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The importance of conspiracy theory in extremist ideology and propaganda

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Chapter 9: The Grand Conspiracy Theory and the birth of Nazi ideology

“As the root of all evil in contemporary European life, the National Socialists regard [it to be] the so-called democratic or parliamentary constitution, which has seized power everywhere. The nature of the objections to parliamentarism is well known to anyone who has only a little insight into the political events of the post-war period. Parliamentarism, ... emerged as the sole victor of the World War... International Jewry, which has an unlimited power over it, still keeps it; but this can not last for long, as experience in the other countries proves, in which the fascists seized power and retained the parliaments as historical relics of dubious interest.”¹ - Anonymous Russian, 1923

“The Russian people are also awakening. And also there are awakening Italians, awakening Englishmen, awakening Spaniards and - thanks to God - finally awakening Germans... these awakening Russians will settle accounts with their international government, just as the awakening Germans will do, or- in a few years' time there will be no Russians and no Germans, no national peoples at all, but under the scepter of The International a mixture of the races... Völkish Germany is prepared to take up this struggle in faith in the German people, to whom a new prophet has arisen in Adolf Hitler, who has understood [how] to rouse the German soul and free it from the shackles of Marxist thought...”² - Ludwig Maximilian Erwin von Scheubner-Richter, 1923

This chapter will argue that the Judeo-Masonic conspiracy theory imported from the collapsed Russian Empire greatly influenced Hitler and became a cornerstone of Nazi ideology.

¹ Metlow “Parlamentarische und nationalsozialistische Verfassung” (Parliamentary and National Socialist constitution), Said to be a translation of an article in “Ruskaia Tribuna,” *Aufbau-Korrespondenz über Ostfragen und ihre Bedeutung für Deutschland* (hereafter just *Aufbau-Korrespondenz*), Munich, 9 November 1923, Year 3, no. 45, p. 2.

² Max Erwin von Scheubner-Richter, “Der Bolschewisierung Deutschlands” (The Bolshevization of Germany), *Aufbau-Korrespondenz*, 21 September 1923, Year 3, no. 38, p. 3.

Focusing on the lead-up to the Beer Hall Putsch of 1923, it will present Hitler and his acolytes as revolutionaries, but revolutionaries against what they believed was a long-term conspiracy slowly bringing the whole world under its control. They wished to destroy both “poles” of Western Civilization in the 1920s - both Communism and capitalism, as they saw them both as tools of a Jewish conspiracy. This was in line with the anti-Jewish conspiracy theory used in Tsarist propaganda after the Revolution of 1905 and its “classic” encapsulation in the *Protocols* that identified both capitalism and socialism as just two tools in a grand Jewish plot. The importance of this specific variant of the Grand Conspiracy Theory in Nazi ideology is perhaps the most direct and dramatic example of a conspiracy theory spread by propaganda “escaping” its original context, finding a new audience, and causing havoc in a totally different context. This transmission was facilitated by refugees from the Russian empire who imported conspiracy theory narratives to post-WWI Germany and helped adapt them to this new German context, along with nationalist and racist Germans who were themselves searching for an explanation for the recent German defeat.

This chapter will not deal in detail with the larger questions about why so many Germans supported the Nazis and their participation in the Holocaust, though the scale of the atrocities and their resonance with turn-of-the-century Russian propaganda requires some comment. This chapter will not dwell on Nazi racialism, but does not wish to minimize the impact of Western European racist ideas on Nazi ideology at the expense of emphasizing the influence of the Russian-origin Judeo-Masonic/Judeo-Bolshevik conspiracy theory. This chapter will show how Hitler and his mentors wedded the Russian-origin conspiracy theory with racist ideas, specifically with German *Völkisch* ideas. This fusion was facilitated by an abandonment of the aspects of the turn-of-the-century vintage Russian Judeo-Masonic conspiracy theory that were anachronistic by the early 20s in Germany. A later section in this chapter will describe how early Nazis could abandon the *Protocols*, not really believing that it was authentic, but still embrace the idea of a massive Jewish conspiracy very like the one described in the *Protocols*. This chapter will also include a discussion of Hanna Arendt’s erroneous ideas about the relationship between conspiracy theory and the Nazis: that they chose anti-Jewish agitation as propaganda to justify their march to power, rather than being actual believers in an anti-Jewish conspiracy theory.

Russian anti-Jewish ideas come to Germany

In chapter 7 we discussed the anti-Semitic movement in Europe in the 1880s. However, by the first decade of the 20th century this kind of antisemitic agitation had died down in Germany, though it never disappeared. German anti-Semitism became less a movement to rouse the rabble and turn out voters and more of a set of “scientific” ideas involving the anthropological analysis of racial types and cultural differences.³

By 1919 the Judeo-Masonic conspiracy theory had been circulating in Europe for almost a century, and the earlier “pure” Masonic conspiracy theory for even longer, predating the anti-Semitic movement. European readers could have come across the Judeo-Masonic conspiracy theory in any number of sources, including the ones described in chapters 6 and 7. After the

³ George L. Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich*, (Howard Fertig Pub, 1999), pp 134-135.

defeat of the Central Powers in November 1918, some Germans turned to versions of the Judeo-Masonic conspiracy theory to explain their loss. One book published in Munich in early 1919 rehashed some old tropes of heavy Jewish involvement in Freemasonry, then explained that Freemasons had assisted the Allied victory because their aims were the same:

“The war aims of the Entente [the Western Allies] are strikingly in line with Masonic aspirations and ultimate goals. Protection for small nations, liberation of peoples from ‘despotism’, the elimination of Prussian imperialism, the struggle for justice and civilization, the fight against barbarism, the establishment of a League of Nations (World Republic!) were already slogans of the world Freemasonry for decades...”⁴

There was also accompanying talk that “Jewish finance” was fighting Germany. Even before the German defeat, in January 1918 a right-wing German magazine declared that a meeting of Jewish bankers in 1913 in Paris had engineered the War in order to weaken Germany and prepare it for revolution.⁵ In August 1919 Prince Otto zu Salm-Horstmar gave a speech before the Prussian Diet that declared that a Jewish conspiracy working through the freemasons had weakened Germany by spreading the democratic philosophy.⁶

These ideas may have come from “indigenous” sources in Western and Central Europe, like the writing of Drumont for example. On the other hand it is likely that the propaganda campaign of the URP and other Black Hundred groups after the Revolution of 1905 had some effects outside Russia's borders. One suspects texts like the *Protocols* would have eventually wormed its way into every corner of Europe during the normal comings and goings of people and ideas from the Russian Empire. The *Protocols* had been published in the Czech language as early as 1906.⁷ The Russian Revolution of 1917 accelerated the dissemination of this Russian version of the Grand Conspiracy Theory. To some Russians the fact that the Russian constitutional revolution of February 1917 was followed several months later by a Bolshevik takeover, including the murder of the Russian royal family and civil war, seemed to confirm everything the *Protocols* had prophesied. (By the way, the Russian Revolution of 1917 will be discussed at length in the next chapter.) Some Russians fleeing their home took the *Protocols* with them. Copies of the *Protocols* are said to have circulated among some of the delegates of the postwar Versailles peace conference in 1919, and there were two reported attempts by exiles from the Russian Empire to extort Jewish organizations in Europe by offering to destroy the “evidence” contained in the *Protocols* in exchange for cash.⁸

The *Protocols* was published and widely distributed in German during the postwar period. It was made known to a publisher through the efforts of a URP activist fleeing from revolutionary Russia. Peter Nikolaevich Shabelsky-Bork (b. 1893) was a URP activist, a member of other Black Hundreds groups, and the godson of some prominent URP activists and publishers, friends of the URP's founder Alexander Dubrovin. After serving in the Russian army during WWI Shabelsky-Bork was involved in a plot to assist a coup attempt, the “Kornilov

⁴ Dr. Friedrich Wichtl, *Weltfreimaurerei Weltrevolution Weltrepublik* (World Freemasonry World Revolution World Republic), (Munich: J. F. Lehmanns Verlag, 1919) p. 175.

⁵ Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide*, p. 144.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ N.L. Mordvinov, *Tajemství židovské politiky*, (Prague, 1906).

⁸ Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide*, pp.138-139.

putsch” that tried to topple the Russian provisional government after the February revolution. He appears to have gotten involved in other counter-revolutionary schemes after the Bolshevik coup in October 1917. He was imprisoned but then amnestied several months later. According to his own account he then went undercover and traveled to Ekaterinburg, Russia, and attempted to assist his Tsar who was imprisoned there. By the time he arrived the Tsar had been murdered. He then began working for a German-supported Ukrainian government. When this government collapsed he was arrested and scheduled for execution by his Ukrainian nationalist captors, but the Germans negotiated his release and he fled to Berlin, taking with him a copy of the *Protocols*.⁹

In Berlin, Shabelsky-Bork made the acquaintance of Ludwig Muller von Hausen, a conservative German publisher who happened to know Russian. Von Hausen was also the founder of an antisemitic group *The Organization Against the Presumption of Jewry*.¹⁰ Von Hausen was the ideal German recipient for the *Protocols*, and after Shabelsky-Bork gave him a copy in February 1919 he was apparently quite convinced it was real. He tried to investigate the origins of the document¹¹ and had it translated into German and published in July 1919. This translation seems to have sold well, as it was in its eighth edition by 1923.¹²

The *Protocols* was also getting new attention in Europe outside of Germany. An English translation of the *Protocols* had also been published in early 1920 and gained much attention.¹³ But this heightened profile for the document also led to heightened scrutiny. In 1920 *The Times of London* published some articles about the *Protocols* and was non-committal about its authenticity. Then in 1921 an anonymous Russian landowner in exile approached the correspondent for *The Times* in Istanbul and showed him the similarity between passages in the *Protocols* and Joly's 1864 *The Dialogue in Hell Between Machiavelli and Montesquieu*. The anonymous Russian claimed that he had just noticed the similarity by chance. This report was published in *The Times* and was a serious blow to the credibility of the *Protocols*, at least in the English speaking world.¹⁴

Unfortunately the core idea of a grand Judeo-Masonic conspiracy would not be so easily diminished in Germany, and in a little over a decade a political party built around the core idea of combatting the Judeo-Masonic conspiracy came to power. This was the Nazi party and its leader Adolf Hitler conducted affairs of state under the influence of the version of the anti-Jewish version of the Grand Conspiracy Theory from the Russian Empire. However, it is not as if Hitler one day picked up the *Protocols* and immediately embarked on conquest and genocide. For one thing, he first persuaded millions of Germans to consent to his leadership and endorse and participate in his actions. Also, it was not the *Protocols* that inspired millions of Germans to

⁹ А Иванов (A Ivanov), “ШАБЕЛЬСКИЙ-БОРК” in *Black Hundreds, historical encyclopedia*, pp. 586 - 587. Also Michael Kellogg, *The Russian Roots Nazism*, (Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 40, 44-45, 59-62.

¹⁰ Kellogg, p. 64.

¹¹ Kellogg, pp. 65-66.

¹² Esther Webman, “Introduction, Hate and absurdity: The impact of *the Protocols of the Elders of Zion*,” in *The Global Impact of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, A Century-Old Myth*, Esther Webman ed. (Routledge, 2011) p. 22. According to Webman In 1929 the Nazi party acquired the rights to the German translation of the *Protocols* and published the ninth edition.

¹³ Colin Holmes, *Anti-Semitism in British Society, 1876-1939*, (Routledge, 2016), pp. 148-151.

¹⁴ Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide* pp. 78-80.

follow Hitler. Before discussing the rise of the Nazis and Hitler's belief in the Judeo-Masonic conspiracy theory it is wise to discuss some of the precursors that made Hitler and his rise possible. These precursors were *Völkisch* ideology, a set of far-right and nationalist ideas that had permeated German society before the Nazis appeared; and also Hitler falling in with a group of refugees from Russia in 1919 who truly believed in the Judeo-Masonic conspiracy theory. These exiles, joined with some native Germans, merged ideas about a Judeo-Masonic conspiracy promoted in previous decades in pro-Tsarist propaganda with a form of German nationalism - a set of ideas called *völkisch*, creating a modified conspiracy theory suited for Germany during this period.¹⁵

Völkisch ideas

Völkisch ideas involved the embrace of a racial identity for German society, rather than class-based identities, the lionizing the countryside over cities, and a general opposition to socialism, to international capitalism, and often to Jews. *Völkisch* ideologues often opposed parliamentary government, favoring instead the idea of a single charismatic leader, a *Führer*, who would emerge from the people, the "volk," and lead it.¹⁶ *Völkisch* thinkers often preferred the "natural" instinct of a peasant to the cold, rational calculus associated with the Enlightenment.¹⁷ A strain of *völkisch* writers were expansionist and chauvinist, embracing a social-Darwinist vision of politics.¹⁸

Anti-Jewish conspiracy theories were present in *völkisch* writings. One of the "founders" of *völkisch* thought Paul de Lagarde (1827-1891) saw the forces of modernity tearing down all that he loved about the German *Volk*, and the Jew as the epitome of this modernity.¹⁹ He bitterly hated Jews, writing in support of accusations of Jewish ritual murder and at one point calling for their extermination.²⁰ Many but not all of his intellectual successors also took up anti-Jewish themes -one later *völkisch* thinker even ridiculed the idea that a small group of Jews could corrupt 50 million Germans.²¹ Be that as it may, anti-Jewish themes were well entrenched in *völkisch* thought by the early 20th century, and *völkisch* writers contributed to the respectability of gross anti-Jewish stereotypes even in polite parts of German middle-class society.²² According to the historian Daniel Goldhagen, *völkisch* ideas involving German racial superiority became so widespread in Germany that they undermined the basic Christian teaching that everyone could be saved through conversion to Christianity, as this would mean Jews could be welcomed into the Christian (that is, German) community. Some *völkisch* Germans even saw Christianity itself as a Jewish deception.²³ These kinds of extreme anti-Jewish attitudes made fertile soil for the expansion of new versions of the Judeo-Masonic conspiracy theory coming out of the Russian empire, shorn of the Orthodox Christian eschatological elements. As mentioned

¹⁵ Kellogg, p. 16.

¹⁶ Guy Turlamain, *Völkisch Writers and National Socialism*, (Peter Lang, 2014), pp 24-25.

¹⁷ Turlamain, p 40.

¹⁸ Turlamain, pp 43.

¹⁹ Mosse, p. 36.

²⁰ Mosse, pp. 36-39.

²¹ Mosse, p. 49.

²² Mosse, p. 143.

²³ Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, (Vintage, 2007), Kindle Edition, p. 68.

earlier, the *Protocols* was particularly flexible in this regard, as it is not an apparently sectarian document, apart from its condemnation of Judaism and its implication in some versions that Protestantism was part of a Jewish plot. Ludwig Muller von Hausen, the man who organized the translation of the *Protocols* into German, was a *völkisch* publisher.²⁴

Anti-capitalist and anti-Jewish ideas had resonance because of the perceived link between Jews, money-lending, and capitalism, personified in the role that the Rothschild family played in European banking. On at least one occasion, anti-capitalist ideas were used to contrast the German *völk* with the decadent and capitalistic American and British nations, which also shared Germanic ancestry but who were under the spell of Jewish bankers. The following text was published during WWI, sometime in 1918 before the end of the war. It is from a racist article titled “Halte Dein Blut Rein” (Keep Your Blood Pure):

“This struggle is actually comprised of representatives of two opposing world views - two opposing races. On the one hand, the Germanic, the creative, and on the other hand, the parasitic and capitalistic race.

