldwide), (Vilnius: Printed by the Provincial Government, 1868) p. 117.

series of sudden overthrows) of Western civilization, prepared and brought about through using the Freemasons and liberal ideas. This version became associated with an eschatological streak that alleged that the Jews were preparing the way for the antichrist. The Russian version, modeled on the Jesuit conspiracy theory, instead saw a conspiracy of Jews slowly and methodically taking over and turning their target nations (and with Russia as the primary target) into hosts they could feed off of. The subsequent chapter will examine how these two different kinds of conspiracy theories rapidly merged.

Jew Hatred Before The Grand Conspiracy Theory

First, we shall summarize the history of Jew hatred in Europe before the French Revolution and the birth of the Grand Conspiracy Theory. Jew-hatred has been a feature of Western Civilization since the Roman Empire. It was the major religious divide in Europe before the Protestant Reformation. The Justinian Code is full of anti-Jewish regulations and several of the early Church Fathers wrote extremely negative things about Jews. Jews were expelled from several European states during the course of the Middle Ages. They were associated with usury, especially after the Church conducted campaigns to ban Christians from charging interest (and therefore, opened up the lending market to the major non-Christian population.)³ Jews were also often rumored to assist the Muslims in their wars with Christians.⁴

One of the more notorious accusations against Jews from the Medieval-era is the blood libel - the idea that Jews needed human blood for their religious rituals.⁵ The blood libel is one of the enduring anti-Jewish myths, and resurfaces regularly in history. Even Voltaire lent credence to the idea that Jews regularly engaged in human sacrifice, using as evidence the story of Jephthah from the Biblical book of Judges, when an Israelite commander appears to sacrifice his daughter to fulfill an oath he made.⁶ In the 16th century the Roman Catholic Church even made a saint of one of the alleged 15th century child victims of Jews searching for blood: Simon of Trent.⁷

European anti-Judaism had “scholarly” sources in addition to “folk” roots like the blood libel or rumors of Jews poisoning wells or being responsible for the Black Death. Serious European scholars spent time attacking the Jews, particularly the Jewish Talmud. The Talmud is the massive collection of Jewish Biblical commentary, oral law, and jurisprudence, mainly written down in the 6th century AD. It is an enormous, convoluted, and dense work, difficult to understand even for educated scholars.⁸ Certain passages quoted out of context - and others in context, for there is an anti-Christian element, unremarkable for a classical Jewish text - were used to justify the destruction of copies of the Talmud and persecution of the Jews. In the mid-13th century Nicholas Donin, a convert to Christianity from Judaism (after being

³ Robert Chazan, *Church, State, and Jew in the Middle Ages*, (Behrman House, 1979), p. 197.

⁴ Daniel Pipes, *Conspiracy*, (p. 56).

⁵ Paul Lawrence Rose, *German Question/Jewish Question, Revolutionary Antisemitism from Kant to Wagner*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), p. 46.

⁶ Rose, p. 47.

⁷ David Kertzer, *The Popes Against the Jews: The Vatican's Role in the Rise of Modern Anti-Semitism*, (Knopf Doubleday, 2002), Kindle Edition, Locations 2820-2821.

⁸ Kertzer, (Locations 1812-1833).

excommunicated from Judaism,) convinced Pope Gregory IX that the anti-Christian Talmud should be destroyed. The Pope sent a circular to bishops and kings in Western Europe ordering that all Jewish books be confiscated. The Talmud, he wrote, was the “chief cause” of the infidelity of the Jews.⁹ This idea contributed to a myth (one that might be considered one of the earliest anti-Jewish conspiracy theories) that the reason the Jews had not converted to Christianity was not because of real religious disagreements, but because a small cabal of anti-Christian (and therefore anti-messiah) Rabbis had hoodwinked the Jewish people in order to keep them in bondage. (A later version of this idea will be discussed at greater length later in this chapter.)

Anti-Judaism was not only a Roman Catholic phenomena. As we have seen, even the vehemently anti-Roman Catholic Voltaire indulged in Jew hatred. The Jews also became a target of the greatest Protestant reformer Martin Luther. After his break with the Roman Catholic Church Luther expressed optimism that the Jews would soon convert to Protestantism as it had, he thought, done away with the Roman Catholic lies and corruptions that prevented sensible Jews from becoming Christians. However, later in life he radically changed his opinion and wrote what could be seen as a sectarian prototype for later modern anti-Jewish conspiracy theories: *On the Jews and Their Lies* (1543). He portrayed the Jews as money grubbing conspirators in league with the Holy Roman Emperor in attempting to destroy Protestantism. He wrote that the sale of indulgences by the Roman Catholic Church, which had been the event that sparked the Reformation, was run by a converted Jew. Luther warned that his followers were in danger of being contaminated with “Jewishness.” He called for the persecution of the Jews, the annihilation of Jewish heritage in Germany, and eventually the expulsion of all Jews from Germany.¹⁰

Unlike the Reformation, the Enlightenment did, on balance, improve the situation of Jews in Western Europe.¹¹ By the time of the French Revolution Jews had limited civil rights and toleration in some Western European countries, like the Netherlands and Great Britain, but they were still officially banned in Portugal and Spain and confined to ghettos in some places like in Frankfurt and the Papal States. After the French Revolution, Jews were given equal political rights as every other citizen for the first time.¹² This sudden gain in political rights made some speculate about a of link between the Jews and the French Revolution that went beyond the fulfillment of the promise of *liberte, egalite, fraternite*.¹³

The Simonini letter and the origins of the Judeo-Masonic conspiracy theory

About 7 years after Barruel published his final volume describing the grand Illuminati/Freemason conspiracy that he believed had caused the French Revolution, he

⁹ Robert Michael, *A History of Catholic Antisemitism, The Dark side of the Church*, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 61.

¹⁰ Rose, pp. 4-8.

¹¹ Adam Sutcliffe, “The Enlightenment, French Revolution, Napoleon,” in *Antisemitism: A History*, Albert S. Lindemann and Richard S. Levy eds., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 107.

¹² Dominique Schnapper, Chantal Bordes-Benayoun, Freddy Raphael, *Jewish Citizenship in France: The Temptation of Being among One's Own*, Catherine Temerson trans., (Transaction Publishers, 2010), p. 109.

¹³ Daniel Pipes, *Conspiracy*, p. 73.

received a letter from an Italian officer named J. B. Simonini. This letter, known as the “Simonini letter” is remarkable because it presaged the next big development in the Grand Conspiracy Theory: injecting the Freemason/Illuminati myth with Jew hatred.

This letter was first published decades later in July 1878 in the Roman Catholic magazine *Le Contemporain*.¹⁴ Simonini’s letter applauded Barruel for uncovering “those infamous sects that are preparing the way for the Antichrist...”¹⁵ Simonini then criticized Barruel for omitting the true source of the French Revolution and the other evil works of the Jacobins, the Freemasons, Illuminati, Sophists etc.: the Jews. Simonini claimed that he had earlier masqueraded a Jew in his native Northern Italy, and that the local Jews had taken him into their confidence. They had shown him large sums of gold and silver dedicated to destroying Christianity and tried to convince him to become a Freemason. Simonini wrote that they declared to him that Manes (the 3rd century heretic who Barruel credited as the ultimate founder of the movement that create Freemasonry)¹⁶ and also the “Old Man of The Mountain” (the leader of the Assassins mentioned by Marco Polo) and the founders of the modern Freemasons and other “anti-Christian sects” were in fact Jews. The Jewish conspiracy theory described by Simonini included secret Jewish operatives masquerading as Christians, with forged baptismal certificates. Some of them were Christian clerics who were in fact clandestine supporters of the Jewish conspiracy (Simonini said they claimed 800 clerics in Italy alone). Their plan hinged on using their network to get full citizenship rights in European countries and then buying up as much land as they could and absorbing all the money and property of the Christians. The Bourbons, Simonini declared, were the greatest enemy of the Jews (which implied the true cause of the French Revolution that deposed the Bourbon dynasty.) Simonini said that the Jews “... promised themselves that in less than a century, to become masters of the world, to abolish all other sects in order to make theirs reign; to make many synagogues of the churches of the Christians, and to reduce the rest of these (Christians) to true slavery.”¹⁷

According to the first publication of this letter in 1878, Barruel forwarded the original letter to Rome, and Pope Pius VII replied through his secretary that the letter was authentic and true.¹⁸ Writers have speculated that the Simonini letter was a forgery, perhaps created by the Paris police chief to fool Barruel.¹⁹ However, modern scholars have found three copies of the Simonini letter, two of them in Barruel’s hand, and one of them (from the Jesuit Archives in London) containing commentary from Barruel that he wrote weeks before his death. These scholars also uncovered evidence that Simonini was an actual living person.^{20 21} Barruel

¹⁴ J. Gagarin, “Souvenirs Du P. Grivel sur Les PP. Barruel Et Feller,” *Le Contemporain: revue d’économie chrétienne*, Series 3, Volume 16, June 1878, Paris,

¹⁵ Gagarin p. 58.

¹⁶ See Barruel, Vol. 2, pp. 231-232.

¹⁷ Gagarin, p. 61.

¹⁸ Gagarin, p. 62

¹⁹ Stephen Eric Bronner, *A Rumor about the Jews: Antisemitism, Conspiracy, and the Protocols of Zion*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 73.

²⁰ Claus Oberhauser, *Die verschwörungstheoretische Trias: Barruel – Robison – Starck*, (StudienVerlag, 2013), p. 269.

²¹ Claus Oberhauser, “Simoninis Brief, oder die Wurzeln der angeblichen,” in *Juden und Geheimnis* Verborgenes Wissen und Verschwörungstheorien, *Jews in Central Europe*, Institut für jüdische

investigated Simonini's idea, but he appears to have remained convinced that the conspiracy was Masonic at its core, not Jewish.²²

The Simonini letter might be the first "complete" version of the Judeo-Masonic conspiracy theory, but the idea that the Freemasons were Jew-aligned was not entirely new. Barruel himself had speculated in a footnote in his second volume of *Memoirs Illustrating the History of Jacobinism* that "it may be very probable that the Jews had had a part in Masonry." Barruel cited as possible evidence a quote from the 1791 *The Veil Lifted for the Curious* by the cleric LeFranc, which had been one of the first books that said the Freemasons were responsible for the French Revolution.²³ Le Franc wrote that "*Jehovah*" the word that Freemasons use to describe God was "...taken from a fable invented by the Rabbins [Rabbis] to rob Christ of his divinity and power."²⁴

This aside from Le Franc and Barruel points to what might be a key enabling factor to the rise of the Judeo-Masonic conspiracy: many Masonic symbols and rituals are derived from the Old Testament or other Jewish history and custom. Every educated European would have been familiar with the Old Testament in the 18th century, and any 18th century gentlemen who had been classically educated would probably have come across some Jewish history²⁵ or perhaps just become familiar with "mysterious" and "eastern" Jewish-related lore. The founders of modern Freemasonry in 18th century Britain mixed and borrowed Jewish symbols and stories freely along with those from other legends that they would have come across, like the Templar legend or the mysteries of the Egyptians. For example, one of the core legendary figures in Freemason ritual and myth is Hiram Abif, the architect of the Temple of Solomon.²⁶ This story is probably drawn from a short passage out of the history book *Antiquities of the Jews* by the most famous ancient Jewish historian Titus Flavius Josephus (c. 37 - 100 AD.) He mentions: "...Solomon sent for an artificer out of Tyre, whose name was Hiram; he was by birth of the tribe of Naphtali, on the mother's side, (for she was of that tribe,) but his father was Ur, of the stock of the Israelites. This man was skillful in all sorts of work;"²⁷ A classically educated gentlemen in Britain around the time that modern Freemasonry was getting started may have been familiar with Josephus' work (as Josephus wrote in ancient Greek) and several English and French translations of Josephus' work were published between 1602 and 1737.²⁸

Geschichte Österreichs. Available at http://www.injoest.ac.at/files/jme_2012_1.pdf . Accessed September 27, 2017.

²² Claus Oberhauser, *Die verschwörungstheoretische Trias: Barruel – Robison – Starck*, pp. 270-271.

²³ See the brief discussion of this book in chapter 3.

²⁴ Barruel, Vol. 2, p. 201.

²⁵ A Portuguese pamphlet dealt with later in this chapter points to the Hebrew symbolism and imagery in Masonic symbols and traditions as evidence that Freemasonry is in fact Judaism "All the signs, dresses, rites, and ceremonies of the Freemasons are Jewish. Even the Masonic words are in Hebrew, which is the language of the Jews." see "On the Freemasons, Jesuits, and Jews of Portugal," *The London Magazine*, Vol. I April-July 1828.

²⁶ Albert G. Mackey, "Abif," in *An Encyclopedia of Freemasonry and Its Kindred Sciences*, (Philadelphia: Jouis Everts, 1905), pp. 3-4.

²⁷ Flavius Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, William Whiston trans., (Wordsworth Editions Limited: 2006), p. 330.

²⁸ Gohei Hata, "A Note on English Translations of Josephus from Thomas Lode to D. S. Margoliouth," in *A Companion to Josephus*, Honora Howell Chapman and Zuleika Rodgers eds., (Wiley Blackwell, 2016), pp. 414-416.

