The Curious Monsieur Cyon

GEORGE F. KENNAN

Across the historical record of nineteenth-century Russian science there flits briefly, in the 1870s, the arresting figure of a young physiologist of startling brilliance and promise: coming suddenly from outside; his personal life very little known; almost devoid of friends; fascinating the local academic community with his skill as a surgeon and the dramatic effectiveness of his lectures; receiving, at one point, Russia’s most distinguished chair of physiology; occupying for a few short months the center of the stage in the world of Russian medical and physiological science; then vacating his chair and abandoning the Russian scene as abruptly as he had entered it, to be remembered (as a scientist) primarily only in the minds and memoirs of certain of those more serious students (and outstandingly, the young Pavlov) who had been exposed to his power as a teacher.

Across the French scene of the ensuing two decades, on the other hand, there moves quite a different figure: a shadowy one, this time, of inferior reputation, appearing in a whole series of guises: journalist, secret agent, publicist, propagandist for a Franco-Russian alliance and historian of the alliance that was ultimately concluded; living for some years in Paris, then in Switzerland; at times a French citizen, at times a Russian one (until deprived of both later by governmental action); finally dying in Paris in 1912 in poverty and neglect.

These were, of course, one and the same man, although the name was different in the two identities. And the strangeness of this career has aroused the curiosity of more than one scholar. What follows is an attempt to unravel as much as can be unraveled of this unusual, and in some respects tragic, life.

It may be useful to recall, by way of background to what follows, that the hero (or anti-hero) of Turgenev’s Fathers and Children, Bazarov, was a medical student, fresh from the pursuit of his studies in Petersburg, and particularly interested in physiology. The story begins, it will be further recalled, with Bazarov’s visit to the country home of a student friend. The latter presents Bazarov to his parents as a “nihilist,” and explains to the bewildered parents just what that means. Bazarov spends

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most of his time in his room, cutting up frogs; and the room thus acquires, according to Turgenev, "a medical-surgical smell." Bazarov also becomes involved with another member of the host's family in bitter arguments over the merits, respectively, of German and Russian physiology, in which connection, incidentally, he declares the works of great artists, including Raphael, to be—since they are not scientific—worthless.

Turgenev's novel was published in 1862. It captured the interest and imagination of many people and entered prominently into the controversies then raging among the various factions—conservative, liberal, and radical—of the Russian intelligentsia. The figure of Bazarov, as well as the term nihilist attached to him (although Turgenev was not the first to use it), achieved through this book a legendary quality as a symbol of positivism, materialism, unfeeling secularism, and social-political radicalism.

All this may usefully be borne in mind as one considers the tale that follows.

I

On an inside street of the "Vyborg Side" of Petersburg's great Neva River there stood in 1873, as there had stood since the beginning of the nineteenth century and still stands today, the graceful and imposing building of what was then Petersburg's only medical school: the Imperial Medical-Surgical Academy. Because surgery had so often had its origins on the field of battle, it was not unnatural that this institution should have been a responsibility of the minister of war and have had a semi-military quality, receiving both military and civilian students. Situated as it was in the immediate neighborhood of the great military and naval hospitals of the Russian capital, it formed the heart of what might be called Russia's leading medical research center of the time—a place from which much of what was great in Russian medical and physiological science of the nineteenth century proceeded.

The Academy had acquired by the 1870s the reputation of being a hotbed of student radicalism. As recently as 1869 it had been racked by violent student disorders. Not for nothing had Turgenev suggested that his Bazarov was one of its students. Conservatives tended to attribute the tolerance of this radicalism by the authorities to the nefarious influence of the minister of war of the day: Dimitri Milyutin, the most liberal of the ministers of the Tsar Alexander II. Among other things, Milyutin had succeeded, in 1871, in bringing about the admission of women to the Academy. This, the first instance of women being admitted to higher education in Russia generally, was a revolutionary breakthrough. While
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it had been achieved only by the ruse that the women were there to study midwifery, not medicine, the ice was thus broken, and female students of that period were later permitted to complete medical studies and to become physicians. For many at court and in the bureaucracy, however, the mere fact of their admission stood as further proof of the dangerous radicalism of the Academy.

In a wider sense, this reputation was not wholly undeserved. The Academy did indeed serve as the inner sanctum for the spirit of scientific materialism that was then sweeping, like a religious hysteria, through the student youth and the professional intelligentsia of the day. This passionately held philosophy commonly expressed itself, as in Bazarov’s case, in a contemptuous repudiation of the existing religious, political, and social establishments, which were seen as unscientific, hypocritical, and obscurantist, and in a determination to see those establishments swept away by revolution in the name of scientific socialism.