One will object to the fact that the English and Americans are also of Germanic origin. This is true. However, this is not decisive, but rather dependent on who controls these nations, who leads them and who guides them. Our enemy's secret ruler which also continues to strive for world dominance is without a doubt international capital. The representatives of big business are the undisputed enemies of our national traditions. This enemy is the Jew.”²⁵

While *völkisch* ideas had penetrated much of the German establishment by 1914, it did not produce a mass movement. It remained, as one historian put it: “an intellectual affair of relatively small groups and circles.”²⁶ Speaking of small circles, there was even a quasi-Masonic society formed around *Völkisch* ideals in the early 20th century. In 1912 a group called the *Germanen Orden* appeared and after faltering refashioned itself as the *Thule-Gesellschaft* (Thule Society) in 1918. It was dedicated to combating the menace of Jewish conspiracies against the *volk*.²⁷ Its small membership printed pamphlets and tried to set up “lodges” in different parts of Germany to push *völkisch* ideas. One of its members Rudolf Glandeck von Sebottendorff was the publisher of the newspaper the *Münchener Beobachter*, which printed the anti-Jewish anti-capitalist article quoted above.

After WWI the Thule Society had a few hundred members in Munich. It attempted to engage in clandestine preparations for a counter-revolution during the succeeding socialist and communist revolutions that erupted in Bavaria. This conservative and antisemitic society was of course against any leftist revolution, particularly one with Jews among the leadership like the revolutionaries in Bavaria. However, when the moment of action came during an attempted counter-revolutionary putsch against the “Bavarian Soviet Republic” in April 1919 the leader of

²⁴ Kellogg, p. 64.

²⁵ Jay Hatheway, “The Pre-1920 Origins of the National Socialist German Workers’ Party,” *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 29, 1994, p. 454. Original German from Rudolf von Sebottendorf, *Bevor Hitler kam: Urkundlich aus der Frühzeit der Nationalsozialistischen Bewegung*. (Munich: Deukula-Grassinger, 1933), p. 44.

²⁶ Avraham Barkai, “Volksgemeinschaft, ‘Aryanization’ and the Holocaust,” in *The Final Solution: Origins and Implementation*, David Cesarani ed., (Routledge, 1994), p. 34.

²⁷ Mosse, pp. 228-229.

the Thule Society promised six hundred men for the effort, but could only muster twelve. Still, this ineffective organization got the attention of the short-lived Bavarian Socialist Republic, and seven members of the Thule Society were captured and shot.²⁸

This event temporarily elevated the Thule Society in the perception of Munich society it went from being perceived as a marginal collection of upper-class enthusiasts of German folklore to a defender of the city against revolution.²⁹ A few Thule Society members tried to capitalize on this perception by reviving a defunct political party they had founded in early 1919, the *Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* or DAP (the German Workers Party.) The party was not a success at first, and the DAP became an only occasional meeting of twenty-or-so people that was sometimes addressed by *völkisch* notables.³⁰ This party eventually became the NSDAP, the Nazi party, but *völkisch* ideas alone were not enough to galvanize support for it and make it what it was to become. Russian exiles who believed in the Judeo-masonic conspiracy provided the core ideology and the necessary connections to make the Nazis the Nazis. As the historian Michael Kellogg put it: “[Russian Emigres] influenced National Socialist ideology by adding White emigre conspiratorial-apocalyptic anti-Semitism to existing *völkisch*-redemptive notions of Germanic spiritual and racial superiority.”³¹

Alfred Rosenberg and the banker / Judeo-Bolshevik conspiracy theories

At the turn of the century the Russian Empire had many ethnic Germans living within it. One prominent group of Germans in the Russian Empire were the Baltic Germans, Germans from what is today Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. While they were just a small part of the population of the Empire, Baltic Germans were disproportionately represented in the Imperial civil service and the Russian officer corps.³² Baltic German nobles enjoyed special privileges and powers in the Baltic provinces of the Russian Empire. The expansion of reformed, popularly elected *zemstvos* (local self-government) in the Russian Empire in the late 19th and early 20th centuries threatened to erode the power and status of German nobles.³³ The establishment of a popularly elected Russian parliament would have been even more threatening to the power of the Baltic German minority. This may explain the curious affinity some pro-autocracy Black Hundred groups had for Baltic Germans. The statutes of the Black Hundred group “Union of Archangel Michael” (a splinter group from the URP) put “particular trust in the German population of the Empire.”³⁴ In 1916 The American Jewish Chronicle reported that the liberal press in Russia jokingly referred to the Black Hundred paper the “Black Banner” as the

²⁸ Mosse, pp. 245-253.

²⁹ Thomas Weber, *Becoming Hitler*, (Basic Books, 2017), p. 134.

³⁰ Weber, p. 117.

³¹ Kellogg, p. 16

³² Michael H. Haltzel, “Triumphs and Frustrations of Administrative Russification, 1881-1914,” in *Russification in the Baltic Provinces and Finland, 1855-1914*, Edward C. Thaden ed., (Princeton University Press, 2016), p. 151.

³³ Haltzel pp. 66, 206.

³⁴ Kellogg, p. 41.

“Prussian Banner” (though of course this report might have been influenced by the ongoing war, an attempt to attack supporters of the autocracy as German sympathizers.)³⁵

The flight of some of these Baltic Germans with Tsarist sympathies into Central and Western Europe as the Tsarist state collapsed and the Bolsheviks seized power was an important factor in the spread of the Black Hundred variant of the anti-Jewish Grand Conspiracy Theory to Germany. One of the most important, arguably the most important, individual in transmitting the Black Hundred-style belief in an anti-Jewish Grand Conspiracy Theory to the nascent Nazi party was Alfred Rosenberg. Born into a Baltic German family in Estonia, he spent his entire youth in the Russian Empire. According to his memoirs, Rosenberg had not paid much attention to the “social question” in Russia before World War One.³⁶ He would have been about 12 years old when the Revolution of 1905 broke out, and he probably came in contact with some URP or URP-like conspiracy-theory propaganda discussed in chapter 8.

According to a volume of his works published during WWII, Rosenberg was already writing that socialism had become “a political weapon in the hands of the Jews” in May 1918, about 6 months after the Bolshevik coup.³⁷ While we cannot be certain that he had perused the *Protocols* at this point, he was already repeating themes similar to those found in the *Protocols*, perhaps picked up from other pro-Tsarist propagandists. For example, Rosenberg described the essence of Socialist doctrine as “the bringing to fruition of a peoples' chaos on an unprecedented scale.”³⁸ Compare this to this selection from Protocol V of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*:

“The second secret requisite for the success of our government is comprised in the following: To multiply to such an extent national failings, habits, passions, conditions of civil life, that it will be impossible for anyone to know where he is in the resulting chaos, so that the people in consequence will fail to understand one another. This measure will also serve us in another way, namely, to sow discord in all parties, to dislocate all collective forces which are still unwilling to submit to us...”³⁹

Even in 1918 Rosenberg saw the Russian Revolution as a transitional phase, a major step in some larger Jewish plan. Despite his proximity to the Russian Revolution, he rejected the truth that Russia had been seized by a clique of fanatical communists who were determined to transform Russia and the world into a socialist paradise. Rosenberg was evidently an early believer in the conspiracy theory of “Judeo-Bolshevism” touched upon at the end of chapter 8, the idea that the same grand Jewish conspiracy that had been presented as the force behind socialist and liberal political parties was also behind the totalitarian Bolshevik revolution. Something like this idea is touched on in the *Protocols*, when the narrator declares that the communists, along with the socialists and anarchists, are the “fighting forces” of the grand

³⁵ “The Crisis in Russia” *American Jewish Chronicle*, December 1, 1916, Vol. 2. No. 4, New York, New York, p. 104.

³⁶ Alfred Rosenberg, *Alfred Rosenberg's 'Memoirs' Composed in Spandau*, 1945, (Skull Press, 2013), p. 8. Available at <https://archive.org/details/AlfredRosenbergMemoirsAndNurembergTrial/page/n7>. Accessed April 12, 2019.

³⁷ Alfred Rosenberg, *Schriften und Reden, mit einer Einleitung von Alfred Bäuml*, Vol. 1, (Munich, Hoheneichen-Verlag, 1943) p. 75.

³⁸ Rosenberg, *Schriften und Reden*, pp. 74-75.

³⁹ *Protocols*, p. 163.

Jewish conspiracy. In another passage the narrator of the *Protocols* describes the communists as one in a number of groups that are actually working for the Jewish conspiracy:

“It is from us that the all-engulfing terror proceeds. We have in our service persons of all opinions, of all doctrines, restoring monarchists, demagogues, socialists, communists, and utopian dreamers of every kind. We have harnessed them all to the task: each one of them on his own account is boring away at the last remnants of authority, is striving to overthrow all established form of order. By these acts all States are in torture; they exhort to tranquility, are ready to sacrifice everything for peace: but we will not give them peace until they openly acknowledge our international Super-Government, and with submissiveness.”⁴⁰

The post-Russian-Revolution Judeo-Bolshevik conspiracy theory was different from this earlier conception of the Judeo-Masonic conspiracy theory. The *Protocols* speaks of the communists being used as one instrument among many to torture states into surrendering. By liberalizing and perhaps by bringing socialists and communists into government, these states would be succumbing to the pressure of Jewish secret super-government and hastening the coming of the Jewish universal monarchy, to be brought into power by an enormous global coups d’etat “prepared everywhere for one and the same day...”⁴¹ Instead the Bolshevik coup was seen as major intermediary step along the way towards the domination of the Jews, and the purpose was not to force states to liberalize and accept parliamentary government (which was obviously not part of the Bolshevik plan) but for some other purpose. It stands to reason that if the Jewish conspiracy was behind the French Revolution, according to the *Protocols*, and other revolutions and consequential events, it would also be behind the Russian Revolution. The core idea remained - a Jewish conspiracy was behind it all. Liberalism and capitalism and republicanism and communism were all just different poisons used by the same fiend. In 1918 Rosenberg cited the Jewish ancestry of many of the Russian revolutionaries as proof of the Bolshevik link to the Jewish conspiracy:

“...although the utopian Lenin is a Russian Tatar, Trotsky-Bronstein is a real Jew [*rasseechter Jude*] from the Yekaterinoslav Governorate... with him works his friend Zinoviev-Apfelbaum, Nakhmkis-Steklov. As you can see, they adopted Russian pseudonyms,... and so behind Slavic names almost everywhere where there was treason, [there was] a real Jew.”⁴²

Rosenberg reported that his personal observation of low-level Bolshevik agitators also indicated that the Jews were behind it: “I saw Jewish students with the Bolshevik ‘Pravda’ under their arms lecturing in soldier’s hospitals. The Jew stands like a closed wall behind the instrument of social destructiveness.”⁴³

Rosenberg would certainly have known about the accusations that the Bolsheviks he so hated had actually been supported and funded by the Germans in order to knock Russia out of the war (a topic discussed at length in the subsequent chapter). These accusations had been widely circulated in the Russian press before the 1917 Bolshevik coup. This accusation would have complicated the picture for anti-communist Baltic Germans like Rosenberg living in Estonia

⁴⁰ *Protocols*, p. 170

⁴¹ *Protocols*, p. 192.

⁴² Rosenberg, *Schriften und Reden*, p. 112.

⁴³ Rosenberg, *Schriften und Reden*, p. 77.

during this time. While Rosenberg was producing these statements about the Jewish origin of the Soviet Union he was living in German-Occupied Estonia. After the Coup of October 1917 the Bolsheviks had declared an end to the war, just what the Germans had wanted. When peace negotiations between the Germans and the Bolsheviks broke down for a spell in February 1918 the Germans quickly seized the Baltic states, Ukraine, and Belarus, forcing the Bolsheviks to sign the treaty of Brest-Litovsk in March.⁴⁴ How would Rosenberg have explained this chain of events that had brought his new protectors, the German army, into his homeland of Estonia? By blaming the Russian Revolution on a Jewish conspiracy Rosenberg could exonerate his German protectors from the charge of having facilitated the Bolshevik takeover. Later on in an article published in 1919 Rosenberg mentioned the idea that the Germans had financed the Communist Revolution, noting that large sums of money had been transferred to the Bolsheviks from abroad, and that many people were convinced the source was Germany. Rosenberg stated that "...the Jew Fürstenberg-Ganezky provably paid large sums of money to the St. Petersburg Soldiers Council..." Rosenberg is here referring to Yakov Ganetsky, a trusted aide to Lenin who had indeed been instrumental in sending money to the Bolsheviks in 1917. We now know that he was the main contact between the Bolsheviks and German intelligence operatives in Stockholm, from whom he received money to finance the Bolsheviks.⁴⁵

In one small section in his Estonia writings from June 1918, Rosenberg went even further than blaming the Russian revolution on a Jewish conspiracy. He insinuated that there was a similar German-Jewish plot to wage war on Germany emanating from America, which had entered the war just two months earlier: "From America comes the news that the Germans had spoken out for an inexorable war against Germany. The Representatives of these "Germans" were Mr. Cahn, Mr. Schiff and Mr. Cohn."⁴⁶

Rosenberg was likely referring to statements made by some American bankers of German-Jewish descent who had loudly proclaimed their support for the Allied cause after America joined the war. Specifically Rosenberg might have been referring to an event on April 12, 1918, six days after America declared war on Germany, the prominent German-Born Jewish-American banker Jacob Schiff gave a speech in New York promoting the purchase of war bonds. According to the New York Times: "He said that peace could not be assured except by the utter destruction of the Prussian military power,... Even if the war lasted so long that this country was impoverished, both in material resources and in young manhood, the sacrifices would prove worthwhile if it ended in victory which guaranteed freedom and peace to the generations to come..."⁴⁷ The insinuation of Rosenberg implied that the Jewish conspiracy was the main problem for both Russia and Germany, who had recently been enemies.

Interestingly, Jacob Schiff had German sympathies earlier in the war. He had some residual loyalty for the land of his birth and also bitterly hated Russia because of its anti-Jewish

⁴⁴ Annemarie H. Sammartino, *The Impossible Border: Germany and the East, 1914–1922*, (Cornell University Press, 2010) p. 38.

⁴⁵ Richard Pipes, *The Russian Revolution*, Locations 10298, 10308.

⁴⁶ Rosenberg, *Schriften und Reden*, p. 77.

⁴⁷ "DESTROY PRUSSIANISM, JACOB H. SCHIFF URGES: Banker Says Our Impoverishment Would Not Be Too High a Price to Pay for Peace Guarantee," New York Times, 12 April 1918, p. 5.

policies.⁴⁸ However, after the fall of the Tsarist regime in early 1917 and the entry of the United States into the war he changed his tune. His new opinion was used by Rosenberg as evidence that the Jews who had destroyed the Russian Empire were now gunning for the German Empire.