Another aspect that linked Freemasonry to Judaism in the popular imagination was the Freemasonic tolerance of all religions, including Judaism, and Masonry's association with liberalism. The second papal bull against Freemasonry (1751) proclaimed that Freemasonry's practice of joining together people from any religion or sect was one of the reasons it threatened the purity of the (Roman) Catholic Religion.²⁹ However, while Jews were permitted to enter Masonic lodges in 18th century England and Holland, this was not usually the case elsewhere on the continent.³⁰ The Masonic lodges in France may have initially been open to Jewish members, but by the mid-18th century literature from the period explicitly excludes non-Christians from being members.³¹ (The scholar Jacob Katz, who has extensively studied the history of Jews in Freemasonry suspects that this mid-18th century French emphasis on Christianity in Freemasonry was an attempt to defend against the Roman Catholic Church's charges that it permitted the mixing of people of different faiths.)³²

Maistre links Illuminism and the Jews

Even if Jews were not welcome in continental Freemasonic lodges, the association of Freemasonry with liberalism (and therefore Jewish emancipation) could have made it automatically suspect to an 18th or 19th century Jew-hater like Simonini. One who believed in the Freemason/Illuminati conspiracy theory could have seen a link between the plotters' supposed hatred of Christianity (camouflaged by the ideals of liberalism) and the interests of European Jews. In his letter, Simonini did not use the symbolism of the Freemasons as his main argument for the reality of the Judeo-Masonic conspiracy, but rather focused on the supposed common enemy both of the Jews and the conspirators identified by Barruel. Another early example of the use of this supposed link between the Illuminati and the Jews can be found in the work of the great anti-Enlightenment philosopher Joseph De Maistre. He wrote about the supposed link between liberalism and the Jews without referencing Masonic symbols or Simonini. In 1811 Maistre was serving as the ambassador for Kingdom of Sardinia in Russia. As an prominent well-educated arch-conservative with a razor sharp wit, Maistre was welcome in conservative Russian circles in St. Petersburg. Maistre also became the most influential advocate for the Jesuits in Russia (who still existed there while they were suppressed everywhere else.) He saw them as sharing his antipathy towards the Enlightenment and revolution.³³ In 1811 the Jesuits in Russia made a bid to get the government's permission to establish an official independent educational system in Russia. Maistre wrote an essay *Mémoire sur la liberté de l'enseignement public* (Memorandum on the freedom of public education) and presented it to the Procurator of the Holy Synod Prince Alexander N. Golitsyn. The text argued

²⁹ "Bull of Pope Benedict XIV Providas Romanorum," Website of the Holy See. Available at: <https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedictus-xiv/it/documents/bolla--i-providas-romanorum--i---18-marzo-1751--il-pontefice-con.html>, Accessed October 5, 2017.

³⁰ Johannes Rogalla von Bieberstein, "The story of the Jewish-Masonic conspiracy, 1776-1945," *Patterns of Prejudice* 11, no. 6 (1977), p. 2.

³¹ Jacob Katz, *Jews and Freemasons in Europe 1723-1939*, (Harvard University Press, 1970), pp. 18-19.

³² Katz, p. 19.

³³ J.T. Flynn, "The role of the jesuits in the politics of russian education 1801-1820," *Catholic Historical Review*, Vol. 56, no. 2, (Jul., 1970) p. 256.

that the Jesuits were a reliable bulwark against those revolutionaries and propagandists trying to overthrow the throne and altar. After the Russian Council of Ministers and the Tsar had already approved the independence of the Jesuit schools, Prince Golitsyn read Maistre's essay to the Emperor. The Emperor enjoyed the work, and asked Maistre to produce further writing on Russia.³⁴

In response, Maistre penned the extended essay *Quatre Chapitres sur la Russie*. This work warned against freeing the serfs, against teaching science at the expense of religious education, against allowing Protestantism to spread, and finally against "Illuminism."³⁵ This final section on "Illuminism" contains a remarkable early use of the ideas of a Judeo-Masonic conspiracy theory. Maistre, a Freemason himself, wrote that the craft "is not bad in itself"³⁶ and he discusses and categorizes three types of "Illuminati:" The first: simple Freemasons. The second: some varieties of Christian mystics. But, he wrote, there was a third type of "Illuminati" which Maistre warned was "very bad, very dangerous, very active, and on which governments cannot be called to too much attention." The core of this "third class" of Illuminati was "the True Enlightenment... modern philosophy grafted onto Protestantism, that is to say Calvinism;"³⁷ He claimed that this "Illuminism" was "much more ferocious in Germany than elsewhere, because the venom of Protestantism has its chief center in these (German) countries."³⁸ Maistre (who in his other writings was a critic of the paranoid imaginings of Barruel) favorably referenced Barruel as a source for information about the Illuminati's activities, and he quoted the letters of Voltaire, D'Alembert, and Frederick II in the manner of Barruel to reveal the "Illuminating" goals behind the apparent "philanthropic" initiatives of these men. Maistre wrote that Illuminati networks were active in Italy and France and even in Russia. He even implied he had some personal knowledge of the machinations of the Illuminati, that once in a city where he used to live "a strange scoundrel, mortally ill in an inn,... summoned a priest, and before him and others in his room confessed aloud 'that he was a member of a society established for the overthrow of Christianity and monarchies.'"³⁹ Maistre warned the Emperor that the Illuminati would soon infect his realm as they have done in Western Europe if he allowed Protestant teaching to spread: "The constitutional and fundamental spirit of Protestantism has a natural affinity with modern anti-Christian and anti-monarchical systems, which are even a direct and evident production of Protestantism."⁴⁰ This threat was compounded at the time because of the excellent Protestant education available in Russia.⁴¹

Having made his attack on Protestantism as the great enabler of the Illuminati, he then turns on the Jews as their ally:

³⁴ Richard A. Lebrun, *Joseph de Maistre, an Intellectual Militant*, (McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988) pp. 203-4.

³⁵ Lebrun, pp. 204-205.

³⁶ Joseph De Maistre, *Quatre chapitres inédits sur la Russie*, Rodolphe De Maistre ed., (Paris: Vaton, 1859), p. 92.

³⁷ Maistre, p. 101.

³⁸ Maistre, pp. 101-102.

³⁹ Maistre, pp. 103-104.

⁴⁰ Maistre, p. 106-107.

⁴¹ Maistre, p. 110.

"The Jews of whom we have just spoken deserve special attention on the part of all governments, but especially of that of Russia, which has many in its midst; We must not be surprised if the great enemy of Europe favors them in such a visible manner, they already possess immense properties in Tuscany and Alsace; Already they have a chief town in Paris, and another in Rome, whence the head of the Church has been driven out. Everything leads us to believe that their money, their hatred, and their talents are at the service of the great conspirators."⁴²

Maistre concluded this section by reiterating the link between the Illuminati and the Jews: "The Sect, which makes use of everything, appears at this moment to draw a great deal from the Jews, of whom it is necessary to distrust a great deal."⁴³

Unlike the Simonini letter which accuses the Jews of being at the core of the Illuminati conspiracy, Maistre's accuses the Jews of only being their ally, though a powerful and useful ally. The primary target of Maistre's bile in his writing on the Illuminati are the Protestants. However, this is an early case of the identification of the Jews with the supposed grand Freemason/Illuminati conspiracy not because of symbols but because of their supposed shared goals. Maistre viewed the Enlightenment, the revolutionary spirit that was leading Europe into the age of democracy and emancipation, as his ultimate enemy. The Jews were among the main beneficiaries of the changes in Europe, and if one believed that a malign force was behind these changes, it would stand to reason that they would make the Jews their allies. In a sense, the accusation of common goals is more insidious and more convincing than pointing to the symbols, myths, and rituals of Freemasonry as "giveaways" of their secret Jewish directors. After all, the core of the supposed conspiracy is deception. The Christian/Monarchist world must not become aware of the danger they face until it is too late. If a Jewish cabal were to found a secret society that would manipulate unwitting gentiles to do their bidding, why would they load it up with Jewish symbolism, leaving clues everywhere? However, if one believes one has identified a common interest between a grand conspiracy and a group, then even weak evidence can be integrated into a more deeply-rooted belief in one's cherished version of the Grand Conspiracy Theory.

Maistre's had earlier harshly criticized Barruel's conspiracy theorizing.⁴⁴ It is possible to interpret the Illuminism section of the *Four Chapters on Russia* as Maistre's disingenuous attempt at turning the Emperor against Protestantism, and especially against protestant educators, and that Maistre's references the Jews as only a prop to get the attention of the Emperor. However, Emperor Alexander I was not given to anti-Jewish beliefs early in his reign. Perhaps the reference to the Jews in this general attack on liberalism and Protestantism was an attempt to contradict the separate policies of Alexander I that favored liberalism, Protestantism, and greater toleration of the Jews by making it appear that the Emperor was unconsciously playing into the hands of a vast conspiracy. Despite containing this subtle rebuke of the Emperor's policies, Alexander I read Maistre's *Four Chapters on Russia* and was so impressed that he tried to take Maistre into his service, but as Maistre was a foreign diplomat, the

⁴² Maistre, p. 111-112.

⁴³ Maistre, p. 128.

⁴⁴ Roberts, p. 296.

arrangement did not work.⁴⁵ Like the Simonini letter, the *Four Chapters on Russia* may have circulated as a manuscript, but it went unpublished for decades, until 1859.

The Judeo-Masonic Conspiracy in Public Propaganda - France and Portugal

The Simonini Letter and Maistre's memorandum to the Tsar were both not revealed to the reading public for a long time, well after the Judeo-Masonic conspiracy had become a common conspiracy theory in Europe. As demonstrated in the preceding section, if one hated Jews the basic points of early Judeo-Masonic conspiracy theories were logical extensions of the Illuminati/Freemason conspiracy theory, given the borrowed Jewish symbolism in Freemasonry and Freemasonry's association with political liberalism, and therefore with Jewish emancipation. This anti-Jewish extension of the Illuminati/Freemason conspiracy was used by anti-liberal propagandists in the early and mid 19th century just as the earlier version was used by propagandists in the wake of the French Revolution.

One of the earliest uses of the Judeo-Masonic conspiracy theory in propaganda is the 1815 French pamphlet *Le Nouveau Judaïsme: Ou la franc-maçonnerie dévoilée* (The New Judaism, or Freemasonry Unveiled.) The anonymous author of this work was a self-described supporter of the recent restoration of the French Monarchy. He mainly regurgitated the Masonic conspiracy theory popularized in the first two volumes of Barruel.⁴⁶ The text attacked the well-established targets of the pre-Revolutionary finance minister Jacques Necker, the Comte de Mirabeau (described in other conspiracist literature as the link between the German Illuminati and the French Revolutionaries,) and the Marquis de Lafayette (who was still alive and active in French politics when this pamphlet was published.)⁴⁷ The pamphlet accused Freemasonry of trying to overturn altars and thrones, and of specifically targeting the Jesuits - committing false-flag assassinations as Jesuits and then persuading the French king to outlaw them.⁴⁸ The main difference from the theory derived from Barruel's second volume was that the author says the origins of the Freemasons are not the ancient Manicheans, but the Jews. The author used the language of a Masonic initiation rite and the symbolism of Freemasonry to make this link. He claimed that the G in the symbol of Freemasonry stands for Golgotha, where Jesus was crucified, and that the Freemasons identified with the "Jews" who "persecuted the disciples like they persecuted the Master" [Jesus].⁴⁹ "Let us not be surprised if the Freemasons are such bold persecutors of the Church: they are Jews; they have confessed this..."⁵⁰

The portion of this pro-restoration pamphlet dedicated to accusations against the Jews is quite small, really just a few paragraphs (apart from the title.) Besides its novelty as the one of the earliest pieces of published propaganda to use the Judeo-Masonic conspiracy theory, there

⁴⁵ C. Joyneville, *The Life and Times of Alexander I. Emperor of all the Russias*, Vol. II, (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1875), pp. 141-142. Also Lebrun p. 205.

⁴⁶ Alain Goldschläger, Jacques Ch. Lemaire, *The Conspiracy Revealed, Jews Freemasons, Illuminati*, Jeremy Worth trans., (Toronto: League for Human Rights, 2012,) p. 43.

⁴⁷ *Le Nouveau Judaism, ou la franc-maçonnerie dévoilée*, Jacques Ch Lemaire ed., (Pairs: Editions teletes, 2007), p. 47.

⁴⁸ *Le Nouveau Judaism*, p. 36.

⁴⁹ *Le Nouveau Judaism*, p. 44.

⁵⁰ *Le Nouveau Judaism* p. 44.

is not much notable about this pamphlet. Another, much more thorough, much more high-profile, version of the Judeo-Masonic conspiracy theory emerged in Portugal eight years later. This text is an early, complete example of the Judeo-Masonic conspiracy theory, emphasizing the Jewish symbolism in Freemasonry, the link between the aims of the supposed Jewish/Freemasonic plot and Jewish interests, and specifically equating liberalism with this plot.

The occasion for this piece of anti-liberal propaganda was a counter-revolution in Portugal. In the wake of the constitutional revolution of 1820 in Spain, a liberal/constitutional revolution also occurred in Portugal. Some of the key leaders of this revolution were members of a secret society that had been preparing for revolution, fatefully named the *Sinédrio* (Sanhedrin in English.)⁵¹ This name was very probably drawn from scripture. It is the name of the Jewish high-court and governing body that is mentioned in the New Testament. The new liberal government in Portugal embarked on a moderate reform program and appeared to reach a *modus vivendi* with the Portuguese king.⁵²

This new liberal government only lasted a few years. A French intervention against the constitutional regime in Spain in 1823 precipitated an absolutist counter-revolution in Portugal, led by the 21-year old prince Dom Miguel, the king's third son and the queen's favorite.⁵³ In the aftermath of this successful counter-revolution, a 19 page pamphlet was published, titled *Maçonismo Desmascarado* "Masonry Unmasked." Its author was an obscure professor named Joze Luiz Coelho Monteiro.⁵⁴ The work is obviously written as a piece of propaganda against the liberal republicans and in support of the absolutist counter-revolution. The text of the pamphlet was republished in the Lisbon Gazette on August 21, 1823.⁵⁵ This was the official gazette of the government.⁵⁶ The pamphlet directly stated that Freemasonry was a Jewish project, and part of a larger conspiracy:

"What is Masonry, and what is its object? Masonry is Judaism masked under that name. All the Jews are consequently masons or liberals by nature. Many individuals there are, however, who, without being Jews, are masons, for reasons which shall be explained. If, then, Masonry is identical with Judaism, the *political* object of Masons and Jews can be no other than to re-establish themselves as a nation, in spite of the anathema which condemns them to live to the end of time as wanderers and vagabonds on the earth, without country, without king, and without law. The political object of the Freemasons or Jews being the re-establishment of their nation, their religious one can be no other than the re-establishment of the law of Moses, or the Jewish law and consequently of the temple of Solomon, which symbolically represents it.^{57 58}

⁵¹ Ron B. Thomson, *The Concession of Évora Monte, The Failure of Liberalism in Nineteenth-Century Portugal*, (Lexington Books, 2014), p. 33, footnote 18.

⁵² Thomson, pp. 34-35.

⁵³ Thomson p. 48.

