

Protocols of the Elders of Zion

Forged document that claims to reveal a Jewish plot to take over the world. The *Protocols* were based on a satire of the French regime by Maurice Joly that had been published in Belgium in 1864. The adaptation was first distributed in Russia. Eventually, the *Protocols* were used by the Nazis as "proof" of the Jews' wickedness and greed. Groups still publish the *Protocols* today with the intention of hurting the Jews and denying the Holocaust (see also Holocaust, Denial of the).

The *Protocols* state that the Jews will use weapons to achieve control over the world. It claims that the Jews brought about the French Revolution, Liberalism, Socialism, Communism, and anarchy in order to weaken European society. Jews also control the price of gold and have the power to evoke economic crises, rule the media, create religious and tribal feuds, and destroy cities if the need arises. Once they gain world power, they would demand total obedience to a Jewish king. Finally, the Freemasons would act as their collaborators in these conspiracies.

The forged claims made by the *Protocols* were not original. By the mid-eighteenth century, similar stories were published in the German media. Such ideas were also being published in Russia at the end of the century. Pyotr Ivanovich Rachkovsky, head of the foreign branch of the Russian secret police in Paris, was probably responsible for forging the *Protocols* during the Dreyfus Affair of 1894. Rachkovsky hoped to accomplish two goals: to provide a document for the French that would "implicate" Alfred Dreyfus, a Jewish military officer, of his alleged crimes, and a document for the Russians to support their antisemitic policies.

Other versions of the *Protocols* were published in Russia at the turn of the century. When opponents of the Revolution fled Russia, they took the *Protocols* with them to the West; versions of the document appeared in Germany by the 1920s. Soon the Nazis began to use the *Protocols* - they were often quoted in Nazi newspapers. The *Protocols* quickly spread all over the world, including the United States and Great Britain, and were translated into dozens of languages.