Rosenberg did not have time to write much more anti-Communist, anti-Jewish, pro-German things in Estonia. The failure of the final German offensives in the west and the American entry into the war led to the collapse of the German Empire, and along with it the German position in Estonia. Rosenberg fled West before the Soviets arrived in Tallinn, eventually making it to Munich in January 1919. There Rosenberg was introduced by another refugee from the Baltics to one Dietrich Eckart, a German writer and member of the Thule Society who was launching an anti-Semitic magazine.⁴⁹

Rosenberg was soon working for Eckart on his new magazine *Auf Gut Deutsch*, and one can possibly detect Rosenberg's influence early in the journal's publications. While Eckart was obviously deeply anti-Jewish, his earlier articles were more in the vein of a metaphysical anti-Semitism: In a series called "Das Judentum in und außer uns" (The Jew in and Around Us) he called the Jews a "world affirming" people, materialists who did not believe in the afterlife or ideals, and opposed to the non-Jewish essence of "negation of the world." While Eckart decried the fact that the Jewish people "triumphs as never before" he also wrote that the Jews were a necessary part of humanity.⁵⁰

"...one or the other of these [non-Jewish] peoples can perfectly well be destroyed what is important will live on in their heirs. But if the Jewish people were to perish, there would no longer be a nation that cherished affirmation of the world: the end of time would have come... It follows from all of this that Jewishness belongs to the organism of mankind as, let us say, certain bacteria belong to the human body, and just as necessarily as these. As we know, the body contains a lot of small organisms without which it would be destroyed, although these organisms feed on it; and similarly mankind needs the Jewish presence in order to remain vigorous until the fulfillment of its earthly mission. In other words, the affirmation of the world, pernicious in itself, which is present in the purest form in Jewishness, is the condition of worldly existence as long as there are men and cannot be imagined away; only with the salvation of all mankind will it collapse.

Thus we must accept the Jews among us as a necessary evil for who knows how many centuries to come. But as our body would atrophy if those bacteria developed to more than a healthy extent, so also, to make an analogy, would our people gradually succumb to a permanent spiritual infirmity if the Jew got to be too much for it. That which Zionism wants or at least pretends to want, to leave completely, would be just as fatal as the Jew ruling us."⁵¹

These pseudo-philosophical quotations are certainly anti-Jewish, but seem weirdly philosemitic compared to what was to come. They were printed in *Auf Gut Deutsch* in late January and early February 1919 in the first issues of the magazine. Rosenberg's first article

⁴⁸ Naomi Wiener Cohen, *Jacob H. Schiff: A Study in American Jewish Leadership*, Brandeis University Press, 1999, pp. 191-192.

⁴⁹ Laqueur, p 73.

⁵⁰ Dietrich Eckart, "Jewishness in and around Us", Barbara Miller Lane and Leila J. Rupp trans., In *The Third Reich Sourcebook*, Anson Rabinbach and Sander L. Gilman eds., (University of California Press, 2013), p. 10.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, pp. 10-11.

“Die Russisch-Jüdische Revolution” (The Russian-Jewish Revolution) appeared in the magazine on February 21 1919. In contrast to the earlier articles by Eckart, this article was concrete, direct, and dealt with what Rosenberg presented as an indisputable fact:⁵² the Bolsheviks were a secretly Jewish project, and if there had once been any authentically Russian aspects of the Russian Revolution, they had been hijacked by Jews. Trotsky and Zinoviev were the Jewish rulers behind Lenin’s throne. Rosenberg wrote that this secretly-Jewish Soviet government only stayed in power through using the harshest repressive measures:

“...for it knows perfectly well that the hatred of the unarmed population, which is still impotent, could be terrible if it is not prevented on a daily basis. According to data from “Pravda” (Truth) the official newspaper, more than 13,000 ‘counter-revolutionaries’ have been shot in recent months.”⁵³

Rosenberg then predicted that the Russian people might rise up against their Jewish rulers if they had a chance, and that perhaps the Jews would be exterminated or forced to flee: “... all the recent news agree with the fact that hatred of the Jews in Russia, despite all the terror, is increasing... If the present government falls, then no Jew will remain alive in Russia...”⁵⁴

A month after Rosenberg’s first article was published Eckart decided to discontinue publishing his rambling philosophical series of articles “The Jew in and Around Us” in his journal, because “...factual material seemed to me to be more important.”⁵⁵ This could have been a reference to Rosenberg’s much more “concrete” writings about the Judeo-Bolshevik conspiracy, or it could have been an acknowledgement that conditions in Munich in the spring of 1919 were not right for publishing such “philosophical” musings when violent revolution was all around. Germany’s defeat in 1918 had been followed by an attempted communist revolution in Berlin. Another short-lived attempt at establishing an independent Bavarian Socialist Republic also failed at the ballot box during elections to the Bavarian Parliament, but the assassination of the leader of the Bavarian revolutionaries (while he was on the way to deliver a resignation speech) galvanized his supporters. Two of them retaliated by entering the Bavarian Parliament and opening fire. Another communist revolution had started in nearby Hungary.⁵⁶ Revolution was in the air in Munich.

On April 5 1919, a day before a Soviet-inspired “Bavarian Soviet Republic” was proclaimed, Rosenberg and Eckart distributed a pamphlet in Munich with the title “To All Working People!” According to Eckart the pamphlet was directed against the soon-to-arrive Bavarian Soviet Republic. The pamphlet is a denunciation of interest a.k.a. “loan capital” and of banking. The pamphlet attacked interest and the Rothschilds along with other Jewish bankers, the “...great number of such ‘Rothschilds.’ The *Mendelssohns*, the *Bleichröders*, the

⁵² One might even have called it world-affirming.

⁵³ Alfred Rosenberg “Die russisch jüdische Revolution” (The Russian-Jewish Revolution), *Auf Gut Deutsch*, Munich, 21 February 1919, p. 123.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Dietrich Eckart, “Notiz” (Notice), *Auf Gut Deutsch*, 28 March 1919, p. 160.

⁵⁶ Mark Jones, *Founding Weimar, Violence and the German Revolution of 1918–1919*, Cambridge University Press, 2016, pp. 288-289.

*Friedländer*s, the *Warburg*s, to name only a few of the most important.”⁵⁷ The pamphlet concludes with an attack on socialists and leftist-revolutionaries, stating that the Rothschilds and other Jewish bankers, the “real” enemy, were funding the revolutionaries. The pamphlet alleges that the plan of the Jewish bankers involved getting people to listen to revolutionary propaganda and attack landowners, which would divert them from fighting loan capital:⁵⁸

“...it is precisely the landowners whom our “saviors of the people” brand as the worst, even the only, exploiters, while the true vampire is never mentioned even in a whisper. We are intentionally diverted to the far lesser evil so that we will not see the greatest evil, all-consuming loan capital. And this is the way it’s been done from Marx and Lassalle up to Levien, Landauer and Mühsam. Haven’t you opened your eyes yet?...”⁵⁹

Once again, while one cannot credit these ideas to the *Protocols* or to any other specific piece of anti-Jewish or anti-banker conspiracy-theory literature, one can see the obvious similarity between what this document says and a message common to many versions of the Grand Conspiracy Theory: the supposed battle between two political poles is really just an ersatz battle between two groups ultimately working for the same side. Just as in the *Protocols*, a shadowy cabal of Jewish financiers was stroking a supposedly socialist revolution as part of a larger plan. In this case they were distracting the German people from the “real fight” - which should be against that cabal of bankers.

The idea that Jews were behind socialists political movements was not imported by Rosenberg, it was already present in Germany before his arrival. In January 1919 right-wing Germans had tried to tar the elections to the new German National Assembly as Jewish. They circulated posters saying that prominent Bolsheviks, Catholics, and other politicians were secretly Jewish, with the slogan “Their star is subversion! Make Germany free for Germans!”⁶⁰ As we have seen, the idea of a powerful cabal of bankers manipulating world politics had emerged in the nineteenth century. It was evidently also popular in *völkisch* circles in Germany as well as in White Russian circles, which added a heavy Jewish element. In fact, the *völkisch* proto-Nazi Eckart hated bankers so much that later when he was arrested during a Bavarian Communist raid on a Thule Society meeting, his bitter hatred for loan capital convinced the Communists that he was friendly.⁶¹ Rosenberg attended meetings of the Thule Society in Munich during this time, and got involved with the establishment of the Thule Society’s attempt at a working class party, the DAP.⁶²

Conspiracy theories from this Munich milieu did not have to include this obvious Jewish element in order to be embraced in *völkisch* circles in Munich. Another Thule Society member⁶³

⁵⁷ Barabara Lane and Leila Rupp, *Nazi Ideology before 1933: A Documentation*, (University of Texas Press, 2014) Kindle Edition, Locations 1102-1157.

⁵⁸ The pamphleteers were obviously not referring to *Imperialism: the Highest form of Capitalism*.

⁵⁹ Lane and Rupp, Locations 1158-1163.

⁶⁰ Paul Hanebrink, *A Specter Haunting Europe: The Myth of Judeo-Bolshevism*, (Harvard University Press, 2018), Kindle Edition, Location 272.

⁶¹ Reginald G Phelps. “Before Hitler Came: Thule Society and Germanen Orden,” *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 35, No. 3 (Sep., 1963), pp. 245-261, p. 260.

⁶² Kellogg, p. 70-72.

⁶³ Lane and Rupp, Location 3445.

⁶⁴ and early member of the DAP named Gottfried Feder wrote a pamphlet sometime between November 1918 and the summer of 1919. Feder attacked the “international financial superpowers, the supranational financial force which rules over all the rights of self-determination of individual peoples, the golden international;...”⁶⁵ This cabal had invented loan interest which “makes possible the lazy drone life of a minority of financially powerful people at the cost of the productive peoples and their labor.”⁶⁶ Feder proposed abolishing all obligations to pay interest, to totally revolutionize the German monetary system, to subordinate the entire monetary system to the state treasury and make all private banks branches of the treasury, and above all to recognize that money is just “exchange for labor.”⁶⁷ It was only through this radical program that people could escape “the golden nets of the international plutocracy.”⁶⁸

This early version of this anti-capitalist pamphlet was devoid of anti-Jewish conspiracy theories which were added in a later version, but it was a conspiracy theory nonetheless. Feder made it clear that the international banker cabal was actively disguising the true nature of interest, and distracting them from the fact that the interest ordinary people might receive from banks was negligible, much less than the state takes in taxes (much of which went to pay the interest on loans from big capital.) “The all-powerful money powers work industriously to keep us forgetting, that with the exception of a few financially important people the supposedly so nice interest, so beloved by the thoughtless, is eaten up by taxes.”⁶⁹

Aufbau and the Judeo-Masonic conspiracy theory

Evidently different variants of overlapping anti-Banker, Judeo-Masonic, and Judeo-Bolshevik conspiracy theories were present in Germany at this time. Though it is likely that Rosenberg was influenced by White Russian propaganda and earlier Black Hundred propaganda, there is actually no good evidence that he had specifically read the *Protocols* before he moved to Munich. Another group of Russian exiles, a number of former officers, propagandists, and participants in the Russian Civil war, that included some Baltic Germans like Rosenberg, settled in Munich in the period following the end of WWI and the German Revolution. This group was the most direct link between the pro-Tsarist groups that spread conspiracy-theory propaganda in the Russian Empire and the Nazis.

The key figure from this group is Max Erwin von Scheubner-Richter. His father was a German subject and his mother was a Baltic German.⁷⁰ Scheubner-Richter spent most of his youth in the Baltic provinces of the Russian Empire. He was studying chemistry in Riga when the Revolution of 1905 broke out. During the Revolution Latvian and Estonian nationalists joined with socialists and started a local rebellion. Scheubner-Richter joined a Baltic German Selbstschutz (Self-Protection) unit and was wounded in action against the rebels.⁷¹ He

⁶⁴ Sebottendorf, p. 62 seems to indicate he was a member of the Thule Society by late 1918.

⁶⁵ Lane and Rupp, Locations 1049-1050.

⁶⁶ Lane and Rupp, Locations 1057-1058.

⁶⁷ Lane and Rupp, Location 1096.

⁶⁸ Lane and Rupp, Location 1102.

⁶⁹ Lane and Rupp, Locations 1102-1103.

⁷⁰ Kellogg, p. 41.

⁷¹ Kellogg, p. 42.

emigrated to Germany after 1910. During WWI he served on the Western front for a time before being sent to Turkey to work as a German diplomat.⁷² Later in the war Scheubner-Richter returned to the Baltic region after it was occupied by advancing German forces, and worked for a press office of the German army in Riga and also for the Political Section of the German army General Staff. During this period he was decorated with the Iron Cross, First Class, and his competence got him the attention and favor of General Ludendorff, one of the top German commanders.⁷³ After the armistice and the German withdrawal from the Baltic states, Scheubner-Richter stayed behind and was involved in organizing German volunteers to fight the Communist advance into the Baltic States. His work also involved disseminating anti-Communist propaganda in the region. Scheubner-Richter traveled to Munich some time in 1919 and met up with Rosenberg, who was trying to raise funds for the White armies still fighting in the ruins of the Russian Empire. Scheubner-Richter also met Eckart, and linked him up to Otto von Kursell, a Baltic German refugee in Munich who had known Scheubner-Richter since high school and had worked for Scheubner-Richter in Riga during the German occupation.⁷⁴ He also got in contact with M. S. Komissarov, a former member of the Russian police who had been accused of secretly printing pamphlets inciting pogroms in the run up to the issuing of the 1905 October Manifesto. (See chapter 8).

In 1920 Scheubner-Richter along with Komissarov, Rosenberg, Ludendorff (who had also moved to Munich) and others began to set up an organization to provide war materiel and manufactured goods to anti-Communist forces still fighting in Ukraine (presumably in return for Ukrainian agricultural goods).⁷⁵ Upon returning to Munich after a trip to Crimea to set this up, Scheubner-Richter established an organization to continue this clandestine relationship with the non-Communist forces in Ukraine.⁷⁶ The organization was called "Aufbau" (reconstruction). Aufbau claimed to be concerned with establishing commercial links with southern Russia after the USSR had collapsed, but it was in fact a conspiratorial organization dedicated to overthrowing the Soviet Union and fighting a non-existent Jewish enemy. The organization sought to put the Russian Grand Prince Kirill Romanov on the Russian throne.⁷⁷

While much of its activity was secret, Aufbau leadership made no secret of who they believed was their real enemy. Aufbau published a periodical: *Wirtschafts-politische Aufbau-Korrespondenz über Ostfragen und ihre Bedeutung für Deutschland* (Economic-Political Reconstruction Correspondence on Eastern Questions and Their Significance for Germany)⁷⁸ (hereafter, *Aufbau-Korrespondenz*.) The periodical interpreted events through the lens of the Grand anti-Jewish Conspiracy Theory. It published articles stating that there was an international Jewish organization bent on world domination usually referred to as "the

⁷² Walter Laqueur, *Russia and Germany; a century of conflict*, (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1965), p. 59.

⁷³ Kellogg, pp. 80-81.

⁷⁴ Kellogg, pp. 42, 82, 89.