⁵⁴ "JOSÉ LUIZ COELHO MONTEIRO," in *Diccionario Bibliográfico Português: Suplemento*, Volume 13, (Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional, 1885), p. 66.

⁵⁵ Jose Monteiro, "O Maçonismo DesMascarado," *Gazeta De Lisboa*, 21 August 1823, No. 197, pp. 1391-1394.

⁵⁶ *Official Publications of Western Europe*, Vol. 2, Eve Johansson ed., (Mansell, 1984) p. 154.

⁵⁷ "On the Freemasons, Jesuits, and Jews of Portugal," *The London Magazine*, 1828, Vol. I (April-July), No. III., p. 429.

⁵⁸ Jose Luis Coelho Monteiro, *Maçonismo desmascarado ou breve opusculo em que com factos e raciocínios se prova como o maçonismo he o judeismo*, (Lisbon: Maignense, 1823), pp. 2-3.

Montiero's argument rested first on the symbols, language, and rituals of Freemasonry, pointing out their Jewish origins: "All the signs, dresses, rites, and ceremonies of the Freemasons are Jewish. Even the Masonic words are in Hebrew, which is the language of the Jews."⁵⁹

Among other things that Montiero used as evidence of this, he stated that the accoutrements of Freemasonry were copied from the Levites, the Freemasons call non-members "profane" - which means Gentile, and that their patron is St. John the Baptist - the last Jewish prophet before Christ. He also alleges that Napoleon's failed expedition to Egypt (1798) "was nothing more than a masonic enterprise; with the object of getting possession of Jerusalem, as the head of the masonic empire." and that the Freemasons were involved in bringing back Jews to Portugal from Holland. In sum, "The declared hostility of Masons to the throne and the altar, is the necessary consequence of the object of their labours, which is the establishment of the temple of the Jews on the ruin of all Christian thrones and altars."⁶⁰

Montiero did not confine his accusations to Portugal. He linked the Portuguese liberals with the Carbonari myth by claiming that the Portuguese Jewish conspiracy was just the local chapter of the same international conspiracy, which were called *Jardineiros* in Portugal, *Comuneros* in Spain, and *Carbonari* in Italy.⁶¹ He claimed that their plans eventually involved the denial of the immortality of the soul and the denial of the existence of God. Montiero pointed out the leaders of the Portuguese branch of the Judeo-Masonic conspiracy by using their initials. They included Manuel Fernandes Tomás, José Ferreira Borges (two Portuguese liberals who actually had been among the founders of the Sinédrio)⁶² and other members of the liberal post-1820 Portuguese government. He also suggested that the conspiracy had taken steps to ensure that the deception worked by deliberately distancing themselves from a few other Portuguese politicians associated with the 1820 revolution "who the whole world knows to be of the Jewish stripe."⁶³

As for his sources: Montiero claimed to be the first one to unmask the connection between Freemasonry and Judaism,⁶⁴ but his conspiracy-theory was not developed in a vacuum. He was certainly familiar with anti-Carbonari literature, and as an educated man in a Roman Catholic country he was probably familiar with the Papal condemnation of the Carbonari/Freemasons and endorsement of the anti-Masonic conspiracy theory in the 1821 encyclical *Ecclesiam a Jesu Christo*. He was probably also familiar with other popular anti-Masonic conspiracy theories.

This early and very "complete" version of the Judeo-Masonic conspiracy theory was probably quickened by Portugal's history of Jew hatred. All Jews had been forced to convert to Christianity in the late 15th century. Like in Spain, there was a Roman Catholic inquisition set up to investigate "New Christians" (the local phrase for a recent convert or his descendant) who

⁵⁹ "On the Freemasons, Jesuits, and Jews of Portugal," p. 494.

⁶⁰ "On the Freemasons, Jesuits, and Jews of Portugal," pp. 494-495.

⁶¹ "O Maçonismo DesMascarado," *Gazeta De Lisboa*, p. 1393.

⁶² Thomson, p. 33.

⁶³ "O Maçonismo DesMascarado," *Gazeta De Lisboa*, p. 1393.

⁶⁴ Jose Luis Coelho Monteiro, *Maçonismo desmascarado ou breve opusculo em que com factos e raciocinios se prova como o maçonismo he o judeismo*, (Lisbon: Maignrense, 1823), p. 1.

were accused of secretly practicing Judaism. Unlike in Spain, where an initial persecution of crypto-Jews was eventually eclipsed by persecutions of others (like Muslims and Lutherans) the Holy Inquisition in Portugal conducted a sustained repression of suspected secret Jews until the early 1700s and continued to mostly arrest “New Christians” for its entire existence.⁶⁵ The Portuguese state continued to impose legal inferiority and other restrictions on New Christians until 1774.⁶⁶

This centuries-long demonization of Jews and the idea that Portugal was full of deceptive Jews who concealed their true nature coupled very nicely with the grand Masonic conspiracy theory that warned of secret freemasons hiding their true nature as they manipulated society. Montiero even went one step further and made a peculiarly Portuguese anti-Jewish reference in his pamphlet. Point thirteen of his proof of the Jewish origin of Masonry is: “In the profession of medicine there are many Masons, because they descend from the ancient physicians, who were, for the most part Jews. They now cover their rabbinical spirit with the forms of masonry.”⁶⁷ This harkens back to a forged letter purportedly from Jews in Constantinople to the New Christians of Spain and Portugal, recommending that they get revenge on the Christians by infiltrating the medical profession and poisoning their patients. A Portuguese document from 1642 listed 52 New Christian medical professionals who were accused of murder in Portugal and Spain, and Christians in Portugal were banned from studying to be apothecaries in the same year.⁶⁸

Fortunately, Montiero’s version of the Judeo-Masonic conspiracy theory had no evident lasting effect in Portugal. The content of his pamphlet and its re-publishing by an official organ demonstrates the perceived utility that propagandists found in conspiracy theories, and his anti-Jewish modification of the Freemason/Carbonari myth was well adapted for local conditions: a tried-and-true propaganda attack on liberals and revolutionaries with an added spice of Jew hatred to grab people’s attention or ensure that any Portuguese who hated Jews would also support the new counterrevolution.

Prominent Jews, Real and Fictional: the Rothschilds and Sidonia

The Judeo-Masonic myth in its full form resurfaced again in Germany after the upheavals of 1848. A Berlin schoolmaster named Carl Didler began publishing a stream of anti-masonic pamphlets, recapitulating the now well-tried story of a Masonic plot to usurp power under the guise of republicanism. Didler argued that the Jews were behind this plot. The writings of Didler are sometimes erroneously considered the first version of the Judeo-Masonic conspiracy theory.⁶⁹ What is interesting about Didler’s version of the Judeo-Masonic conspiracy theory was that it appears to have been the fourth or fifth time the anti-Masonic conspiracy theory

⁶⁵ François Soyer, *The Persecution of the Jews and Muslims of Portugal: King Manuel I and the End of Religious Tolerance (1496-7)*, (Brill, 2007,) p. 294.

⁶⁶ Marvin Perry, Frederick M. Schweitzer, *Anti-Semitism: Myth and Hate from Antiquity to the Present*, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 242.

⁶⁷ “On the Freemasons, Jesuits, and Jews of Portugal,” p. 495.

⁶⁸ Soyer, pp. 292-293.

⁶⁹ Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, *The Politics of Sociability: Freemasonry and German Civil Society, 1840-1918*, Tom Lampert trans., (University of Michigan, 2007), p. 74.

independently morphed into an anti-Jewish one, as there is no indication that any of the several different authors of separate Judeo-Masonic conspiracy theories knew about each other's work.⁷⁰

These separate instances of the use of a Judeo-Masonic conspiracy theory involved grafting anti-Jewish ideas onto the previously existing body of the Freemason/Illuminati myth. Unfortunately, these separate uses would not remain unconnected historical curiosities. Maistre's essay to the Russian Tsar accusing the Jews of being connected to the Illuminati was published in 1859, which meant that conservatives in Europe would have come across the idea while studying this grand philosopher of reaction, though this was probably not a primary cause of the idea's popularization. By the late 19th century the Judeo-Masonic conspiracy theory had transformed into a standard, coherent narrative using common pieces of evidence and tropes. This was in large part due to the work of a few prominent propagandists who will be discussed later in this chapter, but there are two other important events during this period that significantly affected the development of anti-Jewish conspiracy. These were the rise of the Rothschild banking family and also the appearance of the idea of an international Jewish conspiracy in fiction. One novel featuring such a conspiracy was written by a future British prime minister. These developments demonstrate the increasing prominence of some Jews in European affairs, leading to the easy inclusion of them in pre-existing conspiratorial narratives.

In the early 19th century the Rothschilds, a Jewish family from Frankfurt, set up an international banking network that spread across Western and Central Europe. During and after the Napoleonic wars the family made large amounts of money by facilitating intergovernmental payments, bullion shipments and, more lucratively, by engaging in arbitrage between the prices of different currencies in the different European cities, using the money they were transferring as their source of capital.⁷¹ The family built up large reserves of capital and were instrumental in developing the international bond market, as well as doing business in many important sectors of the economy, railroads and mining for example.⁷² After the Napoleonic Wars, the core of the family business was built on access to privileged information that would affect bond markets, and the Rothschilds performed "favors" for prominent European officials (bribes) to lubricate the flow of exclusive information and ensure that the Rothschilds remained the favored bankers of the major European powers, and also to influence opinion about their reputation.⁷³ A notable event illustrating their influence was the 1827 entry for "Rothschild" in a popular German encyclopedia. It was written by none other than Friedrich von Gentz, the secretary and confidant to Metternich (someone who had access to all sorts of information that the Rothschilds would have been interested in.) The article was read aloud to senior Rothschild clerk Leopold von Wertheimstein before publication, and ten days later Gentz received a reward from the head of the Viennese branch of the family- Salomon von Rothschild.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ Umberto Eco suggests that Barruel's spreading of the Simonini forgery among his confidants and in the church might have given the idea to others. See his *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods*, (Harvard University Press, 1994), pp. 135-136.

⁷¹ Niall Ferguson, *The House of Rothschild: Volume 1: Money's Prophets: 1798-1848*, (Penguin Publishing Group, 1999), Kindle Edition, Locations 2346-2354.

⁷² Ferguson, Locations 279-280.

⁷³ Ferguson, Locations 3873-3874.

⁷⁴ Ferguson, Locations 402-403.

The Rothschilds were often given a leading role in anti-Jewish, or anti-capitalist, or even anti-monarchist conspiracy theories, along with other supporting characters who were also influential 19th century Jewish bankers, such as the British Jewish banker Moses Montefiore or the Prussian Jewish banker Gerson von Bleichröder. It is true that any family with such wealth, access, and influence would likely have become a target of conspiracy theorists, but the fact that the Rothschilds were Jewish made them especially suited for this role, and a more attractive target for polemicists.

In the early 1840s France was attempting to develop its fledgling railway system. The political debate about how to finance and run this important new type of infrastructure divided between those who wanted the project to be state-run and those who favored private ownership. The Rothschilds were involved in the eventual construction of these new lines, though they were not at the forefront. After a railroad accident occurred on the Rothschild-owned Northern Line there was an outburst of anti-Rothschild/anti-Jewish pamphlets and books from French Socialist writers.⁷⁵ One socialist pamphlet made an accusation that would become a staple of anti-Jewish conspiracy theorists: The Rothschilds were the ruling dynasty of the Jews, and that the current sovereign, the Paris-based James Rothschild, had corruptly conspired to take advantage of the supposedly “free” auction of shares in the new railroad, using his London connections, and then handed out many of these shares to important politicians and journalists as bribes.⁷⁶ Another influential socialist writer Alphonse Toussenel wrote an influential book *Les juifs, rois de l'époque* (The Jews, Kings of the age) which attacked the Rothschilds, the Calvinist Genevese, the other money-lending Jews, the English, and all bankers as all kinds of “Jews” who were conspiring to foist a new form of “financial feudalism” on France.⁷⁷

The Rothschild's prominence as bankers and their lineage as Jews made them potential targets of both the right and left. The 19th century German poet and acquaintance of some of the Rothschilds Heinrich Heine sketched the structure of the different kinds of blame heaped on the Rothschilds from both ends of the political spectrum. Heine described the ideas later to become a mainstay of conspiracy theorists on the left, that the Rothschilds (or bankers in general) were propping up old regimes and forestalling the coming of revolution (and therefore, some on the left would say, progress):

“...without the Rothschilds' help the financial embarrassment of most states would have been exploited by subversives wanting to mislead the populace into upsetting whatever order or disorder constituted the status quo. Revolutions are generally triggered off by deficiency of money; by preventing such deficiencies, the Rothschild system may serve to preserve peace in Europe... Religion is no longer able to guarantee the governments that the people will remain peaceful; the Rothschild system of loans can perform the task much better...”⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Michael Graetz, *The Jews in Nineteenth-Century France*, Jane Marie Todd trans., (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), p. 80.

⁷⁶ Georges Marie Mathieu-Dairnvaell, under the pen-name Satan, *Histoire édifiante et curieuse de Rothschild Ier, Roi des Juifs*, (Paris: 1846), p. 18.

⁷⁷ Alphonse Toussenel, *Les juifs, rois de l'époque: histoire de la féodalité financière*, in two volumes, (Paris: Librairie De L'ecole Sociétaire, 1845).

⁷⁸ Ferguson, Locations 5393-5403.

On the other hand, Heine recognized the importance of the financial revolution in Europe that the Rothschilds ushered in that downgraded the importance of the landed aristocracy, and therefore paved the way for further political “progress.” This would help them fit snugly into conspiracy theories about a plot against tradition:

“I see in Rothschild one of the greatest revolutionaries who have founded modern democracy. Richelieu, Robespierre and Rothschild are for me three terroristic names, and they signify the gradual annihilation of the old aristocracy.... Then came Rothschild and destroyed the predominance of land, by raising the system of state bonds to supreme power, thereby mobilising property and income and at the same time endowing money with the previous privileges of the land. He thereby created a new aristocracy, it is true, but this, resting as it does on the most unreliable of elements, on money, can never play as enduringly regressive a role as the former aristocracy, which was rooted in the land, in the earth itself.”⁷⁹

Both these ideas, re-cast as accusations, would be used to attack the Rothschilds as the directors of or major participants in vast Jewish conspiracies that were either inhibiting “progress” or a sinister hand behind supposedly progressive forces.