On the afternoon of January 21, 1873, the aula of this Medical-Surgical Academy was packed with a capacity crowd, made up of the administrative staff, student body, and faculty, plus a number of distinguished visitors, including the Minister of War. They had all assembled to hear the inaugural lecture of the most recent addition to the Academy’s faculty: a twenty-nine-year-old physiologist, Russia’s youngest professor and its first Jewish one, who went by the name of Ilya Fadeyevich Tsion.

Not surprisingly, it was no ordinary quality of intelligence and no ordinary academic career that had brought a man of this relatively tender age and this racial-religious background to the prestigious faculty of the Medical-Surgical Academy. Yet much of Tsion’s life, both before and after this appearance at the Academy, remains shrouded in obscurity and can be reconstructed only uncertainly, from circumstantial rather than direct evidence.

He was born, it would appear, in 1842 or 1843, in a small community of the Lithuanian part of the Jewish Pale, near the town of Rassenai, not far from the German border. It was in this region, where the Jewish community was most exposed to the influence of its co-religionists in Germany, that the Jewish enlightenment movement of the period of Nicholas I found some of its strongest support.

Tsion’s father has been referred to as an “artiste graveur”; and there is some evidence for the correctness of this version. From the content of the anonymous novel Tsion himself was to publish in France at a later date, we may also suspect that the question of the boy’s education was the subject of painful conflict somewhere in the family entourage. The father (presumably) strongly favored the restriction of this education to the traditional local Jewish religious instruction of the village cheder
and later, possibly, to the Talmudic studies of the yeshiva, with the thought that the boy should follow in his own footsteps as a superior handicraftsman. Somewhere in the entourage, however, there must have been a recognition of highly unusual intellectual abilities on the boy's part—abilities that deserved the sort of secular education that the locality could not provide—and there must, presumably, have been some pressure on the father to let his education proceed outside the confines of the local religious community. Eventually, though evidently not without crisis, the father's resistance (for this is what we must conclude it was) was overcome.

One might have thought that once this consent had been obtained in principle, the normal choice would have been to send the boy to one of the newly established state-sponsored Jewish schools in the larger cities, where Jewish religious instruction was mixed with other studies, starting with the Russian language, and where a professional assimilation into the Russian cultural world could be eased, if not assured. But for some reason a more radical decision was taken. Tsion was sent, at what appears to have been the unusually young age of nine or ten, to the purely Russian humanistic gymnasium at Chernigov, fully four hundred miles away. Jews were permitted to attend these schools, at least within the confines of the Pale (as Chernigov was), but relatively few did; and why Tsion was sent there, so far from home and at so tender an age, is one of the enduring mysteries surrounding his life. In any case, this is what occurred. And it may be taken, I think, as evidence not only of Tsion's precocity but also as one of the first indications of a very considerable affluence somewhere in his background. For just his board and keep during the six years he spent at the gymnasium must have cost money; yet neither here nor in the case of his many later years of higher study in Russia or abroad is there any suggestion of any financial pressure; on the contrary, there are hints of a very comfortable, even elegant, style of living.

Upon completion (1858) of six years of attendance at the gymnasium, Tsion proceeded directly to the study of medicine at the Medical-Surgical Academy in Warsaw. He was now sixteen or seventeen years old. He was to such an extent Russified by his years at the gymnasium that he appears to have been treated at the Academy in Warsaw as a Russian, and accordingly ostracized by the Polish students there. It was largely owing to this, one is told, that he transferred, the following year, to the medical faculty of the University of Kiev. Three years later (1862) he moved to the University of Berlin, where he completed his medical studies with a doctorate in Medicine and Surgery. He then went to Petersburg, where he did one year as a student at the Medical-Surgical Academy of that city (not to be confused with the Warsaw one),
and obtained there, too, in 1865, the doctorate in medicine.

By this time, his abilities seem to have been well recognized by the Russian educational authorities; for at this point he was sent by the ministry of education to Paris to pursue what must now have been considered to be his researches (rather than studies) in the field of physiology. Where he did this is obscure—probably under the auspices of the great French physiologist, Claude Bernard, of whom he seems to have been a protégé and to whom he was to retain an enduring devotion. He remained in Paris for some years. In 1868 he received from the French Academy of Sciences one of the prestigious Montiou prizes (the Grand Prix de Physiologie expérimentale); and, two years later, he was given the gold medal of the Academy for work on the application of electricity to physiology. From Paris, he went back to Germany, where he was associated for a time with the well-known Leipzig physiologist, Carl Ludwig, and even published, together with Ludwig, a joint work on the so-called depressor-nerve of the heart, sometimes thenceforth referred to, in France at least, as “le nerf de Ludwig-Cyon.”