⁷⁵ Kellogg, p. 116. Despite his credentials, Kommissarov was suspected by some fellow emigres of being a Bolshevik agent. They were right. Kommissarov had been recruited by the Soviet secret service in 1920. Komissarov defected to the Communists while accompanying Scheubner-Richter's delegation sent from Germany to set up the relationship with White forces in Ukraine. See Kellogg, p. 119.

⁷⁶ Kellogg pp. 124-125.

⁷⁷ Kellogg pp. 122-124.

⁷⁸ Kellogg, pp. 128-129.

International.” This was distinct from the Communist Third International, which was also often mentioned, and appeared to be sometimes merged with “international capitalism” or “high finance.”

“International high finance has invited the ‘proletarian leaders’ and the henchmen of ‘democracy’ (i.e. the Plutocracy) together at a table... the peoples who do not yet serve the stock exchange will show up in the future.”⁷⁹

The publication often carried conspiracy-theory laden articles produced by Russian exiles, possibly translated. It reiterated the themes of Black Hundred propaganda, with a newer Judeo-Bolshevik twist. Talk of Freemasons is almost totally absent from available editions of *Aufbau*. Their role was mostly taken by the Bolsheviks, though the democrats and socialists also played a part. The *Protocols* had tried to show that a conspiracy of Jews had used Freemasons to spread the poison of liberalism in order to prepare for its coming autocracy. *Aufbau-Korrespondenz* usually argued that the Soviet Union and the communist international were just parts of some grander Jewish plan, and that behind it all lurked Jewish international finance: “In view of the Bolshevik plague, the nationals of all countries would have every reason to look on the crooked fingers of the leading forces of today's world politics - high finance and its world-revolutionary helpers.”⁸⁰

Aufbau's use of themes from a Judeo-Bolshevik conspiracy theory similar to what Rosenberg had written before he came to Germany is not coincidental, he was a member. *Aufbau* also included two other propagandists who had spread anti-Jewish propaganda in Ukraine during the Russian Civil War. One, Gregor Schwartz-Bostunitsch, was an ethnic German who had been born in Kyiv. He became a propagandist for anti-Bolshevik forces in Crimea, continuing in the tradition of Black Hundred propaganda by spreading the idea of a Judeo-Masonic conspiracy involved with the Bolsheviks. (By the way, Schwartz-Bostunitsch later became an SS officer.)⁸¹ The other one Nemirovich-Danchenko also worked as a press chief and propagandist for an anti-Bolshevik army in Ukraine.⁸² *Aufbau*'s membership also included Major Josef Bischoff, a German who had been involved in the post-armistice intervention of German “volunteers” in Latvia, and who had set up a secret anti-Bolshevik propaganda operation in Odesa.⁸³

Aufbau was exclusive, requiring from its ordinary members a 100,000 mark admission fee and 20,000 marks a year after that. Any prospective members of *Aufbau* were given background checks.⁸⁴ This is unsurprising, given that *Aufbau* members believed they were up against a super-powerful conspiracy. Scheubner-Richter managed to recruit a wealthy noble Baron Theodor von Cramer-Klett to be the official head of the organization and to help bankroll it.⁸⁵ The official vice president of the organization was Vasily Biskupsky, an ambitious former

⁷⁹ “Washington”, *Aufbau-Korrespondenz*, 17 November 1921, Year 1, no. 21, p. 1.

⁸⁰ “Loyd George und die Russen!” (Lloyd George and the Russians!), *Aufbau-Korrespondenz*, November 29 1922, Year 2, no. 48, p. 1.

⁸¹ Kellogg, p. 117,

⁸² Kellogg, p. 117-118.

⁸³ Kellogg, p. 116.

⁸⁴ Kellogg, p. 123.

⁸⁵ Kellogg, p. 126.

general in the Tsarist army who was admired by Ludendorff.⁸⁶ Perhaps just as important as this further connection to Ludendorff, Biskupsky had a cousin, Vladimir Keppen, who donated a large amount of money to *Aufbau*.⁸⁷ Scheubner-Richter's old friend Otto von Kursell was also a member of *Aufbau*.⁸⁸ Peter Nikolaevich Shabelsky-Bork, the man who had transmitted the *Protocols* to Ludwig Muller von Hausen for publishing in German, was also a member.⁸⁹

Ludendorff is an important figure to remark upon when discussing the reiteration of the Judeo-Masonic conspiracy theory in 1920s Germany. Ludendorff joined *Aufbau* along with his political advisor Colonel Bauer.⁹⁰ Ludendorff had been the de-facto ruler Germany for much of WWI⁹¹ and he was still a major public figure with a following despite his wartime failure. At the end of WWI he had demanded an armistice along with his superior Paul von Hindenburg, surprising the civilian German government which resisted his calls for an immediate ceasefire for some weeks. After the war he engaged in some revisionism and became a proponent of the "stab-in-the-back" myth, the idea that the German army had not been defeated in the field but had instead been betrayed by forces behind-the-lines. This myth became widespread in Germany in the period between the wars.⁹² Ludendorff eventually discovered the villain behind his stab in the back myth - the Judeo-Masonic conspiracy. In a memoir published in 1922 Ludendorff made several references to it. He said that the Jews had for quite some time been seeking sovereignty over the entire world and concocted the "seductive words of 'liberty, equality, fraternity'"⁹³ in order to weaken their target (a reference to liberalism being a Jewish plot). Ludendorff directly blamed the Zionists, the Freemasons, the Universal Israelite Alliance, and the Jewish organization B'nai B'rith with participating in the "stabbing" in order to fulfill their plans to gain Palestine:

"Covetousness, jealousy, distrust, mistrust were spurred on,... With the deterioration of the war situation on the German front, this was preached ever more forcefully and the blessing of the revolution were praised....In this fight against national feeling in Germany and Austria-Hungary, the Jewish people stood out in their masses on the side of the Entente and intensified their promotional work. B'nai B'rith, the Universal Israelite Alliance, Zionism, and international Freemasonry worked with them."⁹⁴

It cannot be said with any certainty that Ludendorff got these idea from his new Baltic German and Russian associates. He might have derived it entirely from German sources. His *Aufbau* associates would not have discouraged these beliefs, and Ludendorff's engagement with *Aufbau* probably greatly increased the prestige and capabilities of the organization.

As part of its mission, *Aufbau* also tried to build anti-Soviet resistance in Ukraine, mainly via its member Colonel Ivan Poltavets-Ostranitsa and his organization the *Ukrainian Cossack*

⁸⁶ Laqueur, p. 120.

⁸⁷ Kellogg, p. 131.

⁸⁸ Kellogg, p. 129.

⁸⁹ А Иванов (A Ivanov), "ШАБЕЛЬСКИЙ-БОРК" (Shabelsky-Bork), in *Black Hundreds, historical encyclopedia*, pp. 586 - 587. Also Kellogg, pp. 40, 44-45, 59-62, 64.

⁹⁰ Kellogg, p. 132.

⁹¹ William L. Shirer, *Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, (Simon & Schuster, 2011), p. 34.

⁹² Shirer, pp. 31-32.

⁹³ Erich Ludendorff, *Kriegführung und Politik*, (Berlin: E. G. Mittler & Gohn, 1922), p. 42.

⁹⁴ Ludendorff, pp. 189-191.

*Organization.*⁹⁵ For a time Aufbau gave considerable assistance to a competing White Russian emigre organization the “Union of the Faithful” which had been created by a URP leader and set up a clandestine network among Red Army officers in the early 1920s.⁹⁶

The conspiracy-theory laden outlook of *Aufbau* members was not confined to Russian affairs. The exiles from the Russian Empire grounded their political analysis in the pre-revolutionary idea that Jewish conspiracy deliberately set up republics in order to make them ripe for a complete Jewish takeover. This was the belief espoused by Butmi and enshrined in the *Protocols*. This idea places any republic automatically under suspicion as just being a transitional phase in the Jewish conspiracy. The success of the Bolshevik coup in Russia so soon after the establishment of the republican Russian Provisional Government seemed to confirm this interpretation. *Aufbau-Korrespondenz* described Alexander Kerensky, the final Prime Minister of the 1917 Russian Provisional Government as “a docile tool of Anglo-Jewish Democracy...”⁹⁷ Kerensky was also a Freemason,⁹⁸ which would have contributed paranoia about his role.

Germany had also become a republic at the end of the war, the Weimar Republic. This republic survived attempts at Soviet-inspired communist revolution in 1918, but a mind convinced of a grand Jewish conspiracy would see this success as just part of a deception. This suspicion would have been compounded by the new German Republic’s rapprochement with the USSR. In December 1920, not long after the organization’s founding, Scheubner-Richter approached the German foreign office and asked for support for Aufbau. This request was rejected. At this time the German government was attempting to improve relations with the USSR, and they could not be seen to be working with an organization dedicated to overthrowing the USSR.⁹⁹

Subsequent articles in *Aufbau-Korrespondenz* make it clear that Aufbau’s leaders considered the Weimar Republic to be itself part of a grand Judeo-Bolshevik conspiracy, at one point making a direct comparison to Russia under Kerensky:

“The government of the Reich is in a position for which Russians have long coined the term “Kerentschina,” that is, the Kerensky period... one hears the cries of anarchy and believes that only by yielding can one stop the chaos. It goes downhill step by step, until one day the red tide flows over everything and causes misfortune for millions. The symptoms have long been unmistakable to any unbiased eye, the forces of chaos are the same in Russia and Germany...”¹⁰⁰

Nor did *Aufbau-Korrespondenz* only attack the German government as just a transitional phase. Recall that a common element in the pre-Revolutionary Russian Judeo-Masonic conspiracy was that the governments of the west were *already* under the control of the

⁹⁵ Kellogg, p. 130.

⁹⁶ Kellogg, p. 144.

⁹⁷ “Rückblicke und Parallelen,” (Looking Back and Parallels), *Aufbau-Korrespondenz*, no. 29, year 2, 19 July 1922, p. 1.

⁹⁸ Nathan Smith, “Political Freemasonry in Russia, 1906-1918: A Discussion of the Sources,” *The Russian Review*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (Apr., 1985), p. 160.

⁹⁹ Kellogg, p. 127.

¹⁰⁰ “Dem Bolschewismus Entgegen” (Against Bolshevism), *Aufbau-Korrespondenz*, no. 9, year 1, 9 September 1921, p. 1.

conspiracy. A September 1921 issue of *Aufbau-Korrespondenz* warned that there were two dangers, international capitalism (which dominated in the west) and communism (growing to the east) and that if Germany "...wishes to maintain its independence, it must reject both the dictatorship of the proletariat and international capitalism, and elect a government which, filled with national spirit, can compensate for all class contradictions and guarantee internal peace."¹⁰¹ This interpretation made the situation even more urgent - Germany might be the last hope! As one anonymous Russian journalist put it in *Aufbau-Korrespondenz*: "In Russia, the International has won. In France as well, only in a different guise. The sequence is now in Germany, where the decisive battle of the Jewish star with the Christian cross will take place."¹⁰² One may see here again an echo of the old anti-Jesuit conspiracy theory that was used in the Russian Empire: the two opposing poles, capitalism and communism, were actually just two poles of the same grand conspiracy, just as the Jesuits supposedly controlled both the reactionary Roman Catholic church and the liberals and nihilists.

Like with the URP death squad in Russia discussed in the previous chapter, some members of Aufbau began to take matters into their own hands and engaged in political violence. Initially some members of Aufbau sought revenge against the figures who they believed had facilitated the Jewish takeover of Russia, that is, Russian liberals and socialists who had been overthrown by the Bolsheviks. Some of these former members of the Russian republican government were in exile in Europe, and therefore could be targeted by members of Aufbau. According to a report from a Russian emigre organization, Biskupskii and another member of Aufbau paid for the assassination of Alexander Kerensky sometime around May 1921.¹⁰³ This assassination was never carried out. In another incident Aufbau members and Russian exiles Peter Nikolaevich Shabelsky-Bork and Sergei Taboritskii attempted to assassinate the Kadet leader and former foreign minister of Russia Pavel Milyukov.¹⁰⁴ Recall, Shabelsky-Bork was a former URP activist, and the Kadets were presented as the main Jewish tool in Black Hundred propaganda.

Shabelsky-Bork and Taboritskii tried to kill Milyukov while he was addressing a Russian audience of about 1,500 in Berlin on the topic "America and the Restoration of Russia." Taboritskii rose while Milyukov was speaking and began firing, shouting "For the Tsar's family and Russia!" Vladimir Nabokov, the father of the novelist and a former Kadet, lept up and grabbed Taboritskii. Shabelsky-Bork then shot Nabokov dead. Milyukov escaped unharmed.¹⁰⁵

There is evidence that more senior members of Aufbau, including Scheubner-Richter, knew about this assassination attempt in advance and may have helped plan it.¹⁰⁶ Aufbau's leadership may also have had foreknowledge of (and perhaps been complicit in) the assassination of the Jewish foreign minister of Germany Walther Rathenau in June 1922.¹⁰⁷ Unfortunately, unlike with the URP death squad in Russia, there was never a comprehensive

¹⁰¹ "Die Lehren Der Russ. Revolution" (The Lesson of the Russian Revolution), *Aufbau-Korrespondenz*, no. 10, Munich, 14 September 1921, p. 5.

¹⁰² "Ave, Hilverding, morituri te salutant!" (Hail, Hilverding, we who are about to die salute you!), *Aufbau-Korrespondenz*, no. 36, year 3, 7 September 1923, p. 2.

¹⁰³ Kellogg, p. 167.

¹⁰⁴ Kellogg, p. 130.

¹⁰⁵ Brian Boyd, *Vladimir Nabokov: The Russian Years*, (Princeton University Press, 1990), pp. 190-191.

¹⁰⁶ Kellogg, pp. 169-170.