There was another well-known Jew who had a great influence on the history of anti-Jewish conspiracy theories, but this one was a fictional character created by Benjamin Disraeli, a Jewish convert to Christianity. Before embarking on a political career, the future Prime Minister of Great Britain Benjamin Disraeli worked as a novelist. He continued to write after he had entered parliament. In 1844 he published the novel *Coningsby, or, the New Generation*. In snippets throughout the book within statements from the characters, the book contained a political program aimed at encouraging young English Tories. Disraeli said in the 1849 fifth edition of the novel that the purpose of the book was “to vindicate the just claims of the Tory Party to be the popular political confederation of the country.”⁸⁰ One of the characters in this novel is Sidonia, an incredibly interesting, influential, and talented Jewish banker whose family had been clandestinely Jewish in Spain for generations.⁸¹ The creation of Sidonia was partly inspired by Lionel Rothschild,⁸² a member of the prominent Jewish banking family who was a friend of Disraeli.⁸³ In the novel, Sidonia’s “pastime” was “the secret history of the world.” “No Minister of State had such communication with secret agents and political spies as Sidonia.”⁸⁴ In the novel Sidonia describe a fictional grand network of Jews who hold the most influential positions all over Europe: “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.”⁸⁵ As Sidonia asserts earlier in the novel:

“The first Jesuits were Jews; that mysterious Russian Diplomacy which so alarms Western Europe is organised and principally carried on by Jews; that mighty revolution which is at this moment

⁷⁹ Ferguson, Locations 5425-5435.

⁸⁰ David Cesarani, *Disraeli: The Novel Politician*, (Yale University Press, 2016), pp. 94-96.

⁸¹ Benjamin Disraeli, *Coningsby; Or, The New Generation* (Project Gutenberg, 2005), Kindle Edition, Location 3139.

⁸² Ferguson, Location 4206.

⁸³ Cesarani, p. 116.

⁸⁴ Disraeli, Locations 3219-3227.

⁸⁵ Disraeli, Locations 3685-3686.

preparing in Germany, and which will be, in fact, a second and greater Reformation, and of which so little is as yet known in England, is entirely developing under the auspices of Jews,..."⁸⁶

The character of Sidonia is one of the most famous of Disraeli's literary creations,⁸⁷ but after Disraeli became prime minister and then one of the most influential men of his age some Jew-haters looked at his work of fiction in a new light. They used the character of Sidonia to support the idea of an international Jewish conspiracy. One biographer of Disraeli has pointed out that while he fashioned Sidonia as a hero, a super-influential, super intelligent Jew who was well-versed in operations behind the scenes, "...after a century and a half of Jewish history that Disraeli could never have foreseen, Sidonia looks like nothing so much as an anti-Semitic hate figure."⁸⁸ To the eyes of a paranoid Jew-hater, Sidonia is an example of a conspirator who has many of the attributes that would become standard: he is an international man of mystery, he is a resident of England (a stronghold of liberalism and parliamentarism and a force against authoritarianism), he is a banker, and he believes strongly in the genetic superiority of the Jewish race.

Sidonia's statements about the hidden hands that drive history have cropped up again and again in conspiracy theorist literature,⁸⁹ and we shall take a look at a prime example in a few pages. This is an example of the curious relationship conspiracy theorists often have with fiction, which goes beyond the use of fictional works portrayed as non-fiction by propagandists. The scholar of conspiracy theories Jovan Byford pointed this relationship out:

"...it (the novel *Coningsby*) illustrates the *fact-fiction reversal* commonly found in conspiracy literature. The conspiracy theorist believes not only that 'what the world at large regards as fact is actually fiction', but sometimes also the reverse, namely that 'what seems to be fiction is actually fact.'"⁹⁰

Cretineau-Joly and *The Roman Church in the Face of the Revolution*

The attitude of senior figures in the Roman Catholic Church also helped foster the idea of the Judeo-Masonic conspiracy. In addition to periodic recapitulations of "traditional" anti-Jewish ideas such as the blood libel and the idea that the teachings of the Talmud require Jews to be dishonest swindlers, some clerics and writers with the support of the Church began to write about the Judeo-Masonic conspiracy theory in the mid-19th century. An example of this is the two-volume book *L'église Romaine en Face de la Révolution* (The Roman Church in the Face of the Revolution) by the famous French pro-Roman Catholic historian J. Cretineau-Joly. It was published between 1858-1859, right before the Second Italian war of Independence when the Papal States were absorbed by the kingdom of Sardinia. It updated the Carbonari legend and added an anti-Jewish twist. Supposedly based on information from documents obtained by the Roman Catholic Church, Cretineau-Joly laid out the Jansenist/Masonic/Carbonari plot to destroy the Church, unify Italy, and spread republicanism.

⁸⁶ Disraeli, *Locations* 3663-3666.

⁸⁷ Cesarani, p. 96.

⁸⁸ Adam Kirsch, *Benjamin Disraeli*, (Schocken Books, 2008) p. 131.

⁸⁹ Jovan Byford, *Conspiracy Theories: A Critical Introduction*, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 48.

⁹⁰ Byford, pp. 48-49.

Cretineau-Joly's conspiracy theory was in the mold of De Maistre's (whom Cretineau-Joly praised and referenced)⁹¹ - a conspiracy that was not Jewish per-se, but one that recruited the Jews, along with Protestants and secret societies, to accomplish the destruction of the throne and altar, though the Jews had a special role: "The Revolution led all the sects into battle against Rome. The academy and the agora, the secret societies, and the princes, nations, and armies, the Jew and the Evangelical Christian, she summoned everything under her flag."⁹² Portions of this narrative would have been familiar to Barruel, Jean Filleau and his fellow 17th century anti-Jansenists, and Metternich and his anti-Carbonari contemporaries. In his second volume Cretineau-Joly introduced the character of a key Jewish leader in the Carbonari known only by the code-name of "Piccolo Tigre" - little tiger.⁹³ Piccolo Tigre was supposedly one of the main agents of the *Comite Directeur* in Italy, and large parts of the second volume were based on what Cretineau-Joly claimed were captured correspondence between Piccolo Tigre and another Carbonari leader with the code-name Nubius. Cretineau-Joly went beyond just accusing a particular Jew of being a Carbonari. He wrote that Jewish bankers were core drivers of the conspiracy, the ones who financed it and made sure that it lasted and that the Carbonari/Freemason leaders were maintained in comfort. Their motive was revenge against Christendom:

"It is not very difficult in history to catch-out the hand or the gold of certain Jews, Germans or Italians, exciting revolts and facilitating any career in anarchic passions... These eternally-outcast have penetrated into the bosom of the secret societies. They have supplied them in times of scarcity and encouraged them in days of prosperity; They have incessantly supplied their leaders with subsidies to satisfy their thirst for material happiness. The number of Jews who undertake this trade of hatred and vengeance is very limited; But, by dint of patience and prodigality, they enclosed the Secret Societies in the circle of Popilius....The Jews have contracted a market; They have made a deposit; This market must be executed. This market must fall back upon the social order with all the weight of the curse to which they know they themselves are condemned." ⁹⁴

Cretineau-Joly was not just an over enthusiastic Roman Catholic conservative spinning conspiracy theories, he had the full support of the Vatican. The 1861 third edition of *L'église Romaine en Face de la Révolution* began with a blessing from Pope Pius IX. The Pope had just endured being on the losing side of the Second Italian War of Independence, and the Papal states had lost most of their territories. Addressing Cretineau-Joly the Pope wrote:

"You acquired special rights to Our gratitude, when, two years ago, you formed the project of composing this work, now completed and again delivered to print, to show through documents that the Roman Church always has the envy and hatred of the wicked in the midst of the political revolutions of our ever-triumphant century. So it is with happiness that We have received the copies of which You have paid homage to us, and of this most affectionate attention We give you just thanks."

⁹¹ Jacques Crétineau-Joly, *L'église Romaine en Face de la Révolution*, Vol. 1, (Paris: Henri Plon, 1859), p. 50.

⁹² Jacques Crétineau-Joly, *L'église Romaine en Face de la Révolution*, Vol. 2, (Paris: Henri Plon, 1859), p. 534.

⁹³ Crétineau-Joly, Vol. 2, p. 120.

⁹⁴ Crétineau-Joly, Vol. 2, p. 386-386.

The “Bible of Modern Anti-Semitism”

Cretineau-Joly's work was apparently quite popular in his day, but it has faded from historical memory as a contributor to the Judeo-Masonic conspiracy theory. This is partially because it was overshadowed by another, much more emphatically anti-Jewish, sensational, and influential work endorsed by senior members of the Roman Catholic hierarchy that was published a decade later. This was the 1869 *Le Juif, le judaïsme et la judaïsation des peuples chrétiens* (The Jew, Judaism, and the Judaization of the Christian Peoples) by the French author Gougenot des Mousseaux. This work, called the “Bible of Modern Anti-Semitism” by the scholar Norman Cohn, asserts that a society of Satan-worshipping Kabbalistic Jews was behind the grand conspiracy against the throne and altar, and that they were clandestinely driving the world towards their ultimate goal: the reign of the Antichrist.⁹⁵ The Freemasons play an important role in this plan, but they are just the latest edition in a long line of Jewish intrigue stretching back to the early Christian heresies.

“... on all the points of this globe where a Jew's heart is beating, that this Jew testifies of his most ardent sympathies with Masonry, upon which the Church of Christ has thrown the wrath of his anathemas. For Masonry, which sprang from the mysterious doctrines of the cabal, which the nineteenth-century philosopher *cultivated behind the thickness of its walls*, is only the modern and principal form of occultism, of which the Jew is the prince, because he was in all ages the prince and the great master of cabal. The Jew is therefore naturally, and we add that he is necessarily, the soul, the chief, the great and real master of masonry...”⁹⁶

Mousseaux spun together “traditional” anti-Jewish ideas like the blood libel and the evil of the Talmud with ideas about the ancient heretical origins of Freemasonry and its anti-Christian and anti-societal aims. He tied together beliefs about the Freemasons like those espoused by Barruel, beliefs about the Assassins and Templars like those espoused by Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall, beliefs about the Carbonari believed by Metternich and espoused by Cretineau-Joly, and the conspiracy theories surrounding the Rothschilds and other Jewish bankers. His accusations are often backed up by copious selective quotations from contemporary sources, particularly the French Jewish periodical *Archives Israélites*, in a manner reminiscent of Barruel's selective quotations from Voltaire. The book begins by quoting the character of Sidonia from Disraeli's novel. Mousseaux selectively strung two quotes together and also implied that Disraeli himself made this statement as one of fact, instead of the words he put into the mouth of a fictional character. (He also edited out the accusation from Sidonia/Disraeli that the first Jesuits were Jews):

“The world is governed by very different personages from what is imagined by those who are not behind the scenes... that mysterious Russian Diplomacy which so alarms Western Europe is organised and principally carried on by Jews; that mighty revolution which is at this moment preparing in Germany, and which will be, in fact, a second and greater Reformation, and of which so little is as yet known in England, is entirely developing under the auspices of Jews, etc.” - Disraeli, former Prime Minister of Great Britain, son of an Israelite. See in this book, chapter X.”⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide*, p. 47.

⁹⁶ Gougenot Des Mousseaux, *Le juif: le Judaïsme et la Judaïsation des Peuples Chrétiens*, (Paris: Henri Plon, 1869), p. xxiii.

⁹⁷ Mousseaux, *Le juif*, title page.

One of the biggest ideas that Mousseaux popularized was the mixing of traditional anti-Jewish themes with themes of the occult and devil-worship, and this in a work of ostensible non-fiction. (There was at least one mention of a occult Jewish conspiracy in fiction published in German in 1868, a year before Mousseaux's work. See the discussion of the *Rabbi's Speech* in next chapter.) Using this idea of a central Jewish-satanic cabal (with one of its main outposts in Paris) he merged the narratives of Maistre and Cretineau-Joly, - of a Illuminati/*Comité Directeur* allied to the Jews because of a common interest in the spread of liberalism - with an idea like those of Montiero and Simonini (though there is no evidence Mousseaux read them) that a clique of Kabbalistic Jews were at the center of the conspiracy. He claimed that Jewish mysticism (the Kabbalah) disguises secret evil eastern doctrines that are the core of Freemasonry and all the other anti-Christian secret societies around the world.

His evidence for the existence of a satanic cabal at the center of all these plots were selected excerpts from a few works of contemporary occultists and amateur Freemason-historians. His key sources were the works of David Paul Drach, a former Rabbi who had converted to Roman Catholicism⁹⁸ and most importantly the books *Histoire de la Magie* (History of Magic) and *Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie* (Dogmas and Ritual of High Magic) by Éliphas Lévi, an "eminent cabalist" (according to Mousseaux's description.)⁹⁹ Mousseaux had briefly mentioned this magician Éliphas Lévi in his own previous work on magic *Les hauts Phénomènes de la magie, Précédés du Spiritisme Antique* (The High Phenomena of Magic, Preceded by Ancient Spiritualism.) In *Le Juif, le judaïsme et la judaïsation des peuples chrétiens* he quoted selectively from Éliphas Lévi (mixed with general statements derived from Drach) pointing to proofs that ancient Judaism had been corrupted by evil rabbis, who adopted demonic doctrines from the east and deceived their people and fought Christianity. This group of Jewish leaders eventually created Freemasonry as a tool to fight their Christian enemy and bring about a world revolution: "The Kabbalistic doctrine, which is the dogma of the high magic, is contained in the Sepher-Jesirah, the Zohar and the Talmud"¹⁰⁰ "The great kabbalistic association known in Europe under the name of Masonry suddenly appears in the world at a time when the protest against the Church comes to dismember Christian unity."¹⁰¹

Mousseaux concludes his work by stating his belief in a sudden revelation and unification of all occult societies under the control of the Jewish cabal, before they achieve victory with the coming of the antichrist:

"There will arrive, bursting forth one fine evening, one of those great, one of those formidable crises that shake the earth, and which these societies of occultism have long prepared Christian society for, and then perhaps suddenly we shall see appearing in the open, all over the world, all the militias, all the sects, both fraternal and unknown, of the Cabal....They will rally eagerly under one chief. More than one voice of high masonry, i.e. cabalistic masonry, will perhaps then remind us a bit brutally that the Cabal, finally victorious on all sides, is, in the words of its present apostle 'the

⁹⁸ Henry Hyvernat, "Drach, David Paul," in *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. 4, Isidore Singer ed., (New York and London: Funk and Wagnall, 1907), p. 647.

