

{OCTOBER 2 2004}

EGGS IN ONE BASKET

About a hundred years ago, the Russian Czar's secret police cobbled together a document they called the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion". The "authors" were not particularly original - they took a satire, written decades earlier about Napoleon III's ambitions for world domination, and substituted Jewish rabbis for the French emperor. According to the revised document, the Jews are plotting to control the world, and the tentacles of this conspiracy reach everywhere.

When this fabrication was composed, the scenario was quite outlandish. In mighty Russia, which at that time included a great part of Poland, Jews had hardly any influence at all. In the German Reich, Jews were indeed prominent in several fields - such as banking, commerce and the press - but they were remote from the real centers of power. The Kaiser kept them out of the prestigious officers' corps and the higher echelons of the powerful bureaucracy. Jews prominent in the sciences could count themselves lucky if they obtained a professorship.

In the United States some Jews were getting rich, but they could not penetrate the highest ranks of the economy and society.

How hollow the legend of Jewish power really was, became evident when the Nazis, after soaring high on the wings of anti-Semitism, annihilated the Jews of Europe. American and British Jews could not (and, indeed, did not even seriously attempt to) push their government into doing something to save their brethren. Both governments were afraid of providing ammunition for the Nazis, whose propaganda claimed that Roosevelt and Churchill were stooges of International Jewry.

After a decent interval of several decades, the Elders of Zion have staged a comeback in the last few years. The internet is now full of anti-Semitic messages that adapt the old falsified document to the present realities. But the disgusting old slogans have not changed a bit.

On the face of it, the job of the anti-Semites is much easier now. Since the Protocols were "discovered", much has changed in the world. True, the Holocaust eradicated

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almost all of European Jewry, but in its wake the State of Israel, which defines itself as a Jewish State, came into being. And, most importantly, the Jewish community in the United States has attained a standing comparable only to the Golden Age of the Jews in medieval Muslim Spain.

In a way, the lies of the Protocols have fulfilled themselves. “America controls the world,” the anti-Semites now say, “and the Jews control America.”

In support of this, they point to the war in Iraq. It is well known that a group of “neo-conservatives”, almost all of them Jews, occupied central positions of power in Washington and pushed for the invasion of Iraq. Some years before that, members of this group acted as advisors to the then Prime Minister of Israel, Binyamin Netanyahu.

According to the anti-Semites, these Jews sold the war to the United States with mendacious arguments, in order to eliminate Israel’s most dangerous enemy in the Middle East, Iraq. Now they are conspiring against Israel’s two remaining enemies, Syria and Iran.

On the face of it, but only on the face of it, there is some truth in these allegations. The neo-cons indeed believe that the interests of the United States and Israel coincide, and they indeed pushed for this war. But a thousand neo-cons like Wolfowitz and Perle would not have succeeded in this, without the influence of another group in Washington, much more powerful, and much less visible: the oil people.

The Bush family and Vice President Dick Cheney represent the interests of this group. Behind them looms the immense power of the oil companies, in which Jews play hardly any part at all. Their aim was not only to take over the huge oil reserves of Iraq itself, but also to locate a permanent American military and political base between the immense oil resources of the Caspian Sea in the North and the Persian/Arabian gulf in the South. This, they argue, is necessary in order to assure American dominance in a world in which oil is a dwindling resource of fundamental importance to all industrialized economies.

The neo-cons supplied only the ideological embellishment and the moral justification. One could almost say that this is the traditional job assigned to the Jews.

It is easy for anti-Semites to list all the Jewish names in the American administration. As in Germany after World War I, during the so-called Weimar Republic, American Jews are prominent in the administration, economy, media, law, medicine and science. The Zionist lobby brags openly (perhaps too openly) that it can bring down any senator or congress(wo)man who criticizes Israel. They have given ample proof of that. Somebody once said that if AIPAC, the pro-Israeli Jewish lobby, submitted a resolution to Congress abolishing the Ten Commandments, 80 senators and 400 congressmen would sign on the first day.

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The situation is especially glaring as far as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is concerned. During the watch of President Bill Clinton, almost all the team dealing with this problem were Jews. Their meetings with Israeli politicians could easily have been conducted in Yiddish. With the advent of George W. Bush, a fundamental change took place: the liberal Jews in the team were supplanted by conservative Jews. Now, too, almost all the people in the American administration dealing with the Middle East are Jews.

The anti-Semitic publications stress these facts - which are true in themselves - in order to prove that the Jews control the world. But reality is more complex by far.

True, the Zionist lobby is big and strong, but there are others equally strong or stronger in the field. One could mention the American Rifle Association, the lobbies of physicians and trial lawyers and others, and in the political field the even more powerful Christian Evangelists. Much to the chagrin of the anti-Semites, this lobby is also completely devoted to Israel. Indeed, the Christian Evangelists, especially in the United States and Britain, invented modern Zionism long before Theodor Herzl and his colleagues adopted this idea.

The American Jewish community is proud of its great influence. That is understandable, if one remembers that only two generations ago Jews were not admitted to the important clubs (prompting the Jewish comedian Groucho Marx to quip: "I don't want to belong to any club that will accept me as a member!") Their amazing ascent stems from hard work, organizational talent and readiness to donate money.

But anyone conversant with Jewish history may suspect that, as the Yiddish saying goes, "Die kalle ist zu shein" ("the bride is too beautiful.") After the Golden Age, all the Jews were expelled from Spain. After the brilliant success of the Jews in Germany, the Nazis came to power. Today, anti-Semites in the United States are a vocal and despised marginal group, but it is a mistake to ignore the danger.

What would happen for example, if the United States sank ever deeper into the bloody swamp of Iraq, into an atmosphere of national calamity? When the search for a scapegoat is on, the Jewish neo-cons will stick out.

What would happen if Americans started to wonder about the roots of the terrorism of Islamic fanatics? Won't there be some who would argue that America got into the Clash of Civilizations with the Muslim world only because of Israel?

And if America gets into a really deep economic depression, might not Jewish names - like that of the chief of the Federal Reserve - come up?

One should not exaggerate these dangers. At present they are hardly specks on the horizon. But I would advise the leaders of the Jewish institutions in the United States

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to exercise some self-restraint. Intoxication with power can easily lead to dangerous excesses. And I would also advise the government of Israel not to put all its eggs in one basket.