¹⁰⁷ Kellogg, pp. 177-179.

investigation of the assassinations possibly linked to Aufbau. The organization engaged in clandestine activity, this is for sure, and it certainly included as members individuals who engaged in assassinations. There was no Tsarist state to reign Aufbau in, no authority they considered legitimate that they would willingly obey if ordered to stop. The ideas Aufbau publications espoused publicly, imported from Tsarist Russian propaganda, made a counter-conspiratorial revolution a necessity if one took them seriously in the different German environment. A few assassinations of former Russian parliamentarians or a Jewish member of the Weimar government would not be enough to stem the coming Jewish-led Communist revolution in Germany, or alternatively the coming Jewish domination of Germany through a plutocracy. A truly radical solution was needed to change the course of German history. Scheubner-Richter believed there had to be an awakening and a revolution to stop the inevitable slide into Jewish domination, and this revolution would not be without violence. Scheubner-Richter and other anti-Jewish conspiracy theorists believed they found the man to lead this revolution in Adolf Hitler As Scheubner-Richter wrote in 1923:

“The Russian people are also awakening. And also there are awakening Italians, awakening Englishmen, awakening Spaniards and - thanks to God - finally awakening Germans... these awakening Russians will settle accounts with their international government, just as the awakening Germans will do, or- in a few years' time there will be no Russians and no Germans, no national peoples at all, but under the scepter of The International a mixture of the races... This fight in Germany is near the door... the day is not far off when against this another, a völkish Germany will rise up... This völkish Germany knows that the fight will be a difficult one, a relentless one, and a cruel one. It knows that at the same time it will have to fight on different fronts, that it will fight against the lukewarm... that it will have to fight against German national comrades seduced by Marxism and blinded... often ready to protect their Jewish seducers with their bodies. It knows that perhaps at the same time it will have to fight against the Frenchmen... Völkish Germany is prepared to take up this struggle in faith in the German people, to whom a new prophet has arisen in Adolf Hitler, who has understood [how] to rouse the German soul and free it from the shackles of Marxist thought... For the outcome of this struggle will decide whether national culture, *völkish* characteristics, and Christianity will still hold, or whether all this will be merged in an international mush. And the fight will be fought under the slogan "Here is the Soviet Star - here the Swastika." And the Swastika will win!”¹⁰⁸

Hitler and the NSDAP

Scheubner-Richter eventually became a close collaborator with Adolf Hitler, and we see him in 1923 in the above text declaring Hitler a “new prophet” who would lead the fight against the Jewish conspiracy. Both Scheubner-Richter, hailing from the Russian Empire and a believer in the Black Hundred Judeo-Masonic conspiracy theory, and Alfred Rosenberg, a Baltic German who also believed in a “Judeo-Bolshevik” variant of the Grand Conspiracy Theory, greatly influenced the development of Hitler’s thought. Hitler is perhaps the most famous conspiracy theorist in history. The Judeo-Masonic/Judeo-Bolshevik conspiracy theory was central to his thinking and evident both in his writing, his public statements, and even elements of his diplomatic and wartime decisions.

¹⁰⁸ Dr. von Scheubner-Richter, “Die Bolschewifizierung Deutschlands,” (The Bolshevization of Germany), *Aufbau-Korrespondenz*, no. 38, year 3, Munich, 21 September 1923, p. 3.

Earlier biographers of Hitler often accepted his own narrative, related in *Mein Kampf*, of how he became an anti-Semite in his youth in Austria. After all, there was a strong populist antisemitic movement in Vienna while he was living there. However, more recent scholarship indicates that while Hitler certainly was familiar with the antisemitic vocabulary from Vienna at this time, he did not seem to be an antisemitic radical in his youth. Hitler also claimed to draw a great deal of inspiration from the 19th century German-speaking anti-Semites who had also built a political program around hating the Jews, the source of capitalism, liberalism, and socialism and from Georg von Schönerer who believed in a biological distinction between the Jewish and German races.¹⁰⁹ This Viennese variant of anti-Semitism “was anti-Catholic, anti-capitalist, anti-modernist, neo-pagan, and pan-German, as well as purporting to represent the disenfranchised masses.”¹¹⁰ There were also some conspiracy-theory elements to the anti-Semitism of that era, as discussed in chapter 7. However, contemporary acquaintances of Hitler from before he was 30 don’t record any antisemitic obsessions, in fact he was even been described as mildly philosemitic! Hitler’s autobiography in *Mein Kampf* was written with the purpose of showing that Hitler’s ideas came to him early and were self-taught. The truth seems to be that while he may have been exposed to turn-of-the-century Viennese anti-Semitism and maybe even harbored some antisemitic thoughts, he became an extreme anti-Jewish activist only in post-war Munich.¹¹¹

In late 1918 Hitler was a German soldier stationed in Munich. He had turned down the option to demobilize after the war, and instead opted for wages, housing, and provisions while serving the new German socialist, republican government.¹¹² Hitler had heard a speech by Gottfried Feder during an army propaganda course in July 1919, when Feder had given a version of his anti-capitalist conspiracy theory. Hitler later wrote glowingly about this speech in *Mein Kampf*.¹¹³ Hitler heard Feder again in September, at a meeting of the DAP which Hitler attended as part of his duties as a political officer. Feder was not yet a member of the party but was a guest speaker. Hitler got the attention of the other DAP members when he verbally attacked another speaker at the meeting who had argued for Bavarian independence. After Hitler had read a DAP pamphlet he was given at this meeting against international capitalism, Jews, Freemasons, and socialism, the leaders of the DAP convinced him to join their small party.¹¹⁴

Adolf Hitler made the acquaintance of party members Eckart and Rosenberg in the fall of 1919, probably not long after joining.¹¹⁵ Eckart became a mentor to Hitler.¹¹⁶ According to some friends of Hitler, Hitler greatly esteemed Rosenberg during this time. Rosenberg related to Hitler the story that the Bolshevik Revolution was part of a global plot by Jewish bankers to take over the world.¹¹⁷ In 1922 Hitler wrote of Rosenberg “He is the only man whom I always listen to. He

¹⁰⁹ Wistrich, p. 43.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Brigitte Hamann, *Hitler’s Vienna: A Dictator’s Apprenticeship*, Thomas Thornton trans., (Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 346-353.

¹¹² Weber, p. 10.

¹¹³ Weber, p. 86.

¹¹⁴ Weber, pp. 112-113.

¹¹⁵ Kellogg, p. 72.

¹¹⁶ Weber, p. 142.

¹¹⁷ Weber, pp. 219-221.

is a thinker.”¹¹⁸ Scheubner-Richter met Hitler through Rosenberg sometime in November 1920. Scheubner-Richter first heard Hitler speak on November 22, 1920 and shortly thereafter joined the Nazi party.¹¹⁹ Scheubner-Richter later introduced Hitler to Ludendorff.¹²⁰ Hitler’s emerging worldview was formed under the influence of these three men, one of whom was a former leader of Germany, and all of whom believed in an anti-Jewish version of the Grand Conspiracy Theory. Hitler may already have been antisemitic by the time he fell into this company, but they imparted to him the specific Black Hundred version of the Grand Conspiracy Theory. Scheubner-Richter gave to Hitler much more than ideas. He channeled funds from Aufbau and other White Russian-friendly sources to the Nazis, probably including funds donated by the American industrialist Henry Ford.¹²¹

Interpreting the changing world, beyond the *Protocols*

Before discussing the specifics of this Russian-origin conspiracy theory that Hitler adopted, we ought to discuss Rosenberg’s approach to these conspiracy theories in Germany, and specifically his approach to the *Protocols*. Earlier in this chapter we examined Rosenberg’s belief in the Judeo-Bolshevik conspiracy theory before he came to Germany, but he made no references to the Freemasons or to the *Protocols* in his earliest available writings. Instead, Rosenberg pointed to the Jewishness of people at the pinnacle of Soviet power and the activities of Jewish-American financiers like Jacob Schiff as evidence of this grand conspiracy. Eckart (and therefore Rosenberg) had first mentioned the *Protocols* in *Auf Gut Deutsch* in October 1919. In December 1919 Eckart printed a review of the new German edition of the *Protocols* proclaiming it as authentic.¹²² Rosenberg eventually fully adopted elements of the “older” Judeo-Masonic idea, but he also updated it a little. Rosenberg wrote about the *Protocols* as authentic in 1923:

“The publication [of the *Protocols*] had a tremendous importance because the *Protocols* were demonstrably not a program put together after the fact, but the reproduction of a paper which concerned men had delivered as a warning, decades ago, to persons active in political life, without the paper ever having received the necessary consideration...”¹²³

However, as a former Russian subject, Rosenberg would probably have been aware of and have experienced cognitive dissonance about the anachronistic elements of the *Protocols*. He would have been aware of recent Russian history and seen the obvious anti-autocracy, probability sections of the *Protocols* as answering the specific concerns of a section of landowners in the Russian Empire around the turn of the century, before the Revolution of 1905. The reference in the *Protocols* to the sinister true purpose of subway lines as a revenge weapon of the Jews would have seemed especially bizarre: “the undergrounds, metropolitains, - those

¹¹⁸ Weber, p. 219.

¹¹⁹ Kellogg, p. 124.

¹²⁰ Kellogg, p. 128.

¹²¹ Kellogg, pp. 203-204.

¹²² Kellogg, p. 73.

¹²³ Barbara Miller Lane and Leila J. Rupp, *Nazi Ideology before 1933: A Documentation*, (Kindle Locations 1428-1430). University of Texas Press. Kindle Edition.

subterranean corridors which, before the time comes, will be driven under all the capitals and from whence those capitals will be blown into the air with all their organizations and archives.”¹²⁴ When the *Protocols* were written at the turn of the century, subways were a novel technology in continental Europe, but by 1919 the idea that they were secretly a weapon of mass destruction would have seemed ridiculous.¹²⁵

Even in this 1923 text Rosenberg hedged about the authenticity of the *Protocols*, saying that “no *legally* conclusive evidence either of absolute authenticity or of forgery can be furnished.”¹²⁶ Rosenberg maintained that even if the *Protocols* was not a totally solid, believable Jewish document, it still was in line with the truth, as there were “documents from earlier times and from the most recent present which spring from the deepest Jewish subconsciousness as well as from power-conscious arrogance, documents which reveal the same meaning as the reviled Protocols of the Elders of Zion.”¹²⁷ In an earlier 1921 book about what he believed was the massive Jewish conspiracy behind the Russian Revolution, Rosenberg mentioned the *Protocols* and described it as being contested, (perhaps a response to the debunking of the *Protocols* in the London Times) but then referred to other “obvious” facts that proved the truth of the message of the *Protocols*:

“This whole swarm of Jewish criminals is welded together by instinct and plan... this instinct has long condensed into a plan. I need not point out the contested [*angefeindeten*] ‘Protocols of the Wise men of Zion.’ It was proudly hailed by the Jews after the death of the world-banker Jacob Schiff that he himself had financed Japan’s war against Russia, provided the [Russian] prisoners of war with revolutionary propaganda, and that he also stood behind the Russian Revolution of 1917. Today, these things are so transparent to everyone’s eyes that they need no further explanation...”¹²⁸

Again, Rosenberg references Jacob Schiff - a powerful and influential American Jewish banker who had nursed a special hatred for the Tsarist regime. Schiff had indeed helped to finance the Japanese war effort during the Russo-Japanese war, and had given money to spread revolutionary (though not Bolshevik) propaganda amongst Russian prisoners of war with the approval of the Japanese government.¹²⁹ He had done this partly out of his hatred of the anti-Jewish policies of the Tsarist regime. Schiff was a high-profile and powerful anti-Russian Jew, and his biography fitted perfectly into the conspiracy theory framework of the *Protocols* in the way that Adolphe Crémieux fit snugly into the earlier versions of the Judeo-Masonic conspiracy theory. Like with Crémieux, a closer examination of his actual activities destroys the myth.

¹²⁴ *Protocols*, p. 158.

¹²⁵ Dr. Randall L. Bytwerk makes a similar statement about the anachronistic nature of this claim by the outbreak of WWII. See his article “Believing in ‘Inner Truth’: The Protocols of the Elders of Zion in Nazi Propaganda, 1933–1945,” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, Vol. 29, Issue 2, Fall 2015, pp. 212–229. Available at <https://academic.oup.com/hgs/article/29/2/212/562402>. Accessed June 2, 2019.

¹²⁶ Lane and Rupp, Location 1427.

¹²⁷ Lane and Rupp, Locations 1433-1435. See also Bytwerk, “Believing in ‘Inner Truth...’”

¹²⁸ Alfred Rosenberg, *Pest in Rußland* (Plague in Russia), (Munich: Deutscher Volksverlag, 1922), p. 24.

¹²⁹ “Pacifists Pester till Mayor Calls Them Traitors,” *New York Times*, 24 March 1917. Available at <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1917/03/24/102324302.pdf>. Accessed Feb 9, 2019. Also Adam Gower, *Jacob Schiff and the Art of Risk: American Financing of Japan’s War with Russia*, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), pp. 101-103.

Schiff's Russian strategy and purposes were actually the polar opposite of the strategy and purposes portrayed by the Russian conspiracy theorists. Far from being part of a Jewish plot to entice Russia into the international financial system in order to dominate it, (as the *Protocols* asserted) Schiff had consistently refused to get financially involved at all in Russia because of his objection to Russia's egregious anti-Jewish policies. The Russian government had tried to entice him to do business, even at one point around 1900 sending a representative to meet with him in person to suggest that if Schiff did business with Russia, the Russian Minister of Finance (Count Witte) would be inclined to lobby for the repeal of some Russian anti-Jewish legislation. According to Schiff's own account, related by a member of the Rothschild family, Schiff replied "promises were cheap, and that action would have to precede Russia's application to the American money markets before our cooperation could be had, and that until then we should bring all the influence we could command to bear against Russia getting a foothold in the American money markets."¹³⁰

Ironically, Schiff at one point had also spoken disdainfully of "Jewish high finance" - meaning the Jewish European bankers who *had* done business with Tsarist Russia. He wrote that they had possessed the ability to pressure Tsarist Russia to treat the Jews of the Empire better, but had "instead closed its eye to make a despicable profit, and rendered service to the Russian Government selling her Jewish subjects for a few pieces of silver."¹³¹

Schiff was in fact anti-communist, which is to be expected given that he was a major capitalist. Nevertheless, Schiff became a centerpiece of the conspiracy through a further bit of slander, which Rosenberg probably knew of, that was circulating in Russia in September 1919. A document claimed that Schiff had financed the Bolshevik Revolution with millions of dollars.¹³² This was probably based on a secret intelligence report from the United States, in which a single anonymous source had made this claim. This secret report had been shared with America's allies, and was eventually leaked and published as fact.¹³³ Thus a single piece of slander, laundered through a single intelligence report became a key piece of the evidence supporting the Judeo-Bolshevik conspiracy theory.

Holding a belief in a conspiracy with superpowers of deception not only allows one to slide easily between categorizing something as truth or fiction but also allows one to easily find new points of evidence that can be added to sustain one's belief, even when the original "proof" has been debunked. Rosenberg and Eckart's belief "that the world is governed solely by Judaism, and this is not a superstition"¹³⁴ requires the existence of massive secret infrastructure to govern the world. A global conspiracy may occasionally be revealed by a leak (like the *Protocols* or the *Polish Catechism*) but much more convincing than this kind of "solid" evidence is a stream of constant insinuations and interpretations of world events through a conspiracy-theory framework. As we examined in earlier versions of the Grand Conspiracy Theory, even a total lack of direct evidence can itself be part of the confirmation that there is a powerful deception at work. We can see this in some words Eckart placed in the mouth of Hitler in a

¹³⁰ Naomi Wiener Cohen, p. 130.

¹³¹ Naomi Wiener Cohen, p. 135.

¹³² Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide* p. 138

¹³³ Kenneth D. Ackerman, *Trotsky in New York, 1917: A Radical on the Eve of Revolution*, (Counterpoint, 2016), p. 319.