⁹⁹ Mousseaux, *Le juif*, p. 99, footnote 2.

¹⁰⁰ Mousseaux, *Le juif*, p. 99. Quote can be found in Éliphas Lévi, *Historie de la Magie*, (Cambridge, 2011), p. 273.

¹⁰¹ Mousseaux, *Le juif*, p. 101. - Quote can be found in Éliphas Lévi, *Historie de la Magie*, p. 399.

science of the sciences and the religion of religions' (Eliphas Levi, *Dog., And Rit.*, Pp. 244, ii., 1854.)" ¹⁰²

The accusation of a clandestine Jewish cabal orchestrating everything was at the heart of Mousseaux's conspiracy theory. However, Mousseaux believed that there was one high-profile, visible operative of the Judeo-Masonic conspiracy: the Jewish French statesman Adolphe Crémieux, the founder of the philanthropic organization the Universal Israelite Alliance.

Crémieux was one of the most influential liberals of his era. He was a brilliant orator who served as Minister of Justice for France during the short-lived Second Republic.¹⁰³ He was a prominent advocate for the interests of persecuted Jews all over the world, as well as for any other persecuted minority. In 1860 he was instrumental in founding the Universal Israelite Alliance, an organization dedicated to assisting persecuted and impoverished Jews all over the world that still exists today. He became president of that organization in 1863 and as such was an internationally recognized Jewish figure.¹⁰⁴ Given his connections and high profile, he regularly communicated with members of the Rothschild family as well as other prominent European Jews and gentile statesmen. To top it all off, he was a well-known Freemason.¹⁰⁵

Such a man at the head of such an organization was an ideal fit for Mousseaux's Judeo-Masonic conspiracy theory. The influence of Crémieux and his Universal Israelite Alliance in France and Western Europe combined with his activities in the Middle East and Eastern Europe, and his association with Freemasonry made him the perfect anchor-point for Mousseaux's fantasies. Mousseaux considered an incident when Crémieux's interceded to assist the Jews of Romania when they were not going to be granted rights as citizens as a particularly egregious example of the power of international Jewry to usurp the prerogatives of sovereign nations.¹⁰⁶

To Mousseaux, common ideals of liberalism shared between many Freemasons and the Universal Israel Alliance, which hearkened back to the same sources in the Enlightenment and worked towards the same goals, were not evidence of a similar ideology penetrating different groups but evidence of a single conspiracy using the same kind of propaganda:

"Do we hear? Do we understand? Do we not see these doctrines as clearly formulated by the official organs of the Universal Israelite Alliance as by the organs of Freemasonry? And whenever one of these *universal* associations expresses herself, are we at all surprised to hear her repeat, in variations, the language of her sisters? *This is the anti-Christian philosophy of the eighteenth century, the Universal Israelite Alliance*, and the *universal* society of masonry... animated by one

¹⁰² Mousseaux, *Le juif*, p. 554.

¹⁰³ Joseph Reinach, "Crémieux, Isaac Adolphe," *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. 4, (New York and London: Funk and Wagnalls, 1916), pp. 345-348

¹⁰⁴ For a narrative of Crémieux's career and his role in the founding of the Universal Israelite Alliance see Simone Mrejen-O'Hana, "Isaac-Jacob Adolphe Crémieux, Avocat, homme politique, président du Consistoire central et de l'Alliance israélite universelle," in *Archives Juives*, 2003/2 (Volume. 36) pp. 139-146. Available at <https://www.cairn.info/revue-archives-juives-2003-2-page-139.htm>. Accessed October 8, 2017.

¹⁰⁵ Angela Jianu, *A Circle of Friends: Romanian Revolutionaries and Political Exile, 1840-1859*, (Brill, 2011), p. 54.

¹⁰⁶ See in particular Mousseaux, *Le juif*, pp. Xxxvii - xxxix - which quotes an article from the Russian newspaper *Golos* that makes this point.

and the same soul! And the masonry of the *senior* adepts, that of the *serious initiates*, finally allows us to see - through the meaning of its manifestos - that it is ultimately only the *latent* organization of militant Judaism, just as the Universal Israelite Alliance is one of its parent organizations.”¹⁰⁷

Like *L'église Romaine en Face de la Révolution* by J. Cretineau-Joly, *Le Juif, le Judaïsme et la Judaïsation des Peuples Chrétiens* was produced with the apparent cooperation of prominent Roman Catholic figures. A forward to *Le Juif, le Judaïsme et la Judaïsation des Peuples Chrétiens* was written by one R. P. Voisin, the director of the Seminary for foreign missions in Paris. Mousseaux's anti-Jewish work was part of a larger anti-Freemason conspiracist push that took place within the Roman Catholic church in the runup to the Vatican Council of 1870 which tried to discredit Freemasonry and other progressive forces.¹⁰⁸ Mousseaux was inducted into the Roman Catholic “Order of Pius IX”¹⁰⁹ in recognition, it was said, for writing this anti-Jewish tome.¹¹⁰

Le Juif, le Judaïsme et la Judaïsation des Peuples Chrétiens is rightly regarded as the most influential work asserting the existence of the Judeo-Masonic conspiracy until *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* was first published 34 years later. *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* was obviously heavily influenced by this book, or at least, its authors were under its heavy indirect influence via those who had read and believed Mousseaux.¹¹¹ Mousseaux seemingly wove together every scrap of anti-Masonic and anti-Jewish information he could find into one giant tapestry demonstrating the influence and perfidy of the Jews. This ambitious project had flaws that were obvious on inspection, but the text itself is full of footnotes and the book has an air of erudition. When read as excerpts by a credulous person already given to Jew-hatred, Freemason-hatred, and hatred of the ideas of liberalism and republicanism, this book could be persuasive enough, as long as one does not research too much further. For example, weaving together the history of the Carbonari as related by Cretineau-Joly with the politics of 1869, Gougenot des Mousseaux claimed that the Carbonari leader with the code-name Nubius (whose correspondence with the Jewish Carbonari “Piccolo Tigre” is recorded in Cretineau-Joly's work) is none other than the then British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli.¹¹² If Gougenot des Mousseaux took Cretineau-Joly's chronology seriously, and there is every indication he did, then this would mean that the precocious Benjamin Disraeli assumed control of the Italian Carbonari at the age of 19.

Even more discrediting than this questionable chronology is the key source for Mousseaux's claim about the Kabbalistic Jews: Eliphas Lévi. In his previous work on magic, Mousseaux indicated that he knew the name Eliphas Lévi was a pseudonym, but speculated “Perhaps he [Lévi] wanted to write Levite [the Jewish priestly tribe] for he wore the sacred robe.”¹¹³ Despite what his pen-name implies Lévi was not Jewish, but was in fact a gentile

¹⁰⁷ Mousseaux, *Le juif*, p. xxiii.

¹⁰⁸ Cohn, p. 50.

¹⁰⁹ *Pontifical Catholique*, Year 8, (Paris: Maison de la Bonne Presse, 1905).

¹¹⁰ See the excerpted quote in *Journal General De L'imprimerie et de la librairie*, series 2, volume 15, 1871, (Paris: cercle de l'imprimerie, de la librairie et de la papeterie, 1871), p. 189.

¹¹¹ Cohn, pp. 48-49.

¹¹² Mousseaux, *Le juif*, pp. 372-373.

¹¹³ Gougenot Des Mousseaux, *Les hauts phénomènes de la magie, précédés du spiritième antique*, (Paris: Henri Plon, 1864), p. 242.

Frenchman named Alphonse-Louis Constant. Constant had gone to seminary but departed from the path a week before he was to be ordained, had been convicted in France in 1841 of writing a book that preached impiety and subversion. He had spent time in prison. He switched careers from that of a failed politically-radical priest and become a successful writer about the occult. He adopted the name Eliphas Levi and abandoned “the Abbee Constant.” It is a great historical irony that Mousseaux’s work, endorsed by the Pope, which made a big contribution to one of the most murderous ideologies in history and harmed the reputation of the Roman Catholic Church, was dependent on the work of such a poor source who obviously should not have been knowingly trusted by any Roman Catholic.¹¹⁴ In a single footnote in *Le Juif, le Judaïsme et la Judaïsation des Peuples Chrétiens* Mousseaux describes Levi as “anti-Catholic”¹¹⁵ but evidently did not mind taking everything he wrote at face value. One generally positive contemporary review of *Le Juif, le Judaïsme et la Judaïsation des Peuples Chrétiens* complained that “... it would nevertheless have much more authority if M. des Mousseaux did not constantly quote the works of M. Eliphas Levy. Does this not give this forgotten author undue importance?”¹¹⁶

Analysis: the first generation of the Judeo-Masonic Conspiracy theory

The Judeo-Masonic conspiracy theory was used in public propaganda in French and Portuguese, and the works of Cretineau-Joly, Mousseaux, and Maistre allowed this idea to spread throughout Europe, and only began to noticeably affect politics and popular opinion in the late 19th century. The addition of Jew hatred to the Freemason/Illuminati conspiracy theory did not change many minds among the reading public from 1806-1870. Perhaps this was because there was so little novel in these earlier versions of the Judeo-Masonic conspiracy theory, apart from the addition of Jews on top of the old anti-Freemason stories. The narrative was still the same: political liberalism, forms of republicanism, and Enlightenment ideas were just camouflage and propaganda for a group of anti-Christian deceptive usurpers intent on making revolution to overthrow established (mainly monarchical) governments and destroy the Christian religion.

The Russian Empire - a separate variant of the anti-Jewish Grand Conspiracy theory

The Judeo-Masonic conspiracy did not make a direct impact on the Jews in the Russian Empire in the mid 19-century. Of course, some Russians were aware of this Western conspiracy theory but in the mid-19th century a separate anti-Jewish conspiracy developed in the Russian Empire, with some support from elements of the Russian state. Like the Judeo-Masonic conspiracy theory, this Russian one asserted that there was a secret network of Jews who were trying to manipulate society for nefarious ends. Unlike the Judeo-Masonic conspiracy theory, this one derived its structure from the anti-Jesuit conspiracy theory that had been used by

¹¹⁴ See the biography of Constant by Christopher McIntosh, *Eliphas Levi and the French Occult Revival*, Second Edition, (State University of New York, 2011), particularly pp. 71-72, 77, 82.

¹¹⁵ Mousseaux, *Le juif*, p. 231.

¹¹⁶ Firmin Boissin, Review of “Le juif: le Judaïsme et la Judaïsation des Peuples Chrétiens,” *Polybiblion : revue bibliographique universelle*, volume 5, January, 1870, (Paris: bureau de la Revue, 1870), p. 188.

Russian propagandists during the 1863-1864 Polish rebellion. The development of this separate conspiracy theory indigenous to the Russian empire prepared the way for the Western Judeo-Masonic myth to be seamlessly adopted by elements of the Russian state and a not-insignificant portion of the Russian population at the beginning of the 20th century. This mix of two different complementary conspiracy theories would contribute to one of the deadliest ideologies in history.

First, let us begin with a short history of the Jews of Russian Empire, which really begins with the Jews of Poland. When Jews were being persecuted in and evicted from many Western European states in the late Middle Ages, Poland offered them sanctuary. King Casimir III of Poland (1310-1370) encouraged Jews to come to Poland and set the stage for further Jewish migration from Western Europe. He granted them special privileges and Jews started performing important functions such as the minting of currency and tax farming.¹¹⁷ Over the centuries Jews became integrated into the Polish economy as the middlemen between nobles and peasants. One scholar of Jewish economic life in 19th century Poland described it as a “noble-Jewish symbiosis,” with nobles leasing many of their important assets to Jewish middlemen or just encouraging Jewish settlement in their lands because of their reputation as hardworking taxpayers who could provide credit.¹¹⁸ Polish nobles would collaborate with their Jewish leaseholders and business partners to avoid state interference in local businesses, most notably by facilitating the Jewish black-market liquor trade.¹¹⁹

This created resentment among the lower classes of Christians. A 1751 Papal Bull from Pope Benedict XIV described some standard complaints Roman Catholics living in the Polish Commonwealth would bring to the Pope’s attention:

“Because the Jews control businesses selling liquor and even wine, they are therefore allowed to supervise the collection of public revenues. They have also gained control of inns, bankrupt estates, villages and public lands by means of which they have subjugated poor Christian farmers. The Jews are cruel taskmasters... although the power to punish lies with the Christian official, he must comply with the commands of the Jews and inflict the punishments they desire. If he doesn’t, he would lose his post. Therefore the tyrannical orders of the Jews have to be carried out.”¹²⁰

This resentment of the Jewish middlemen was even more acute in Ukraine, then mostly under Polish rule. Ukrainians often saw the Jews as a link in the chain of Polish (and therefore Roman Catholic) domination of the oppressed Orthodox Ukrainians.¹²¹ A Ukrainian folk song shows this link:

“Would it not be better,
Would it not be more beautiful,
If in the Ukraine,

¹¹⁷ Heiko Haumann, *A History of East European Jews*, James Patterson trans., (Central European University Press, 2002), p. 4-5.

¹¹⁸ Glenn Dynner, *Yankel’s Tavern, Jews, Liquor, and Life in the Kingdom of Poland*, (Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 6.

¹¹⁹ Dynner, p. 7-8.

¹²⁰ *The Papal Encyclicals: 1740-1878*, “A Quo Primum,” Pádraig M. O’Cleirigh trans., (Perian, 1990), p. 42.

¹²¹ John Klier, *Imperial Russia’s Jewish Question 1855-1881*, (Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 207.

There was no Jew,
There was no Pole,
There was no Union.”¹²²

During the Khmelnytsky Uprising of 1648-1657, a revolt by some Ukrainians against their Polish rulers, an estimated 14,000 to 20,000 Jews were killed. In his letters to Polish authorities justifying the revolt its leader mentioned grievances against Jews alongside grievances against Polish officials.¹²³

The Russian empire inherited this large Jewish population and their resentful neighbors during the partitions of Poland in the 18th century. Before Russia acquired these new territories and populations the Russian state had no experience dealing with Jewish local self-governing religious bodies, called *Kahal*. The Russian state under Catherine the Great left these untouched, and also allowed Jews to continue their special economic activities, like selling alcohol.¹²⁴ However, an influx of Jewish merchants to Moscow caused an outcry among Russian merchants, and Catherine decreed that Jewish merchants could not operate outside of the newly annexed territories. This and subsequent decrees banned Jews from settling in most of the Russian Empire and established the “Pale of Settlement” - areas of the Western Russian empire where Jews were allowed to reside, often with restrictions even within these areas. The Pale of Settlement reached its final form in an 1835 decree of Tsar Nicholas I that also further restricted Jewish movement and automatically stripped any Jew who went abroad of his Russian citizenship.¹²⁵ This restriction of movement was combined with other legal discrimination against Jews and government bans on them practicing their traditional rural trades - dealing in alcohol and innkeeping. When Tsar Alexander II liberated the serfs of the Russian Empire in 1861, allowing peasants to move freely and own their own land, Jews were no longer needed to play their traditional role as the intermediaries between landowners and their serfs. Consequently Jews became increasingly impoverished and were pushed into overcrowded towns.¹²⁶

The resentments against the Jews in the population of Russia's Western borderlands did not diminish, and suspicion of Jews and Jewish institutions contributed to the state's creeping discrimination against them. The institution of local Jewish self-government, the *Kahal*, was formally abolished by the Russian government in 1844. The Jewish community continued to have the collective responsibility of providing military recruits for the Russian army and collecting taxes, only now it was supposedly under state supervision.¹²⁷

¹²² Klier, p. 207.

¹²³ Serhii Plokhyy, *The Gates of Europe: A History of Ukraine* (Basic Books, 2017), Kindle Edition, pp. 98-99.

¹²⁴ Heinz-Dietrich Löwe, “Antisemitism in Russia and the Soviet Union,” in *Antisemitism: A History*, Albert S. Lindemann and Richard S. Levy eds., (Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 167.

¹²⁵ Nicholas I, “Delineation of the Pale of Settlement (April 1835),” in *The Jew in the Modern World*, Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz eds., I Sachs trans., (Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 379.

¹²⁶ Anne Kershen, *Strangers, Aliens and Asians: Huguenots, Jews and Bangladeshis in Spitalfields 1666-2000*, (Routledge, 2004), pp. 41-42.

¹²⁷ I. Michael Aronson, *Troubled Waters, Origins of the 1881 Anti-Jewish Pogroms in Russia*, (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1990) p. 13.

By the mid-1860s some Russian writers would complain of the oppression of Orthodox people by the Jews, and sometimes hinted that the evil Poles were ultimately behind this oppression. Recall from the previous chapter the document “*On the destruction of the Greco-Russian Faith in the regions isolated from Russia*” which claimed to detail the supposed Jesuit/Polish plot against Russia which involved the clever use of Jews to impoverish the Russians by taking “into their hands all the means of acquiring income” and then “drive the Russian residents out of the city and force them to join the peasantry.”¹²⁸ The prominent Russian conservative I. S. Aksakov reiterated these fears in 1867:

“...the contemporary structure of the Jews constitutes, we repeat, a status in statu in the western region, where the wisdom of Polish kings and the Polish szlachta strengthened the Jewish domination long ago... this is a question not about the emancipation of the Jews, but about the emancipation of the Russian population from the Jews, about the freeing of the Russian people in the west, and partly in the south of Russia, from the Jewish yoke.”¹²⁹

In 1866 the *Vilenskii Vestnik*, the official paper of the Vilna Governorate (situated in what is today Lithuania, Belarus, and Latvia) began a discussion of the “Jewish Question” in an effort, the editor wrote “... to discover the most hopeful course for the improvement of the life of the Jewish race, in order to liberate the people of West Russia from the harmful influence of Jewry...”¹³⁰ The first set of articles were written by an assimilated and educated Jew named Lev Levada. He used a story of Polish oppression as a way of explaining the “backwardness” of the Jews. The Poles, he wrote, were hostile to the Jews, and the Polish nobility had cynically used them to their own economic advantage. Jews had responded to this exploitation by turning inward and developing the institution of the *Kahal* to increase solidarity and protect members of the Jewish community. Now that Polish oppression was a thing of the past, Russia should open its arms to the liberated Jews and fully emancipate them, and the new generation of Jewish youth would flock to the Russian banner and the Jewish question would be resolved.¹³¹ The use of the Polish factor to explain Jewish backwardness was a clever way of placing the Jews on the side of Russia. The 1863 January Uprising of the Poles had ended just a few years ago, and the areas around Vilnius had seen a fair bit of fighting and subsequent repression.

The response to Levada’s articles was overwhelmingly negative. Judeophobes filled the *Vilenskii Vestnik* with accusations about the parasitism of the Jews and their essential alien-ness.¹³² A recurring theme was the Jewish connection to the Poles and the danger this held for Russia. One article accused the Jews of not only being a tool of Polish plots against Russia, but a potential tool for anyone who wanted to harm Russia in the Western borderlands- the Prussians, for example.¹³³

¹²⁸ Kalamajska-Saeed.

¹²⁹ John D. Klier, “Kievlianin and the Jews- A Decade of Disillusionment,” *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (March 1981) p. 92.

¹³⁰ Klier, *Imperial Russia’s Jewish Question*, pp. 166-167.

¹³¹ Klier, *Imperial Russia’s Jewish Question*. p. 167.

¹³² Klier, *Imperial Russia’s Jewish Question*, pp. 167-168.

¹³³ Смолякъ, (Smolyak), “Еврей и Сѣверо-Западный Край Россіи” (Jews and Northwestern border of Russia), *Виленский вестник* (Vilnis Vestnik,) No. 152, 16 July, 1866.

During this debate, a Jewish convert to Russian Orthodoxy and missionary named Jacob Brafman wrote a series of articles describing a conspiracy theory that was to have an immense impact on Jews in the Russian Empire. The essence of his idea was the adaptation and re-direction of ideas from the anti-Jesuit Russian propaganda campaign used against the Polish uprising in 1863 towards a Jewish target. He did not make this link explicit, but it becomes evident once one examines Brafman's accusations. He charged that the Jews ran a clandestine government, a "Talmudic kingdom" based on an oppressive religious hierarchy, the *Kahal*. This meant that the *Kahal* had not really been abolished in 1844, but had gone underground (just like the Jesuits had been banned from the Russian empire in 1820, but according to Russian propaganda, still managed to orchestrate the Polish Uprising of 1863.) Like the supposed Jesuit conspiracy to keep Russian Christians ignorant and pliable, this *Kahal* was supposedly deliberately keeping the Jewish masses in ignorance and poverty in order to exploit them. Brafman made an oblique criticism of Judeophobes who made the "error" of focusing on the Talmud as the root of the Jewish evil. These Judeophobes, some of them well-meaning (according to Brafman) were attacking the obviously insane Talmud but ignoring the real enemy: the *Kahal*.¹³⁴ Local agents of the Russian government were playing into the hands of the secret *Kahal* by allowing the collection of taxes by the Jewish religious hierarchy, and turning a blind eye as they skimmed off the top to finance their clandestine *Kahal* government.¹³⁵ Brafman maintained that the *Kahal* sought to deceive educated opinion in Russia and Europe (similar to the accusation of what the Jesuits supposedly did in the discussed anti-Jesuit conspiracy theory.) 19th century European Jews, Brafman claimed, using their new-found wealth, were waging a campaign to improve Judaism's image and encourage the idea of a Jewish "enlightenment" that would integrate Jews with European civilization: "...many foreign publicists and writers... suddenly recommend Judaism...the facts appeared in print proving that the fanaticism of the Jews was not so potent that European civilization could not have a powerful influence on them."¹³⁶ He claimed that all this positive spin and promises of a Jewish enlightenment that would transform Jews into "normal" members of society was a ruse: the educated Jews calling for emancipation were really just tickling the fancy of European public opinion.¹³⁷ In fact, he wrote, the "Talmudic kingdom" still reigned over the Jews¹³⁸ and even the "emancipated" liberal Jews were still really under the control of their local *Beth Din* (rabbinical court.)¹³⁹ Towards the end of his last article, Brafman made an appeal to the Tsar-

¹³⁴ Яков Брафман (Jacob Brafman), "Взглядъ Еврея, принявшаго православіе, на реформу въ бытъ еврейскаго народа въ россіи" (The view of a Jew who converted to Orthodoxy on reforming the way of life of the Jewish people in Russia) Part 3, *Виленский вестник* (Vilnis Vestnik,) No. 173, 16 August 1866.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Яков Брафман (Jacob Brafman), "Взглядъ Еврея, принявшаго православіе, на реформу въ бытъ еврейскаго народа въ россіи" (The view of a Jew who converted to Orthodoxy on reforming the way of life of the Jewish people in Russia) Part 1, *Виленский вестник* (Vilnis Vestnik,) No. 149, 13 July 1866.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Яков Брафман (Jacob Brafman), "Взглядъ Еврея, принявшаго православіе, на реформу въ бытъ еврейскаго народа въ россіи" (The view of a Jew who converted to Orthodoxy on reforming the way of life of the Jewish people in Russia) Part 2, *Виленский вестник* (Vilnis Vestnik,) No 151, 15 July 1866.

¹³⁹ Яков Брафман (Jacob Brafman), "Взглядъ Еврея, принявшаго православіе, на реформу въ бытъ еврейскаго народа въ россіи" (The view of a Jew who converted to Orthodoxy on reforming the way of life of the Jewish people in Russia) *Виленский вестник* (Vilnis Vestnik,) No. 149, 13 July 1866.

Liberator, Alexander II, who had freed the serfs, to free the Jews from their secret captors. He ended this article with a translation of an 1825 document he claimed showed the kinds of penalties the *Kahal* meted out to Jews who resisted it.¹⁴⁰

This was an innovative attack on Judaism. This secret Jewish shadow government, not the Talmud or poor government policy, was blamed for the poverty and “backwardness” of the Jews.¹⁴¹ The day after Brafman’s article describing the secret Kahal appeared in the *Vilenskii Vestnik*, the head of the Vilnius educational district Ivan Kornilov wrote to the Russian ministry of education about the secret *Kahal*. He was obviously impressed by Brafman and managed to get him appointed as Censor of Jewish books in Vilnius and got him 2,500 rubles to translate some *Kahal* documents.¹⁴² (It should be noted that Kornilov had previously written privately about his belief that the Jews were oppressing the local population.)¹⁴³

Brafman was now a state-subsidized conspiracy theorist. He would publish his first book about this grand Jewish conspiracy in 1868, but he began to enjoy influence and get more government attention before this. His conspiracy theory, not apparently based on racial or Orthodox religious antipathy against the Jews, got the attention of the governor general Eduard Baranov, a Lutheran.¹⁴⁴ Under the influence of Brafman, in August 1867 Baranov issued a circular to all the governors of the Northwest Region of the Russian Empire on how to fight Jewish isolation, which he claimed:

“...creates many abuses and hardships for the Jews themselves since it facilitates the preservation, in secret, of the kahal institution of the Jews which has been abolished by the government. This isolation, which placed the Jews in a position independent from Christian society, gives them [the Jews] the opportunity to abuse their relationship with Christians because every Jew is well aware that in the case [of wrongdoing] he will receive protection and defense from his communal institutions.”¹⁴⁵

Baranov proposed that Jews were to be integrated into their local peasant *volost*, and take part in peasant self-government. In this way they would be tied to the local government and no longer view the peasantry as something to be exploited.¹⁴⁶ However, the *Kahal* would not

¹⁴⁰ Яков Брафман (Jacob Brafman), “Взглядъ Еврея, принявшаго православіе, на реформу въ бытъ еврейскаго народа въ россіи” (The view of a Jew who converted to Orthodoxy on reforming the way of life of the Jewish people in Russia) Part 3, *Виленскій вестник* (Vilnis Vestnik,) No. 173, 16 August 1866. Also Klier, *Imperial Russia’s Jewish Question*, p. 169.

¹⁴¹ Klier, *Imperial Russia’s Jewish Question*, pp. 265, 267

¹⁴² Klier, *Imperial Russia’s Jewish Question*, pp. 266

¹⁴³ М. Золотоносов (M Zolotoosov), “У истоков сра-идеологии (Из книги ‘путеводитель по субкультуре русского антисемитизма’)” (The origins of SRA-ideology, from the book “guide to the subculture of Russian antisemitism), *Труды по иудаике* (Works on Judaica), Issue 3. Petersburg Jewish University, St. Petersburg 1995. Available at http://jhistory.nfurman.com/lessons9/rus_antish.htm, Accessed October 9, 2017.

¹⁴⁴ Darius Staliūnas, *Making Russians*, (Rodopi, 2007) p. 142.

¹⁴⁵ Baranov’s 1867 Circular was republished in Volume 1 of the First edition of the *Kniga Kagala*, see Яковъ Брафманъ (Jacob Brafman), *Книга Кагала* (Book of the Kahal), Volume 1 (Vilnius: Press of the Vilnius Provincial Government, 1869), pp. 156-158. This section’s translation from Klier, *Imperial Russia’s Jewish Question*, p. 172.

¹⁴⁶ Klier, *Imperial Russia’s Jewish Question*, pp. 171-172

simply disappear, and there was the threat that, at least in some areas, Jews could seize control of local government:

“...there is possibility of such a case: That in some towns and cities the number of Jews will exceed the number of Christians, and then the public administration of the latter could fall under the rule of the Jews.”¹⁴⁷

Baranov's solution was a sectarian division in local government. No matter the population of any community, two-thirds of the Christian voters had to agree on any proposal if it was to be agreed upon. This subordination would have meant that even in majority-Jewish areas, the local Christian peasantry would have had control.¹⁴⁸ Baranov requested that regional authorities provide him with a complete census of Jews and Christians, as well as information “about all charitable Jewish institutions, such as: Talmud-Torah [schools], hospitals, almshouses, etc., with an explanation of where they are located and on what account they are held [how they are paid for.]...On all movable and immovable property belonging to Jewish societies and the income received from them...on their spare capital, the results of collection, as well as copies of their current estimates... about the funds and their tax debts which are registered in Jewish societies, including about recruitment arrears.”¹⁴⁹

The local state was not only going to hand over Jewish communities to the mercies of the local peasant voters, but also going to intrusively gather information on the structure and finances of Jewish institutions. This information was probably going to be acted on to harm their communities. However, if one had accepted the truth of Brafman's accusation about the secret *Kahal*, then Baranov was just taking steps against these clandestine tyrants: gathering information about the true nature of the threat and taking steps to rob the *Kahal* of its power. A few years later, Brafman would describe Baranov's proposal as “a well-known circular...on the destruction of the Jewish Kahals...”¹⁵⁰ This project would not have been “totalitarian,” but certainly would have expanded the reach of the state into the lives of Jews. Fortunately for the Jews of the Russian Empire's western borderlands, Baranov was suddenly replaced in 1868.¹⁵¹ Baranov's proposals were debated, and in the end the proposals were scrapped and had no real impact.¹⁵² However, the influence of Brafman's conspiracy theory continued to spread. The Governor-General of the Southwestern Russian Empire also asked for similar reports about the Jewish community in 1868.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁷ Baranov's 1867 Circular, republished in Volume 1 of First edition of *Kniga Kagala*, p. 157. See footnote 145.