¹³⁴ Dietrich Eckart, "Die rote faden" (The red thread), *Auf Gut Deutsch*, 20 March 1918, p. 152.

posthumously published pamphlet that presented an apocryphal conversation about the Jewish conspiracy:

“Consider how an astronomer would handle a similar situation. Suppose that he has been carefully observing the motion of a certain group of celestial bodies over a long period of time. Examining his records, he suddenly notices something amiss: 'Damn it!' he says. 'Something's wrong here. Normally, these bodies would have to be situated differently relative to one another; not this way. So there must be a hidden force somewhere which is responsible for the deviation. And, using his observations, he performs lengthy calculations and accurately computes the location of a planet which no eye has yet seen, but which is there all the same, as he has just proved. But what does the historian do, on the other hand? He explains an anomaly of the same type solely in terms of the conspicuous statesmen of the time. It never occurs to him that there might have been a hidden force which caused a certain turn of events. But it was there, nevertheless; it has been there since the beginning of history. You know what that force is: the Jew.”¹³⁵

The conspiracist's path to power

After joining the DAP Hitler discovered he had a gift for oratory, and he began working as a staple speaker for the party. By mid-October 1919, not even two months after Hitler had joined the party, he was giving rousing speeches against the Jews and the “Jewish papers” that distorted the news.¹³⁶ Hitler's earliest known reference to the *Protocols* is in a speech from August 12, 1921, when he remarked on how the *Protocols* touches on the Jewish conspiracy's use of starvation as a weapon.¹³⁷ However, the foundation of his evolving worldview was not based in the *Protocols* alone. Hitler was close to Rosenberg and Scheubner-Richter, two men who interpreted the world through the prism of the Judeo-Masonic/Judeo-Bolshevik conspiracy theory and provided Hitler with a stream of evidence for the existence of this conspiracy. Hitler probably read *Aufbau-Korrespondenz*, which was full of conspiracy-theory laden articles about the Jewish, Bolshevik, high-finance conspiracy sometimes written by exiled Russians, along with other articles offering an ongoing interpretation of events that was dependent on the idea of a vast deception. While Hitler did mention the *Protocols*, especially earlier in his career, his belief in a grand Jewish conspiracy like the one described in the *Protocols* was grounded on more than its testimony alone.

Hitler's version of the Grand anti-Jewish Conspiracy Theory included the traditional hatred for democracy that most variants of the Grand Conspiracy Theory also tend towards. This was probably partially inspired by Scheubner-Richter's and his companions' belief that the Weimar Republic was a transitional stage to a Bolshevik (that is, Jewish) revolution. Hitler also came to believe that real democracy is impossible in the face of such a powerful deceptive force, just as Butmi and others had concluded before. Here is an excerpt from a speech Hitler gave in 1922, castigating right-wingers who willingly participated in the democratic process of the Weimar Republic:

¹³⁵ Deitrich Eckart, *Bolshevism from Moses to Lenin: A Dialogue Between Adolf Hitler and Me*, Dr. William Pierce trans., Available at: http://library.flawlesslogic.com/eckart_1.htm. Accessed Feb 13, 2019.

¹³⁶ Weber, p. 135.

¹³⁷ Kellogg, p. 74.

“And the right has further completely forgotten that democracy is fundamentally not German: it is Jewish. It has completely forgotten that this Jewish democracy with its majority decisions has always been without exception only a means towards the destruction of any existing Aryan leadership. The Right does not understand that directly every small question of profit or loss is regularly put before so-called 'public opinion,' he who knows how most skillfully to make this 'public opinion' serve his own interests becomes forthwith master in the State. And that can be achieved by the man who can lie most artfully, most infamously; and in the last resort he is not the German, he is, in Schopenhauer's words, 'the great master in the art of lying' - the Jew.”¹³⁸

Hitler's conspiratorial anti-Jewish, anti-capitalist, anti-communist speeches were the mainstay of the increasingly popular DAP gatherings in Munich. The DAP later changed its name to the NSDAP, the “National Socialist German Workers' Party” - a.k.a. the Nazis - and Hitler began to take control of the party. Under Hitler's leadership the earlier vision of the party as a kind of *völkisch* secret society for the working class was sidelined, and instead the NSDAP tried to become a mass party that appealed to all Germans.¹³⁹

While it was seeking to be a mass party, the Nazis were not at this point seeking to come to power through elections. The Republic was the enemy in a different guise. On August 6 1922 Hitler warned of the “...approaching Jewish-Bolshevism under the protection of the Republic.”¹⁴⁰ Rosenberg and Scheubner-Richter proposed that Hitler lead a revolution in Munich by kidnapping a few leading less-radical right-wing politicians and forcing them to back a coup against the government in Berlin, with Ludendorff as a figurehead.¹⁴¹ The Nazis got inspiration from Italy. In October 1922 Benito Mussolini had been invited by the Italian king to form a government. Mussolini's supporters invented a legend of a “march to Rome” when the fascists had come to power. Actually the pro-Mussolini marches that had occurred dispersed outside of Rome. The Nazis embraced this myth, but having no king to invite them to form a government, they instead had to seize power.¹⁴²

In preparation for a coup the Nazis appeared to have readied a draft emergency constitution. The document laid out an extreme program of declaring an immediate state of siege in Germany, the imposition of “emergency” police measures such as restrictions on personal liberty, and surveillance, extensive property confiscation, bank and stock market closures, the immediate dissolution of all parliaments and representative bodies, and a ban on owning weapons without a license. The freedom of the press was to be revoked and any printed statement that was determined to be “detrimental to the state” was to be punished with a fine and the expropriation of the printer. All movable and immovable Jewish property was to be confiscated, along with that of any war profiteers. Anyone who resisted or helped those who resisted these measures was to be killed.¹⁴³ “Dangerous persons” and “useless eaters” were to

¹³⁸ Jon Hilden, *The Weimar Republic*, (Routledge 2014) p. 90.

¹³⁹ Weber, pp. 131-133, 148.

¹⁴⁰ Ian Kershaw, *Hitler: 1889-1936 Hubris*, (W. W. Norton & Company; Reprint edition 2000), Kindle Edition, 2014, p. 177.

¹⁴¹ Shirer, pp. 66-67.

¹⁴² Kershaw, p. 180.

¹⁴³ Hanns Hubert Hofmann, *Der Hitlerputsch*, (Nymphenburger Verlagshandlung, 1961), p. 288. The full text of the program can be found in pp. 284-294.

be rounded up and placed in camps for forced labor. Anyone who tried to escape or resisted internment was to be executed.¹⁴⁴

As we observed with Metternich's expansion of police powers and the 1867 Baranov circular imposing a harsh regime on Russian Jews, this Nazi emergency constitution contained many "rational" responses to the irrational fear of a massive conspiracy: expanded police powers, surveillance, and a state of emergency. The closure of the stock markets and banks and the restrictions on the press shows that this emergency constitution was targeted at the main instruments of the purported Jewish conspiracy. The emphasis on dispossessing the Jews and making them do forced labor in camps is an unambiguous early sign of the anti-Jewish and eventually genocidal Nazi plans enacted after they finally seized power in 1933.

The attempted Nazi coup took place in November 1923, and it was a fiasco. Hitler became afraid that another leader in Bavaria was about to declare Bavarian independence and the restoration of the Bavarian monarchy (which would throw a monkey-wrench into his plans to control all of Germany) so he acted two days before the planned date of the coup. Hitler and his core followers took over a meeting in a Munich beer hall and captured some reluctant Bavarian politicians. Scheubner-Richter fetched an angry Ludendorff, who had not been informed of their actions. When Hitler ran off to investigate a report of a fight between soldiers and his own men, Ludendorff allowed the captured politicians to walk away, over Scheubner-Richter's objections. The coup-plotters, now without hostages or any clear plan, decided to march. Ludendorff lead the Nazi marchers into a line of armed soldiers who opened fire, and the Nazis returned fire. Sixteen Nazis were killed, including Scheubner-Richter. The Nazis dispersed. Hitler tried to flee, but was arrested.¹⁴⁵

During the trial of the failed revolutionaries Hitler seized the limelight and used the trial to raise his profile and paint himself as a selfless patriot who was willing to sacrifice it all for the sake of Germany. Earlier Hitler had decried democracy as Jewish, but in a speech at the trial, Hitler emphasized that the particular form of government was of little importance to him. In fact, Hitler even claimed to be a republican! What mattered was the opposition of the government to the conspiracy:

"I am no monarchist, but ultimately a Republican... The fate of Germany does not lie in the choice between a Republic or a Monarchy, but in the content of the Republic and the Monarchy. What I am contending against is not the form of a state as such, but its ignominious content. We wanted to create in Germany the precondition which alone will make it possible for the iron grip of our enemies to be removed from us. We wanted to create order in the state, throw out the drones, take up the fight against international stock exchange slavery, against our whole economy being cornered by trusts, against the politicizing of the trade unions..."¹⁴⁶

If Hitler had been shot during the attempted coup like Scheubner-Richter, or if he had not made such a successful spectacle at his trial and remained just another obscure German radical, his story to this point would still be an important example of the influence of conspiracy

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Shirer, pp. 67-74.

¹⁴⁶ Hitler's Speech at the Putsch Trial (February 1924), German History in Documents and Images, German Historical Institute. Available at: http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=3913, Accessed Feb 13, 2019.

theories on politics. Inspired by conspiracy theories spread by supporters of the Russian autocracy decades earlier, a German had attempted to overthrow his own republican government. Unfortunately, Hitler was allowed a second act in which his debt to conspiracy theories concocted by the likes of Gregori Butmi-de-Katzman is even more evident.

For his attempt at violent revolution, a sympathetic court gave Hitler a lenient sentence of five years in prison. He served less than a year. Hitler had made Rosenberg chairman of the NSDAP in his absence. Hitler's performance at the trial had made him a celebrity in some *völkisch* circles and he received hundreds of guests during his comfortable imprisonment.¹⁴⁷ While he was in prison he began dictating his first book, *Mein Kampf*. This long and rambling book provides an interesting snapshot of Hitler's thinking during this time. In *Mein Kampf* Hitler reiterated many of the main ideas from earlier iterations of the Judeo-Masonic / Judeo-Bolshevik conspiracy theories and presented a putative Jewish plan that had a goal of enslaving Germany to Jewish finance capital. The conspiracy would first soften Germany up with a French invasion and then have communist foot soldiers take over the country.¹⁴⁸ Hitler presented the Jews as natural conspirators, but he also traced the path of the Judeo-Masonic conspiracy that began, Hitler believed, with the arrival of modernity, - when Jews were able to grasp at the "old goal, which was promised to [them] in ancient times, namely world-rulership..."¹⁴⁹ Hitler wrote that the conspiracy had worked hard to advance the ideas of universal rights, as a way of finally gaining legal equality with the Gentiles. Its main tool in this endeavor was, of course, the Freemasons:

"...in the freemason organization, which had fallen completely into his [the Jews] hands, he found a magnificent weapon which helped him to achieve his ends. Government circles, as well as the higher sections of the political and commercial bourgeoisie, fell a prey to his plans through his manipulation of the masonic net, though they themselves did not even suspect what was happening."¹⁵⁰

Hitler believed that when the Jewish conspiracy was unable to take over the world using the Freemasons, they decided to also dominate the press.¹⁵¹ Hitler repeated the classic Judeo-Masonic conspiracy theorist idea that to facilitate their goal of world rule, the Jews had encouraged the emergence of democracy, which makes states more open to manipulation by the conspiracy:

"During this phase of his progress the chief goal of the Jew was the victory of democracy, or rather the supreme hegemony of the parliamentary system, which embodies his concept of democracy. This institution harmonizes best with his purposes; for thus the personal element is eliminated and in its place we have the dunder-headed majority, inefficiency and, last but by no means least, knavery."¹⁵²

Later, Hitler wrote, the Jewish conspiracy had used the stock market to dominate economies,¹⁵³ and therefore whole peoples danced to their tune, following what they believed to

¹⁴⁷ Kershaw, Locations 4969-5168.

¹⁴⁸ Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, James Murphy Trans., (This electronic edition by "White Wolf" however, it is evidently a copy of the 1939 edition. This edition dates from 2014) Kindle Edition, p. 260

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 136.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 137.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid., p. 138.

¹⁵³ Ibid., p. 137.

be the dictates of the market. Hitler believed that the conspiracy's goal was to destroy all nations, all national economic independence and "...on its ruins triumphantly erect the structure of the International Stock Exchange."¹⁵⁴

In line with the teachings of Rosenberg and Scheubner-Richter and other emigres from the Russian Empire, Hitler also stated his belief that the Jews had created Marxism and communism, supposedly the ultimate forms of socialist anti-capitalism, as tools to enhance their capitalist takeover of the world: "While on the one hand he organized capitalistic methods of exploitation to their ultimate degree of efficiency, he carried favor with the victims of his policy and his power and in a short while became the leader of their struggle against himself... Without knowing it, the worker is placing himself at the service of the very power against which he believes he is fighting."¹⁵⁵ Hitler believed that a major propaganda campaign, or perhaps rather a counter-propaganda campaign, was necessary to educate the workers about the true Judeo-capitalist ends of their supposedly "socialist" leaders. Hitler also suggested that the same results could be achieved if "the government authorities would get rid of the Jew and his work..."¹⁵⁶ Hitler did not elaborate further on what he meant by this, but in retrospect it is quite ominous in light of the Nazi emergency constitution of 1923 and the later genocide of the Jews during WWII.

A change from the earlier Russian version of the Grand Conspiracy Theory that is evident in *Mein Kampf* is a much more pronounced racialism. Butmi-de-Katzman, Frederick Milligen, et. al. saw the struggle as essentially religious, not racial. The Jewish conspiracy was against Christian civilization and Christianity, and it sought to replace them with Judaism and a Jew-dominated civilization. The *Protocols* makes it clear that the goal of the Jewish conspiracy is a universal Jewish monarchy, with Judaism supplanting Christianity as the main religion. Racial theory does not play much of a role. Hitler mixed the Judeo-Masonic / Judeo-Bolshevik conspiracy theory with racialist *völkish* ideas. He described the conspiracy of Jews as racially self-aware, one that had long recognized the importance of racial purity. They had conspired to use racial pollution as a weapon to undermine their racial competitors by deliberately mixing with gentiles and destroying "enemy" races by making them part-Jewish:

"He [the Jew] poisons the blood of others but preserves his own blood unadulterated. The Jew scarcely ever marries a Christian girl, but the Christian takes a Jewess to wife. The mongrels that are a result of this latter union always declare themselves on the Jewish side. Thus a part of the higher nobility in particular became completely degenerate. The Jew was well aware of this fact and systematically used this means of disarming the intellectual leaders of the opposite race. To mask his tactics and fool his victims, he talks of the equality of all men, no matter what their race or color may be. And the simpletons begin to believe him."¹⁵⁷

Hitler declared that the conspiracy went beyond just adulterating other races with Jewish blood, "The Jews were responsible for bringing negroes into the Rhineland, with the ultimate idea of bastardizing the white race which they hate and thus lowering its cultural and political level so that the Jew might dominate."¹⁵⁸ This racial mixing was deliberate and conscious, and "systematically practiced by the Jew..."¹⁵⁹ Hitler believed that behind a screen of deception the "Jew is destroying the racial basis of our existence and thereby annihilating our people."¹⁶⁰ Something like this idea had already been mentioned in the pages of *Aufbau-*

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 139.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 141.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 138.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 142.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 236.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 237.