¹⁴⁸ John Klier, “Traditions of the Commonwealth: Lithuanian Jewry and the Exercise of Political Power in Tsarist Russia,” in *The Vanished World of Lithuanian Jews*, Alvydas Nikžentaitis, Stefan Schreiner, Darius Staliūnas eds., (Rodopi, 2004), p. 10.

¹⁴⁹ Brafman, *Kniga Kagala*, Volume 1, p. 158.

¹⁵⁰ Brafman, *Kniga Kagala*, Volume 1, p. VI.

¹⁵¹ Benjamin Nathans, *Beyond the Pale: The Jewish Encounter with Late Imperial Russia*, (University of California Press, 2002) p. 175.

¹⁵² Nathans, p. 180.

¹⁵³ Klier, *Imperial Russia's Jewish Question*, p. 172.

Brafman and the *Kniga Kagala*

Before he converted to Christianity, Brafman had clashed with the local Jewish leaders while he was living in Minsk. There is a story that the members of the local Jewish burial society harassed his family for payment when his daughter died, with one of them snatching a pillow from his dead daughter's bed as collateral for Brafman's "debt." (The scholar John Klier suggested that Brafman's subsequent specific focus on the Jewish burial society as the primary agents of the *Kahal* was his revenge for this humiliation.) In danger of being conscripted, he fled his native village and eventually converted to Orthodoxy, becoming a missionary to the Jews. He was given the post of a teacher of Hebrew at the Russian Orthodox Seminary in Minsk.¹⁵⁴ According to his son, during the Polish uprising he worked on a "commission on the analysis of papers in Jewish languages."¹⁵⁵ There was active fighting in the area around Minsk during the Polish Uprising of 1863, and Brafman probably experienced the war firsthand, and was certainly exposed to the anti-Polish/anti-Jesuit propaganda used during that war. As mentioned in the previous section, Brafman stole themes from that anti-Polish/anti-Jesuit propaganda campaign for use in his own anti-Jewish conspiracy theory. This will become even more clear as his work is further analyzed.

After publishing his conspiracy theory in the *Vilenskii Vestnik* in 1866 and permanently moving to Vilnius with a government subsidy, Brafman began working on his magnum opus, a book that described and gave evidence supporting his conspiracy theory: the *Книга Кагала* (*The Book of the Kahal*, transliterated as the *Kniga Kagala*). This book was initially published in two parts, the first titled *Еврейскія Братства, Мръстныя и Всемирныя* (*Jewish Brotherhoods, Local and International*) and the second part titled *Kniga Kagala* that included supposed translations from *Kahal* documents. The book achieved its final, unified form later in 1888. The first editions of these books were published with financial assistance facilitated by the Vilnius Education district director Kornilov.¹⁵⁶

The first part of this work, *Jewish Brotherhoods*, appears to have been rushed into print before the complete work was finished to counteract another pamphlet written by an assimilationist Jew who had written against Jewish religious brotherhoods, but only that they negatively impacted the general welfare of the region.¹⁵⁷ Brafman wrote that the local Jewish religious brotherhoods were not merely retrograde and harmful and instead insisted that they were a global threat against Russia and all of Christian civilization. The Jewish brotherhoods, Brafman claimed, were of two kinds - local and international.¹⁵⁸ He wrote that each local Jewish brotherhood that focused on a particular industry or religious function usually had the *Kahal* standing behind it. On the economic side: wherever Jews existed the *Kahal* and its Jewish brotherhoods were always engaged in a local conspiracy to squeeze out competition. For

¹⁵⁴ Klier, *Imperial Russia's Jewish Question*, p. 263-4.

¹⁵⁵ Н. Н. Покровский (N. N. Pokovskii, "Брафманъ, Яковъ Александровичъ" (Brafman, Jacob Alexandrovich), in *Русский биографический словарь* (Russian Biographical Dictionary), Vol. 3, A. A. Половцова (A. A. Polovtsova) ed., (St Petersburg, Главного Управления Уделов [Chief Administrator of the Units] 1908), p. 334-335.

¹⁵⁶ Klier, *Imperial Russia's Jewish Question*, pp. 266-267.

¹⁵⁷ Zolotonosov.

¹⁵⁸ Brafman, *Jewish Brotherhoods*, p. 20.

example, if the Jews in a particular region were intent on monopolizing local bathhouses, then every attempt by a Gentile to start a bathhouse would be met with the organized, clandestine resistance of the *Kahal* network:

"With each such attempt, the business meets obstacles from a holy [Jewish] brotherhood, behind which, usually, stands the Kahal. In the fight against such powerful opponents as the brotherhood and the Kahal, it is difficult for an individual to resist..."¹⁵⁹

This accusation is parallel to the accusation from the anti-Polish/Jesuit document *On the destruction of the Greco-Russian Faith in the regions isolated from Russia* discussed in the previous chapter, when the Poles/Jesuits were supposedly using Jews to drive the Russian peasants into poverty, as Jews would use their "natural cunning" to "take into their hands all the means of acquiring income."¹⁶⁰ In Brafman's version these Jewish plots to take over local economies were not part of a larger Jesuit conspiracy, but local Jewish conspiracies to squeeze out competition.

Furthermore, Brafman's obsession with Jewish brotherhoods to explain the influence of the *Kahal* even after the *Kahal* had been banned in 1844 is an apparent copy of the accusation that Jesuits had continued their operations in the Russian empire after they were banned in 1820 by using Roman Catholic fraternities (i.e. brotherhoods.) As Count Dmitry Tolstoy wrote in 1864:

"...Their [the Jesuit's] fraternities remained indeed after the expulsion of the Jesuit Body from Russia, and were annexed to other Churches. But these fraternities, maintaining the most strict and yet secret ties with the Monastic Orders and the clergy in general, served as the agents of the Jesuits in society at large; and, acting according to the direction which they received from them dispersed throughout the whole country,..."¹⁶¹

Like the supposed machinations of the Jesuits, the *Kahal* was not just an economic plot against Russia, but also an attempt to usurp the prerogative of the government and govern their own (in this case, Jewish) society secretly through the influence of religion and the brotherhoods, based on fanaticism and coercion:

"Each of the handicraft brotherhoods, in fact, is a separate closed world - a separate small kahal, inaccessible to the influence of state laws and the control of local authorities and before which a separate individual is nothing. At the bottom of this small, original world lie the beginnings on which the Kahal is built, under the tutelage of which all fraternities exist: brute force and idle fanaticism,"¹⁶²

The Jewish Brotherhoods, Brafman claimed, were a normal tool of the "highest Jewish class" in any area, and designed to:

¹⁵⁹ Brafman, *Jewish Brotherhoods*, p. 53.

¹⁶⁰ Kalamajska-Saeed.

¹⁶¹ Tolstoy, *Romanism in Russia*, Vol. 2, p. 232.

¹⁶² Brafman, *Jewish Brotherhoods*, p. 81.

“...turn the masses into a profitable article for itself (the highest Jewish class), a blind tool for its own purposes, retaining in itself the same impregnable pride,...and contempt for its lower brethren, whom it leeches, exploits and despised.”¹⁶³

This parallels the idea from the Jesuit conspiracy that the Jesuits were a class of priests who were positioning themselves as the highest caste in Roman Catholic world, and who were trying to dominate and order society in order to satisfy their own greed.

What made the anti-Jesuit conspiracy theories so frightening was that they usually had some kind of global aspect. The Jesuits were said to be everywhere and their plots crossed continents. Brafman’s gave his anti-Jewish conspiracy theory a similar global aspect by creating the idea of a “Worldwide Brotherhood”¹⁶⁴ of Jews that had only been created recently, when “... the Jewish horizon became illuminated with light of modern science,... telegraphs, railroads and steamboats [now] facilitate communication by members of the Jewish people, scattered across the globe.”¹⁶⁵ This nefarious global Jewish brotherhood was enabled by a global network of wealthy and influential Jews. They had managed to capture the imaginations of European progressives by pretending to support enlightenment and education among the Jews: “...It is not surprising that they, that is, the new Jewish brotherhood, has found sympathy among well-intentioned Christians. Identifying themselves as progressives, indeed, it was difficult not to be charitable, sympathetic for a good cause...” But the true cause of these unions was not to promote enlightenment among the Jews but to “prepare Jews for citizenship for a non-existent kingdom.”¹⁶⁶

And what kingdom would this be? A new dark age under the Jews (but not worshipping the God of Abraham, but the Golden Calf), sustaining itself on finance and ruled by the Rothschilds:

“Righteous Jewish publicists warmly believe that the Golden Calf shall not desert the Jews, and they are not without its protection. And their faith is not in vain: the Golden Calf obviously, by his grace, truly had ordered through his priest *Rothschild* - Yes, let there be darkness everywhere, with the exception of the abodes of the children of Jacob, *illuminated by the stock exchange*, and all else covered in Egyptian darkness.” ¹⁶⁷ (Emphasis in the original.)

As this passage suggests, Brafman was probably familiar with the anti-Rothschild themes that emanated from Western Europe starting in the 1840s.

The fronts that this global *Kahal* worked through were international Jewish philanthropic organizations, “new Jewish Brotherhoods”¹⁶⁸ Brafman identified several organizations, including the “Society for the Spread of Enlightenment among the Jews in Russia,” a Russian organization founded in 1860 by wealthy Jews in the Russian Empire and dedicated to spreading secular knowledge among Russia’s Jews and getting more of them into Russian

¹⁶³ Brafman, *Jewish Brotherhoods*, p. 19.

¹⁶⁴ Brafman, *Jewish Brotherhoods*, p. 96.

¹⁶⁵ Brafman, *Jewish Brotherhoods*, p. 96.

¹⁶⁶ Brafman, *Jewish Brotherhoods*, pp. 102-103.

¹⁶⁷ Brafman, *Jewish Brotherhoods*, p. 117.

¹⁶⁸ Brafman, *Jewish Brotherhoods*, p. 102

universities.¹⁶⁹ He also singled out the Universal Israelite Alliance, the Paris-based organization founded by Adolphe Crémieux which was the target of Gougenot des Mousseaux's anti-Jewish book published in France a year later in 1869, discussed earlier in this chapter.^{170 171}

The second book which Brafman published in 1869 called the *Kniga Kagala* detailed the supposed history of this secret government “which has existed for over 2000 years, and is harmful to the local Christian population and despotic over the Jewish masses.”^{172 173} Kosher regulations, the Sabbath, Jewish religious brotherhoods in charge of education and especially funerals - virtually every aspect of Jewish religious life was represented as another link in the chain of oppression of the Jewish people by their evil *Kahal* masters. This book included hundreds of pages of translations from supposed *Kahal* documents that Brafman had gotten a hold of that showed the operation of this clandestine religious-based government of the secret Jewish upper class, oppressing both Jews and also the masses of peasants and using underhanded practices to out-compete Gentile tradesmen.

According to the *Kniga Kagala* Gentiles were secretly bought and sold between clandestine Jewish overlords, making them the “rightful” objects for exploitation by their owners. As one Russian writer summarized the book:

“We learn that each Christian landowner is sold by the kahal to a Jew. Yes, sold like an investment, both in his person and in his property. It is not just a way of speaking, but a legal term because the transaction is sealed by a special sales contract. Similarly, villages, whole sections with their inhabitants (Christians, of course) are bought and sold. Under the cover of our civil laws there exists a radically different legal code, secret, and negative, that rules over and subjects to the jurisdiction of the Jews not only the Jews but also the Russians, without their knowledge.”¹⁷⁴

This conspiracy theory is an outstanding example of the idea of usurpation-by-deception except that instead of just manipulating the ruler like in pre-modern ideas about how a king can be usurped via manipulation, this usurpation occurs at nearly every level of Russian society. The idea that Russians were secretly exploited, bought and sold, and bled dry to enrich the *Kahal* is also an idea Brafman got from the anti-Polish/Jesuit conspiracy theory expounded in Russia propaganda during the uprising of 1863. According to the *Polish Catechism* discussed in the previous chapter, the Jesuit plot involved making Poland independent. Ukraine and

¹⁶⁹ Brian Horowitz, *Jewish Philanthropy and Enlightenment in Late-Tsarist Russia*, (University of Washington Press, 2009), p. 7-8.

¹⁷⁰ Brafman, *Jewish Brotherhoods*, p. 97.

¹⁷¹ See Klier, *Imperial Russia's Jewish Question*, p. 271.

¹⁷² Яков Брафман (Jacob Brafman), *Книга Кагала* (Kniga Kagala), (Ukraine: MAUP, 2004), p. 98.

¹⁷³ The text of the *Kniga Kagala* changed significantly over several editions, with material being added to respond to new concerns and hot topics. See Klier's book *Imperial Russia's Jewish Question, 1855 - 1881* for a detailed analysis of the differences between these different editions. Subsequent quotes from the *Kniga Kagala* in this chapter are from the 2004 re-printing of the book by the Ukrainian Press of the Ukrainian University MAUP, which is well-known for pushing anti-Jewish literature. The American anti-Semite and conspiracy theorist David Duke is an alumnus of this school. See: Per Anders Rudling, “Organized Anti-Semitism in Contemporary Ukraine: Structure, Influence and Ideology”, *Canadian Slavonic Papers / Revue Canadienne des Slavistes*, Vol. 48, No. 1/2 (March-June 2006), pp. 81-118.