Korrespondenz, for example when in 1923 Scheubner-Richter warned that "...in a few years time there will be no Russians and no Germans, no national peoples at all, but under the scepter of The International a mixture of the races..."¹⁶¹ - but this racialism had not been a major aspect of the earlier Russian iterations of the Judeo-Masonic conspiracy theory. An important consequence of Hitler's fusion of racist beliefs with the Judeo-Masonic/Judeo-Bolshevik conspiracy theory was the eventual Nazi disdain for Slavs. In *Mein Kampf* Hitler still called the Russians a "great people"¹⁶² but by the end of his rule Hitler was responsible for the deaths of millions of Russians, to say nothing of Ukrainians, Poles, and other Slavic peoples. Though the conspiracy theory at the core of Hitler's belief came directly from Russia, Hitler eventually saw the Slavs as slaves of the Jews, poor-quality racial material that could be dispensed with. Hitler's racist retreading of a conspiracy theory that had earlier been believed and spread by Russians reminds us of the flexibility of the Grand Conspiracy Theory, discussed in chapter 7. The central idea is the existence of a conspiracy with massive powers of deception. What the deception has as a goal, or who they supposedly believe their ultimate enemy is can change without too many leaps of logic. After all, any evidence to the contrary may be disinformation.

The Nazis in power

After leaving prison Hitler resumed his political activity and eventually led the Nazis to power through the ballot box, although he never abandoned his determination to establish a dictatorship and a police state. This chapter is not about the Nazi electoral strategy, but it should be mentioned that deceptive propaganda was an important part of their repertoire. The Nazis toned down their advocacy in anti-Jewish conspiracy theories between 1923 and 1933 though they never repudiated their previous statements. When they finally achieved power in 1933 the old themes reemerged. After Hitler became the undisputed leader of Germany the *Protocols* was often cited in Nazi propaganda,¹⁶³ unsubtly demonstrating the Nazi's debt to propaganda themes from Tsarist Russia.

After achieving power the Nazis closed or took over papers that they considered hostile, expanded the press holdings of the Nazi party, and gave detailed orders to publishers that were not directly under Nazi control.¹⁶⁴ Nazi books encouraged the belief that Western capitalism and Marxism were two sides of the same Jewish coin, "...two powerful bastions behind which they could work unfettered and untroubled to bring their plans for world domination ever closer to perfection."¹⁶⁵ The work this quote is taken from was a 1933 book titled "Das ist Nationalsozialismus: Organisation und Weltanschauung der NSDAP" (This is National Socialism: the Organization and Worldview of the NSDAP) and it included a detailed history of the Jewish conspiracy the Nazis believed in, which identified the Jews as the main enemy, and

¹⁶¹ Max Erwin von Scheubner-Richter, "Der Bolschewisierung Deutschlands" (The Bolshevization of Germany), *Aufbau-Korrespondenz*, 21 September 1923, Year 3, no. 38, p. 3.

¹⁶² Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, James Murphy Trans, p. 142.

¹⁶³ Lane and Rupp, Location 1407. Also Wolfram Meyer zu Utrup, "Why the Jews? The Impact of The *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* on Nazi Ideology and Policy," in *The Global Impact of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, Esther Webman ed., (Routledge, 2011), pp. 89-90.

¹⁶⁴ Jeffrey Herf, *The Jewish Enemy: Nazi Propaganda During World War II and the Holocaust*, (Belknap Press, 2006), Kindle Edition, pp. 17-20.

¹⁶⁵ Engelbert Huber, "The Anti-Semitism of the NSDAP," In *The Third Reich Sourcebook*, Anson Rabinbach and Sander L. Gilman eds., (University of California Press, 2013), p. 194.

the main ideological tools of the Jews as liberalism - which the Russian propagandists of 1905 believed to be their main adversary - and Marxism - which White Russian propagandists of the civil war and exile identified as the main adversary:

"What was behind the Freemasons' propagandistic exhortation of *individualism* and *liberalism* was the Jew, who saw in the doctrine of Freemasonry his free ride to economic and world supremacy. It was the doctrine of Freemasonry that engendered the *Enlightenment*, which engendered the *theories of liberalism* that paved the way for the [French] Revolution of 1789...The *Freemason's sermon of liberalism* engendered Jewish capitalism, the consolidation of many assets in a few Jewish hands... it was the brainchild of the Jews...All this brought the ancient Jewish scheme for world domination appreciably closer to fruition. Ever since the plot for Jewish world domination was first laid out at the fifth kabbalistic Sanhedrin in Prague in 1851, it was methodically advanced throughout the nineteenth century.

...Assuming leadership of the proletarian masses of workers was paramount to Jewish plans for world domination. The Manifesto that Karl Marx thrust upon the world in 1848 from London was merely the reiteration of the "social-anarchist program" set forth by world Freemasonry in 1843. That same year, this Freemasons' program was distributed to lodges throughout the world with the authoritarian directive to use the principles outlined there as a way of gathering, dominating, and leading the revolutionary proletarian masses in a unified movement in such a way as to prevent them from posing any detriment to capitalism. In this manner, the Jew Karl Marx concocted the intoxicating brew that poisoned the minions of workers into a drunken stupor to the point that they finally fell in line behind the Jews and Jewish capitalism. They allowed these Jewish leaders to strip them of their socialism and to supplant it with the surrogate that is Marxism; they let the social struggle be steered into the straits of politics and, rather than strive for that socialism which had been toppled by the Jewish economic monopoly that is capitalism, they stooped to the level of becoming sentinels for Jewish capitalism."¹⁶⁶

The conspiracy theory was not just for public consumption, the Nazis taught it to their police, activists, and operatives. A visual example of this is Figure 1, a chart of a Nazi vision of the structure of the Grand Jewish conspiracy, published in 1936 as a training aid to the SS political curriculum. It shows the American Joint Consultative Council and the American Jewish committee at the very top. Below these the chart is divided into the informational - propaganda - section (Western/Sephardic) and the executive - force - section (Communist/Ashkenazi.) Freemasonry is under the western section and also there, on the right, is the "demoted" Universal Israelite Alliance, which decades earlier anti-Jewish conspiracy theorists believed was the beating heart of the Grand Conspiracy.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., pp. 192-194.

¹⁶⁷ Meyer zu Utrup, p. 92.

Even with these changes and additions, the conspiracy theory promoted in Nazi propaganda was still at its core the same one championed by the Black Hundreds and transmitted to Hitler by Rosenberg and Scheubner-Richter. In the 1930s one man recognized and tried to publicize the origins of this conspiracy theory in Tsarist propaganda. Henri Rollin was a French intelligence officer with experience in Russia. Rollin had married a Russian Jewish emigre, and perhaps her familiarity with the kinds of state-subsidized anti-Jewish conspiracy theories common in Russia before the 1917 Revolution helped Rollin see the origins of Nazi ideology more clearly.¹⁶⁸ In 1939 he published the book *L'Apocalypse de Notre Temps* (The Apocalypse of our Time) which laid out the origins of the *Protocols* in Russia, and identified the URP and other Black Hundred groups like the Union of the Archangel Michael as the main publicizers of this strain of the Judeo-Masonic conspiracy theory in Russia. He even identified by name some of the former subjects of the Tsar who “went to Berlin, then to Munich, to revive the flame of Austrian and German racism, and to complete his [Hitler’s] theories” - including Rosenberg and Scheubner-Richter.¹⁶⁹ Rollin got some individual facts wrong but the probity of his analysis in 1939 was incredible, especially given that he was probably not aware of the existence of *Aufbau*. Rollin wrote this book because he believed that unmasking “the colossal mystification of Nazi propaganda seemed to [him] the best way to reduce its effects.”¹⁷⁰ Rollin

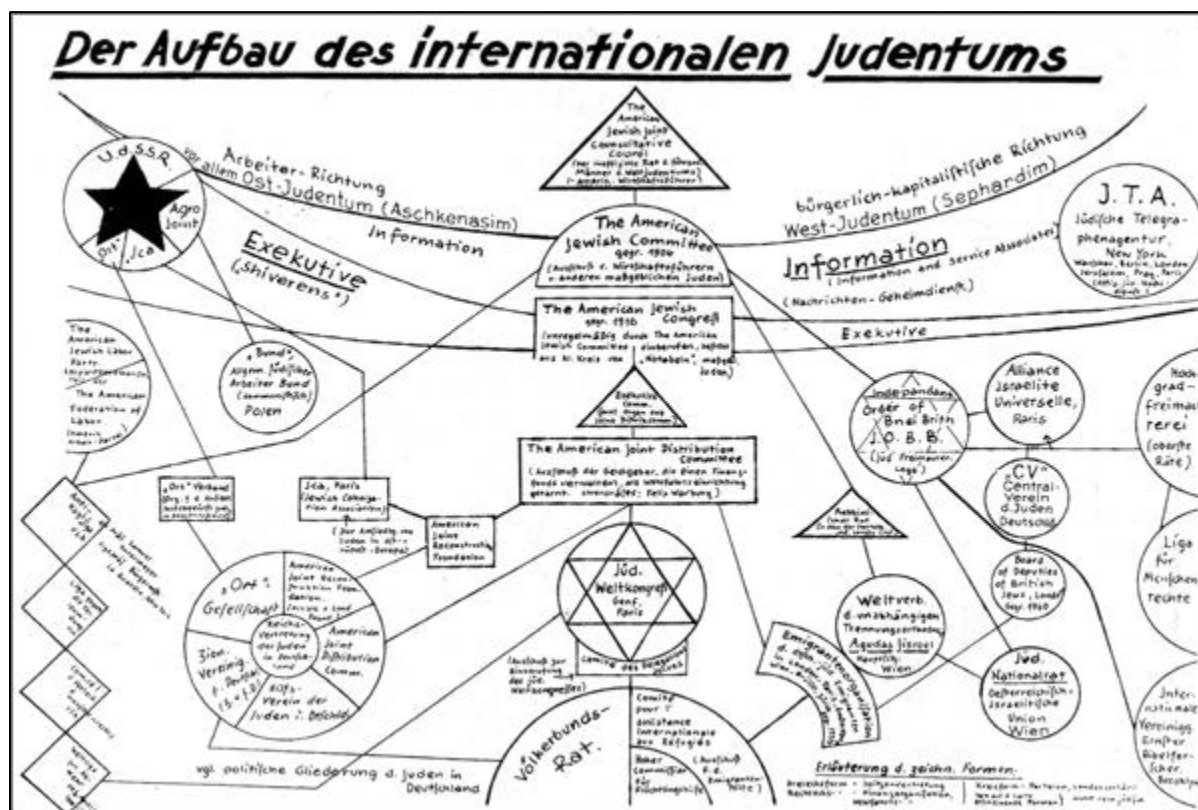


Figure 4

¹⁶⁸ Matthew Cobb, *The Resistance: The French Fight Against the Nazis*, (Pocket Books, 2009), p. 113.

¹⁶⁹ Henri Rollin, *L'Apocalypse de notre temps : Les dessous de la propagande allemande d'après des documents inédits*, (Allia, 2006), p. 209.

¹⁷⁰ Rollin, p. 22.

wanted to show the world that the core of Nazi ideology was not some authentically German idea from the brain of a German genius-leader but a thinly-disguised retread of an outdated Tsarist propaganda campaign. Unfortunately his book was published in 1939, and it did not have time to make an impact before the Nazis conquered France. The book was banned in occupied France¹⁷¹ and in the libraries where it survived it languished mostly forgotten until long after the Nazis were defeated.

World War II and the Holocaust

Given his belief in the Judeo-Masonic/Judeo-Bolshevik conspiracy, Hitler naturally would seek to disable liberalism (under the control of the Jews) and destroy the USSR (Bolshevism under the control of the Jews.) The Molotov-Ribbentrop pact between the USSR and Germany was an temporary ruse that allowed Hitler to concentrate his forces against the Western allies and gather his forces to strike at the USSR. Even with a massive state and several intelligence

agencies at his service, Hitler and other leading Nazis continued to interpret the world as under the control of a vast secret conspiracy that was *really* pulling the strings. Hitler once pooh-poohed the idea of understanding England, the homeland of some of his primary antagonists, to his closest circle: "At present, England no longer interests me. I am interested only in what's behind her."¹⁷² Upon the fall of France Rosenberg, still a leading Nazi, immediately sent lieutenants into occupied France to loot the archives of Freemason lodges, searching for evidence of the real levers of Western activity.¹⁷³

This idea, that the Allies battling Germany were just the tools of a deep global Jewish plot, was also a major theme of German propaganda during the war. Figure 2 is an illustration from a 1943 Nazi publication depicting the USA, the USSR, and Great Britain as robots under Jewish



Figure 5

¹⁷¹ Simon Kitson, *The Hunt for Nazi Spies: Fighting Espionage in Vichy France*, (University of Chicago Press, 2009), p. 142.

¹⁷² H.R. Trevor-Roper ed, *Hitler's Table Talk 1941-1944: Secret Conversations*, (New York: Enigma Books, 2007), p. 93.

¹⁷³ Anders Rydell, *The Book Thieves: The Nazi Looting of Europe's Libraries and the Race to Return a Literary Inheritance*, (Viking, 2017) pp. 129-130.

remote control.¹⁷⁴ This belief in a grand conspiracy may have been a factor in the German underestimation of the Allies, and especially of Hitler's underestimation of the USSR. If the USSR was just a tottering Jewish colony supported by deception and terror, then an invasion by a determined army really would make the whole rotten structure collapse. The invasion of the USSR ended up being the strategic blunder that broke the back of Hitler's empire.

We ought to also briefly deal with the mass-murder of the Jews known today as the Holocaust. Hitler's genocidal policies can be explained on racist grounds, after all the German state also attempted to annihilate the Romani, but the anti-Jewish conspiracy theory also played a role in shaping the genocidal policies of Hitler and other senior Nazis. In *Mein Kampf* Hitler had written that the Jewish conspiracy had weaponized racial mixing, and if one believed this and in the importance of racial purity it would make sense to remove the ability of a conspiracy to destroy one's race by destroying the aggressor race. In private, Hitler himself framed the extermination of the Jews as an act of racial self-defense: "Any and every nation which fails to exterminate the Jews in its midst will sooner or later finish by being itself devoured by them."¹⁷⁵

This thesis attempts to show how the idea of a Grand Conspiracy Theory, often spread by state propaganda, can affect small groups of people who form their own counter-conspiracies and sometimes engage in violent extremism and plot revolution against the non-existent usurper. In this chapter this pattern is exemplified by Hitler and the core Nazis around him. The scale of the atrocities of the Holocaust, however, are enough to justify a small detour to speculate on the possible effects of the grand conspiracy on a whole population led by this small group of conspiracy theorists. There had been plenty of anti-Jewish violence in both medieval and early-modern Germany, but by the late-19th century the violence was almost gone, especially when compared to Russia. The last major pogrom in Germany before the coming of the Nazis had been in 1819.¹⁷⁶ To explain Holocaust as just an extension of "traditional" German anti-Jewish attitudes is insufficient. The Russian Tsarist regime was also anti-Jewish, and subsidized some extreme anti-Jewish propaganda and organizations that carried out pogroms. However, in general, the regime was anti-pogrom, not because the Tsar and his servants had any special love for the Jews, but because they were anti-chaos, and feared the reputational and unintended consequences of sectarian violence. The purpose of the subsidies and propaganda was to prop up the autocracy, and autocracies are not assisted by pogroms and assassinations, so they were reined in. As Alexander III once said in an earlier era: "I am very glad when they beat up Jews, but nevertheless it can't be allowed."¹⁷⁷

The Nazis, on the other hand, sometimes relished chaos that resulted in Jewish deaths and encouraged the most extreme anti-Jewish attitudes in the German population. Eventually the campaign went well beyond just controlled chaos. Not only were pogroms and violence against Jews officially encouraged, most notably the 1938 *Kristallnacht* pogrom, but state bodies directly organized the mass extermination of Jews, which ordinary German soldiers,

¹⁷⁴ Meyer zu Utrup, p. 104. Citation there from SS paper *das Schwarz Korps* (the Black corps) July 8 1943, p. 1.

¹⁷⁵ Trevor-Roper, p. 678.

¹⁷⁶ Christhard Hoffmann, Werner Bergmann, Helmut Walser Smith, "Introduction", in *Exclusionary Violence: Antisemitic Riots in Modern German History*, Christhard Hoffmann, Werner Bergmann, Helmut Walser Smith eds., (University of Michigan Press, 2002), pp 1-2.

¹⁷⁷ Montefiore, p. 463.

bureaucrats, and policemen willingly participated in. The Nazis were not attempting to defend an establishment, a monarch, they were trying to revolutionize the world and destroy what they believed was an enemy that was intent on destroying their race. They managed to convince a large enough portion of the population to willingly go to foreign lands and murder Jews. This was partially justified through appeals to self-defense against a Judeo-Bolshevik enemy. The post-war Nuremberg court judgement against the Nazi press chief Otto Dietrich expressed this idea when it condemned him of organizing:

“a well thought-out, oft-repeated, persistent campaign to arouse the hatred of the German people against Jews was fostered and directed by the press department and its press chief, Dietrich....they were not aimless expression of anti-Semitism, and they were not designed only to unite the German people in the war effort . . . Their clear and expressed purpose was to enrage Germans against the Jews, to justify the measures taken and to be taken against them, and to subdue any doubts which might arise as to the justice of measures of racial persecution to which Jews were to be subjected...”¹⁷⁸

The invasion of the USSR expanded the possibilities for the organized mass-murder of Jews by Germans led by a Nazi government convinced that they were combatting a racial enemy that had been engaged in a massive conspiracy to destroy the German race. One of the earlier mass killings of the Holocaust was on 29-30 September 1941 in Kyiv, at the ravine called Babi Yar. Retreating Soviet forces had hidden bombs along the main street in Kyiv that destroyed a large section of central Kyiv five days after the Germans had occupied the city. This provided the justification for a mass shooting of 33,771 Jews at Babi Yar, including women and children.¹⁷⁹ Mass murder at this scale could not be hidden or ignored, and the commander of Army Group South Field Marshal Walter von Reichenau issued an official explanation for the massacre. He proclaimed that the German army was attacking the USSR as part of its mission of “liberating the German people from the Asian-Jewish danger once and for all” and exterminating the “the Jewish-Bolshevist system...” He called for the continuation of these kind of atrocities, as there was a “need for hard but just atonement for Jewish subhumanity.” While Reichenau mainly referenced these massacres as revenge for partisan warfare (and therefore justifying the killing of the race that he believed were the “true” wire-pullers of resistance against the German army) he also referenced the need for revenge “for all bestialities that were inflicted on German and related ethnicities...”¹⁸⁰ This appears to be a reference to Hitler’s idea that the Jewish conspiracy having practiced deliberate clandestine racial destruction over the long term.

¹⁷⁸ Herf, *The Jewish Enemy*, p. 22.

¹⁷⁹ Karel C. Berkhoff, “Dina Pronicheva’s Story of Surviving the Babi Yar Massacre: German, Jewish, Soviet, Russian, and Ukrainian Records,” in *The Shoah in Ukraine: History, Testimony, Memorialization*, Ray Brandon, Wendy Lower eds., (Indiana University Press, 2008), pp. 291-292.

¹⁸⁰ “Das Verhalten der Truppe im Ostraum” October 12, 1941, further sourced from John Mendelson, *The Holocaust, Selected Documents in Eighteen Volumes* (New York/London:1982) Vol. 10, Einsatzgruppen, p. 7ff. Available online at: <https://www.ns-archiv.de/krieg/untermenschen/reichenau-befehl.php#begleit>. Accessed Feb 21, 2019.

Arendt on Nazi methods

Once they had taken over the German government, the Nazis sought direct and indirect control over the press in order to engage in propagandist campaigns. They worked to ensure that Nazis dominated the universities and other cultural institutions. They eventually attempted to re-arrange the political economy of an entire continent, used starvation as a weapon, and practiced a strategy of racial destruction. In other words, they did all the things Hitler had accused the Jewish conspiracy of doing. In *The Origins of Totalitarianism* Hannah Arendt wrote that the Nazis used the *Protocols* as a “textbook for global conquest” and she asked “why the totalitarian claim to global rule, to be exercised by members and methods of a secret society, should become an attractive political goal at all.” She believed the answer to this lies in previous imperial practices combined with the ideology of the “so-called pan-movements.”¹⁸¹ Arendt identified the legacy of European imperialism outside Europe as a major influence on how the Nazis attempted to engage in imperialism in Eastern Europe.

This chapter offers an alternative answer to Arendt’s question about the apparent similarities between the Nazis’ plans and methods and the actions they believed the Jewish conspiracy was taking. The Nazis used the “methods of a secret society” and aped their imaginary foes in what they believed were defensive measures and “retaliation” against their non-existent enemy. They were acting in a manner similar to Leopold II of Austria when he formed “The Association” secret society to fight the Illuminati, or to the Tsar’s secret funding of the Black Hundred press to fight the press that was believed to be controlled by a Jewish conspiracy. Unlike these two earlier examples, the Nazis had no legitimate authority to rein them in, no king or *ancien régime* that was using the “secret society” or the political movement for his own purposes, and could withdraw its support and move on. In this way the Nazis are like the Salis-Soglio brothers, but on a grander scale. The Salis-Soglio brothers believed that the Illuminati had managed to secretly seize control of the Austrian empire and so they organized a violent revolt against that Empire. Rosenberg, Scheubner-Richter, and Hitler believed that the Weimar Republic was a sinister front for a Jewish plot to destroy Germany, so they tried to overthrow it. After they took over in 1933, senior Nazis continued to be motivated by the belief that a sinister conspiracy had taken control of nearly the entirety of Western civilization through seemingly antagonistic ideologies of liberal capitalism and Marxism. They then set out to destroy both. Hitler came to believe that the foundation of the grand conspiracy was racial, and so he set out to destroy the “opposing” race.

Arendt went too far by indicating that the Nazis discovered their own program for governing by examining the *Protocols* and imitating it: “The Nazis started with the fiction of a conspiracy and modeled themselves, more or less consciously, after the example of the secret society of the Elders of Zion...”¹⁸² Actually the Nazis received the core of their ideological inheritance not from a fictional tale but from *Aufbau*, an actual secret society dedicated to combating the Judeo-Bolshevik menace. The crucial difference between the fictitious Jewish conspiracy depicted in the *Protocols* and the program of the Nazis was that the conspiracy supposedly operated behind the scenes, while the Nazi empire acted in broad daylight. The

¹⁸¹ Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Kindle Edition, Location 187.

¹⁸² Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Kindle Edition, p. 378.

Jewish domination of the world was said to be through a clandestine “peaceful conquest” and the Nazis attempted an actual armed conquest.

Arendt seemed to believe that the Nazis chose the myth of the Jewish world conspiracy as a propaganda tool, a story to help shore up Nazi power. She discussed this as part of her broader analysis of the similarities between Nazi and Soviet propaganda in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, specifically with how they “choose those elements from existing ideologies which are best fitted to become the fundamentals of another, entirely fictitious world.”¹⁸³ This world was “fit to compete with the real one, whose main handicap is that it is not logical, consistent, and organized.”¹⁸⁴ Arendt wrote that lies that support this “fictitious world” were placed at the center of totalitarian ideologies, which meant that they had to be maintained in order for these ideologies to keep their internal integrity. She accused Hitler and Stalin of having “clung to their original lies in the face of absurdity”¹⁸⁵ in order to maintain these ideologies.

Arendt did not seem to understand that to Hitler and other Nazis the “real world” was the product of a massive deception. To the Nazis, the ideological contest was not some battle between their fictional world vs the real world. Instead the Nazis saw it as their task to unmask and destroy of the massive Jewish deception that encompassed the whole world. This hermeneutic trick allows true believers to dismiss any individual piece of contrary evidence as just an aspect of this grand deception. To the Nazi true believer, the important thing is not the truth or falsity of the *Protocols*, but the “truth” of the existence of the conspiracy. This provides a framework that allows one to interpret all of reality through the prism of a massive deception.

In a section dealing with the “elite formations” of totalitarian movements, such as the SS and SA, Arendt wrote that these men “are not even supposed to believe in the literal truth of ideological clichés.”¹⁸⁶ Doubtless the Nazis attracted many power-hungry cynics to their elite bodies, especially after they were in government. The successful Nazi party attracted many careerist, corruptioneers, and cynics like any other party in power. Arendt also marveled at the suddenness with which the German population dropped Nazi ideology the moment that they were defeated, and concludes:

“The moment the movement, that is, the fictitious world which sheltered them, is destroyed, the masses revert to their old status of isolated individuals who either happily accept a new function in a changed world or sink back into their old desperate superfluosity. The members of totalitarian movements, utterly fanatical as long as the movement exists, will not follow the example of religious fanatics and die the death of martyrs (even though they were only too willing to die the death of robots).”¹⁸⁷

In 1923 Scheubner-Richter did die the martyr’s death, and he left behind a terrible legacy in the form of Hitler and the Nazi party. They continued to fight Scheubner-Richter imaginary enemies long after he was dead and his *Aufbau* went defunct. There was an elite, a pre-Nazi anti-Jewish elite, that did ardently believe in a Jewish conspiracy. This was the hard-core, the group that attempted the Beer Hall Putsch in 1923, and who built the Nazi party and

¹⁸³ Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Kindle Edition, p. 362.

¹⁸⁴ Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Kindle Edition, p. 362.

¹⁸⁵ Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Kindle Edition, p. 362.

¹⁸⁶ Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Kindle Edition, p. 384.

¹⁸⁷ Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Kindle Edition, p. 363.

formed the cadre that drove it towards power. The Nazis did manage to attain power, but what if they had not - but instead engaged in acts of terror, other failed coups, or what if Hitler had not shot himself in Berlin at the end but had instead fled to an alpine redoubt and carried on an insurgency? The attitude of the postwar German population after WWI and WWII may have been very different in both cases.

Arendt saw the “lying statements”¹⁸⁸ of totalitarian leaders as evidence of cynicism. In fact, at least in the case of Hitler, his “lies” appear to have been a combination of necessary dissembling during war (whether that be a war against the Allies or a war against the Jewish conspiracy), and a deep belief that the “obvious truth” believed by others was actually a deception. The writings of Hitler’s mentors before the 1923 coup demonstrate that there was a dedicated group, inspired by Tsarist propaganda from decades earlier, that truly believed in a massive Jewish deception long before they dreamed up the Nazi state. Indeed, it appears that these beliefs inspired the 1923 attempted coup and the structure of the conspiratorial-authoritarian government they were planning to impose on Germany after they succeeded.

These same beliefs persisted after Hitler gained power. The historian Stephen Kotkin has spoken of the greatest secret of the Soviet Archives, which show that “...behind closed doors when these guys didn’t expect anyone to overhear, they talked like Communists: of class warfare, kulaks, global imperialism, finance capital. It was not just about personal power, careerism, and control. They were to a great degree true believers...”¹⁸⁹ The same thing is true for Hitler. We have a record of some of Hitler’s private conversations with his closest subordinates between 1941 and 1944 from a collection known as *Hitler’s Table Talk*. In these records Hitler appears to be a true believer in the conspiratorial capacity of Jewry, saying that the Jews had “...seized the levers of control in the Anglo-Saxon world (the press, the cinema, the radio, economic life), ...in the United States he is the entire inspiration of the populace, especially of the negroes...”¹⁹⁰ Churchill was just a “puppet of the Jewry that pulls the strings.”¹⁹¹ Freemasonry was “...a handful of men who are responsible for the war.”¹⁹²

Conclusion

This chapter focused on the transfer of the Judeo-Masonic/Judeo-Bolshevik conspiracy theory from the disintegrating Russian empire to post-war WWI Germany, and how the narrative of a super-powerful Jewish conspiracy adapted to the German environment, and specifically to völkish ideology. This was assisted by a few former residents of and refugees from the Russian empire who imported themes and texts from Black Hundred propaganda to Germany, and a group of whom formed an organization to clandestinely carry on the fight against the non-existent Jewish conspiracy in Munich. Hitler was indoctrinated by two men associated with this circle early in his political career, Rosenberg and Scheubner-Richter. Inspired by the belief that

¹⁸⁸ Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Kindle Edition, p. 382.

¹⁸⁹ “Interview with Steven Kotkin - author of the Pushkin Prize 2015 shortlisted book 'Stalin Volume I: Paradoxes of Power, 1878-1928,’” interview by Andrew Jack. Available at <http://www.pushkinhouse.org/author-interviews-2015-1>. Accessed February 21, 2019.

¹⁹⁰ Trevor-Roper, p. 394.

¹⁹¹ Trevor-Roper, p. 72.

¹⁹² Trevor-Roper, p. 184.

the German government was part of a grand Jewish conspiracy preparing the way for a Jewish-lead communist revolution in Germany, they collaborated to overthrow the Weimar Republic in the Beer Hall Putsch of 1923. This places Hitler's beliefs in the tradition of the Grand Conspiracy Theory stretching back to the 18th century. It also demonstrates that the early Nazis followed a path towards violent extremism that had been followed at least twice before, with the Salais-Soglio brothers and the URP.

Using the writings of Rosenberg and some material written by his first German employer Dietrich Eckart, we examined Rosenberg's evidently tepid attitude towards the classic conspiracy-theory text the *Protocols* compared to his enthusiastic embrace of the idea of a grand Jewish conspiracy. Rosenberg referred to the text as "contested" but nevertheless ardently believed in a grand Jewish conspiracy, based on other "evidence" and a conviction that a massive deception was at work. This belief enabled him to interpret nearly any new piece of information in a way that aligned with this belief. The writings in *Aufbau* also demonstrated this same hermeneutic agility. This worldview was also Hitler's after he came to power and during the war, as evidenced through his *Table Talk*.

This chapter dealt with Arend's ideas that downplay the importance of "true belief" in the inner core of the Nazi party. By documenting the foundations of a pillar of Nazi ideology in pro-Tsarist propaganda, and demonstrating how true believers in the idea of a Jewish conspiracy migrated to Munich and indoctrinated Hitler, this chapter demonstrates the importance of a core of "true believers" in the formation of the Nazi party. Many of these people from the Russian empire were originally concerned with fighting the enemies and imaginary enemies of the Tsarist autocracy, and were willing to engage in violence and make significant sacrifices to combat these enemies.