¹⁷⁴ Quotation is from Sergey Aksakov “About the Articles by Brafman on the Kahal”, Complete Works, 3: p. 747. Translation from Leon Poliakov, *The History of Anti-Semitism, Volume 4: Suicidal Europe, 1870-1933*, George Klin trans., (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), p. 85.

Lithuania were to remain part of the Russian empire, but were to be secretly colonized and exploited by Polish/Jesuit agents, with Russia incurring the costs and the burden of administration and the Poles and Jesuits reaping the profits: "Let greedy Russia think the Ukraine and Lithuania her property; but she won't understand who will have the material profits of those provinces."¹⁷⁵

Brafman's anti-Jewish conspiracy theory supposedly involved almost all Jews, but it was really only a small group of Jews who had full knowledge of what was going on. Many were complicit, most were ignorant, but all had a role to play and only a few knew the grand plans. Brafman emphasized that it was only this small Jewish upper caste that was responsible for this grand conspiracy, and that he, Brafman, really had the best interests of the Jewish masses at heart.¹⁷⁶ The consequences of this idea are analogous in nearly every variant of the Grand Conspiracy Theory: Does one know a good Jew? Well, he is probably not in on the secret - but he could have been manipulated by those who are. Is there a lack of evidence that an international Jewish *Kahal* was operating in one's country? Well, that is in fact evidence that the deception was working. This belief that the lack of evidence is itself evidence is exemplified in Brafman's campaign against the Universal Israelite Alliance and the Society for the Spread of Enlightenment among the Jews in Russia (which used the Russian acronym OPE.) While Brafman's first book described the Universal Israelite Alliance and the OPE as two arms of a global *Kahal* network, later editions of the *Kniga Kagala*, probably under the influence of western anti-Jewish polemics, upgraded the Universal Israelite Alliance into the "Central Committee" of the global *Kahal*. The Russian-based OPE was described as merely the cover for the activities of the Universal Israelite Alliance in Russia.^{177 178} The fact that the Universal Israelite Alliance appeared to have no operations in Russia is evidence that they were in fact clandestinely operating the OPE:

"Despite the fact that the Central Committee [The Universal Israelite Alliance] in each of its reports speaks about Jews in Russia, it nevertheless keeps silent about the existence of the Regional Committee of the Society in Russia, knowing that such an open committee... would not be tolerated by the Russian government, as a real implementation of the principle of 'state in the state'...But it takes little insight to see that the [OPE] formed in Russia in 1863, that is, 3 years after the emergence of the 'World Union of Jews', is nothing more than the Regional Committee of the Union in Russia."¹⁷⁹

This went back to the theme Brafman had begun in his 1866 articles in the *Vilenskii Vestnik*. While it might have seemed that there were many different types of Jews in the world: Russian, French, American, and also conservative, unassimilated Jews who were poor and backward and new, educated, assimilated Jews like those in the OPE, Brafman insisted that they were just different parts of the grand Jewish conspiracy of the global *Kahal*, organized by the Universal Israelite Alliance. Here again, we see an idea inherited from the anti-Polish/Jesuit conspiracy theory of the Polish Catechism: groups that hold seemingly opposing ideals are

¹⁷⁵ Day, p. 10.

¹⁷⁶ Klier, *Imperial Russia's Jewish Question*, pp. 273

¹⁷⁷ Klier, *Imperial Russia's Jewish Question*, pp. 282-283.

¹⁷⁸ See chapter XXVII of the 2004 MAUP edition of the *Kniga Kagala*.

¹⁷⁹ Brafman, *Kniga Kagala*, (MAUP, 2004), p. 315-316.

actually operating in concert (like Jesuits and nihilists.) Using this deception, the *Kahal* was capable of simultaneously deceiving the Jewish masses and Russian government and society, not to mention the rest of educated European opinion. Brafman seemed to suggest that this global conspiracy had gotten away with this deception until he had unveiled it. The global *Kahal*, he maintained, would go to any lengths to deceive people and keep the Jewish masses in suppression while plotting their global parasitic plot, mirroring the accusations against the Jesuits. Brafman made the thematic connection between his anti-Jewish conspiracy theory and the older anti-Jesuit conspiracy theory clear in an 1876 article attacking the OPE that he wrote titled “The Jesuits of Jewry.”¹⁸⁰

The impact of Brafman's work

The first editions of the *Kniga Kagala* and *Jewish Brotherhoods* were serialized in the *Vilenskii Vestnik* in 1868 and 1869.¹⁸¹ The books were said to have been dispatched to government offices throughout Western Russia to help officials understand the “reality” of Jewish communities.¹⁸² The *Kniga Kagala* was not an “official publication” of the central Russian government, but it was published with the assistance of the head of the Vilnius Educational district with money taken from a candle tax levied on Jewish communities.¹⁸³ It should also be noted that the first edition of the *Kniga Kagala* and *Jewish Brotherhoods* were printed by the press of the Provincial government.

The work's impact can be partially judged by the vehemence of Jewish opposition against it within the Russian Empire. The Jewish press in Russia attacked the *Kniga Kagala* persistently, pointing out how in his translations of the *Kahal* documents that substantiate his conspiracy theory Brafman cut out text, or would sometimes slide two fragments together in his translation. Some critics said he did not understand Hebrew that well.¹⁸⁴ For example in his translation of the Hebrew documents supposedly demonstrating the machinations of the *Kahal* through Jewish courts, Brafman (or rather, he and his small team of translators) routinely translated the phrase for “the residents of the town” as “the local *kahal*.”¹⁸⁵ This error would produce predictable consequences by skewing the meaning of judicial decisions.

Brafman's major contribution to the history of the grand conspiracy theory is that he helped make an anti-Jewish conspiracy theory an acceptable, respectable, even common opinion among the educated classes of a major power. Brafman later became a writer at the liberal Russian newspaper *Golos*, and helped transform it into one of the most Judeophobic publications in the Empire.¹⁸⁶ The great Russian writer Fyodor Dostoyevsky took interest in the work of Brafman, and there are three editions of the *Kniga Kagala* in Dostoyevsky's personal library, the last one (the third edition, 1875) was presented to Dostoyevsky by Brafman himself,

¹⁸⁰ Klier, *Imperial Russia's Jewish Question*, p. 261.

¹⁸¹ Klier, “Kievlianin and the Jews- A Decade of Disillusionment, 1864-1873,” p. 95.

¹⁸² Klier, *Imperial Russia's Jewish Question*, p. 266.

¹⁸³ Klier, *Imperial Russia's Jewish Question*, p. 266.

¹⁸⁴ Dudakov, p. 50.

¹⁸⁵ Klier, *Imperial Russia's Jewish Question*, p. 279.

¹⁸⁶ Klier, *Imperial Russia's Jewish Question*, p. 380.

with an inscription.¹⁸⁷ The influence of Brafman's ideas on Dostoevsky's opinions about Jews is clear from Dostoevsky's non-fiction *Writers Diary* where a Brafman-tinged Jew-hatred is a recurring theme.¹⁸⁸ Like Brafman, Dostoevsky maintained that it was the Jews who were oppressing Russia, and not the other way round.

Brafman's conspiracy theory provided a convenient key to explain Jewish behavior, the failure of Russian government policies, and much else. Was a particular government policy not working? The *Kahal* must have bribed someone.¹⁸⁹ It was also a persuasive argument against Jewish emancipation. Those against Jewish emancipation could now couch their arguments as measures in defense of the common people of the Empire. As one Russian article in 1867 put it, to impose legal equality while the *Kahal* endured would be like giving the Jews a revolver and the non-Jewish peasants a switch.¹⁹⁰ The Jewish community was conducting a massive conspiracy against Christian interests. The Jewish intellectuals who did not denounce the *Kahal* conspiracy were accused of being secretly in cahoots with the *Kahal*.¹⁹¹

The scholar John Klier called Jacob Brafman "the grandfather of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*" and that his work "encapsulates the evolution of Russian attitudes towards the Jewish Question from vague distress at the perceived disorder of Jewish religious and economic life to the paranoid obsession with international Jewish conspiracies."¹⁹² Brafman did not invent Russian Jew-hatred any more than Simonini invented Western European Jew-hatred. The "scheming Jew" was nothing new, and the idea that Jews were hostile to Christians is older than the New Testament. Brafman's contribution was not just a recapitulation of the idea that Jews engage in conspiracies, but a secular conspiracy theory that identified Judaism itself as a conspiracy. The whole "religion" was not really a religion but a scam by a clique of Jews to manipulate their lesser brethren and eventually to take over the world. This, combined with the other themes he borrowed from the Russian anti-Polish/anti-Jesuit propaganda campaign of 1863 and his normalization of anti-Jewish conspiracies in Russia certainly earns him the title of one of the "grandfather[s] of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*."

As mentioned, Brafman's conspiracy theory was also entirely secular, meaning there were no occult, mystical, or Christian sectarian elements to it.¹⁹³ As such, his conspiracy theory could be believed by Russian Orthodox people, as well as by Lutherans, and even Roman Catholics (and there were many Lutheran ethnic Germans in the service of the Tsar.)

The intersection of the theories

It is interesting that the works of Jacob Brafman and Gougenot des Mousseaux both settled on the same main villain: the Universal Israelite Alliance. The work of Adolphe Crémieux,

¹⁸⁷ В. А. Шнирельман (Victor Schnirelmann), *Лица Ненависти* (the Face of Hate), (Moscow: Academia, 2010,) p. 168.

¹⁸⁸ Kenneth Lantz, "Anti-Semitism," in *The Dostoevsky Encyclopedia*, (Greenwood Press, 2004), pp. 17-18.

¹⁸⁹ Klier, "Kievlainin and the Jews," p. 95.

¹⁹⁰ Klier, *Imperial Russia's Jewish Question*, p. 275.

¹⁹¹ Klier, "Kievlainin and the Jews," p. 100

¹⁹² Klier, *Imperial Russia's Jewish Question*, p. 263.

¹⁹³ Klier, *Imperial Russia's Jewish Question*, 417

and other prominent western European Jews to improve the lot of the Jews of the Middle East and Eastern Europe had been grabbing the attention of the European reading public for some decades, starting with the Damascus Affair of 1840. During that widely-covered incident Crémieux and Moses Montefiore traveled to the Ottoman Empire to assist in the defense of some Syrian Jews who had been accused of the blood libel.¹⁹⁴ By 1869, the *annus horribilis* of anti-Jewish conspiracy theories that saw the publication of Brafman's *Kniga Kagala* and Mousseaux's *Le Juif*, Crémieux was a Jewish political celebrity, and a hate figure for judeophobes. In fact, in his introduction, Mousseaux includes a translation of a 1869 anti-Crémieux article from the Russian newspaper *Golos* (a newspaper which later featured many articles written by Brafman) purportedly demonstrating the global reach of the Universal Israelite Alliance.¹⁹⁵ (It is not inconceivable that the author of this article had read Brafman's *Jewish Brotherhoods*, which had come out the previous year.) Both Mousseaux and Brafman make much of the involvement of the Universal Israelite Alliance in Romania, where Crémieux had been engaged in a high-profile pressure campaign to force the nascent independent Romanian government to grant full citizenship to its Jews. The coincidence of both Brafman and Mousseaux fixating on the same figure as an important part of an international Jewish conspiracy helped these two separate anti-Jewish conspiracy theories to merge, and eased the introduction of western anti-Jewish narratives into the Russian mainstream.

Conclusion: The setup for convergence

This chapter examined the emergence of two separate anti-Jewish conspiracy theories. Each of these was based on different, perhaps even opposing, previously existing variants of the Grand Conspiracy Theory, anti-Masonic and the anti-Jesuit. Both the Western Judeo-Masonic conspiracy theory and Brafman's conspiracy of the *Kahal* shared these common facets: 1. A small group of powerful Jews are manipulating Gentile society mainly through the use of propaganda, deception, and bribery. 2. This Jewish Cabal is intent on overthrowing Christian society and usurping power. 3. They have been very successful so far. 4. The Universal Israelite Alliance, Crémieux, and the Rothschilds are involved in key parts of the conspiracy. Both of these versions shared many of the hallmarks of the Grand Conspiracy Theory, its universal scope, the idea that spreading ideas of liberty and equality was part of the evil master plan, and that the conspiracy works under the command of a small cabal that is manipulating a larger group of duped operatives. These similarities are partially because the anti-Jesuit conspiracy theories which Brafman's *Kahal* conspiracy theory is based on had already absorbed a lot of the facets from the "competing" Freemason/Illuminati conspiracy theories in the early 19th century, as described in the previous chapter.

The Judeo-Masonic conspiracy theory was used in propaganda as early as in the 1820s. It had the ability to re-invigorate the old anti-Masonic conspiracy with a fascinating new twist and that perhaps could rope judeophobes into supporting a conspiratorial narrative targeting one's enemies. One might even view the works of Mousseaux and Cretineau-Joly as Roman Catholic propaganda against liberalism. Brafman's *Kniga Kagala* was funded by state support, though it

¹⁹⁴ For a full account of this incident see Jonathan Frankel, *The Damascus Affair: 'Ritual Murder', Politics, and the Jews in 1840*, (Cambridge University Press, 1997).

¹⁹⁵ Mousseaux, *Le juif*, p. xxxvii.

itself might not fit a strict definition of “propaganda” and was instead a kind of pseudo-scientific work, an informational book that “helped” Russians to “understand” their Jewish neighbors. Nevertheless Brafman used themes derived from the anti-Polish/anti-Jesuit Russian propaganda during the Polish uprising of 1863, demonstrating the indirect impact of that propaganda campaign.

This chapter has focused on the evolution of the conspiracy theory and its use in propaganda, and less so on its effects on politics. The subsequent two chapters will deal with the further development of the anti-Jewish variants of the Grand Conspiracy Theory and their political effects, as well as cover how Western anti-Jewish conspiratorial ideas found fertile ground in the Russian Empire. Brafman’s ideas had prepared the educated public of the Russian empire for western anti-Jewish conspiracy theories. This eventually resulted in the adoption of a version of the Judeo-Masonic conspiracy theory by an influential segment of Russians, who engaged in a propaganda campaign to stifle liberalism and stave off reform and revolution.