Around the year 1867 Tsion returned to Petersburg. He was now a well-known and, in Western Europe at least, distinguished figure in his chosen field of science; and the Russian educational authorities were unable to ignore this distinction. In 1868 he became the Director of the Physiological Laboratory at the University of St. Petersburg, and began, although as yet without the title of professor, to lecture at that institution. Two years later he became the University’s first, albeit “unestablished,” professor of anatomy. By all evidence a brilliant lecturer, he was the first in Russia to combine lectures on anatomy with vivisectional demonstration, using animals and presumably corpses. He appears to have been endowed (possibly as an inheritance from his “artiste-graveur” father) with a phenomenal manual dexterity. The success of his lectures in Petersburg was legendary. Among his appreciative students was the young Ivan Pavlov, who in later years never failed to acknowledge his great debt to Tsion as a teacher.

Few eyewitness tales of these lectures have survived; but those that have are colorful. One of these tells of Tsion arriving for an evening surgical demonstration at the hospital on his way to a ball, attired in evening dress; of his performing the operation swiftly and faultlessly without even removing the white gloves; then tipping his top hat to the gaping students and proceeding on his way to his social engagement.

A second glimpse of Tsion’s activity of that time, more earthy and probably more reliable than the other, comes from the classroom janitor at the Academy, an illiterate former peasant-soldier. He, too, was fascinated by Tsion’s lectures. He never failed to attend them; and he recalled them in later years with admiration and enthusiasm. Tsion’s
predecessor, Sechenov, he would say, had been all right in his way, but all Sechenov had brought with him were a few frogs. Now Tsion—that was a different thing. "Before the lecture, he would surround the platform with an assemblage of dogs and rabbits, and sometimes even geese. And before he had finished, [this admiringly] not one of the creatures was alive. He had carved them all up."

In 1872, two years after Tsion assumed his special professorship at the University, the professor of physiology at the nearby Medical-Surgical Academy, the well-known Ivan Mikhailovich Sechenov, announced his intention of leaving the Academy to take up a position in Odessa; and he evidently recommended Tsion as his successor. The recommendation met with strong opposition on the part of the majority of the faculty. The opposition centered in what was called the "Russian" faction, as opposed to "German" (presumably largely German-Balt) minority, which favored the appointment. The question touched off one of those lively and excited conflicts to which faculties the world over seem to be prone, the upshot being that the nomination was voted down. But the arguments of the faculty majority for this action were of such absurdity in the light of Tsion's record and his obvious academic qualifications that the Minister of War, Milyutin, declined to accept them; and the Director of the Academy, on the Minister's orders, reversed the decision and appointed Tsion over the heads of the faculty majority. Tsion (unwisely, no doubt) accepted the appointment.

This is probably the point at which the reader should be informed of two of Tsion's personal qualities, both of which were henceforth to play an important part in the ups and downs of his curious career.

First of all, he was by now a strong and confirmed reactionary—not so much in the political sense (for there was scarcely such a thing as "politics" in the Russian autocracy of that day) but rather as regards his attitude to the philosophical issues racking the Russian society of the time. Primarily, these were the differences between a religious-conservative outlook, on the one hand, and a secular-liberal positivism on the other—the latter outlook being sharply divided between those who sought the realization of their ideals on the path of gradual and peaceful reform and those who preferred the path of terrorism and violent revolution. Tsion's views, by the time he came to his Petersburg professorships, were firmly rooted in the conservative camp, and strongly opposed to both of the other tendencies.

This, for a Russian-Jewish intellectual of the 1870s, was something so unusual as to be almost unheard of; and the processes by which Tsion came to this Weltanschauung are another of the mysteries of his life. They were ones probably connected with his experience at the Russian gymnasium, his tendency to deny or trivialize his own Jewishness, his
obvious desire to be seen and accepted as a Russian, and a very genuine aversion to purely materialistic thinking. But they must have gone deeper than that. He sheds little light on them in the few autobiographical passages of his works. He admits that in his student days he was, like everyone else, not lacking in liberal impulses. As a student in Berlin in the early 1860s, he had become fascinated with the views and personality of the German socialist Ferdinand Lassalle. He had, in his youthful exuberance, even become one of the founding members of Lassalle's *Deutsche Arbeiterverein*. But disillusionment set in when Lassalle came to Berlin and Tsion attended one of his beer-hall political meetings with German worker-members of his movement. Tsion was shocked by the poorly concealed boredom and distaste with which his idol endured this encounter with the proletariat. And when he went up, after the meeting, to congratulate Lassalle on the effectiveness of his speech, Lassalle set him back by replying: "Yes, if only the beer weren't so horrible and if these people didn't stink so."

One cannot suppose that this momentary brush with liberal socialism alone sufficed to turn Tsion into a lifelong conservative. There must have been other and deeper reasons as well. The fact remains that Tsion brought to his professorship at the Medical-Surgical Academy a set of philosophical outlooks far to the right of all but the most reactionary intellectual circles of the Russia of his time. He was to retain this orientation to the end of his life.

The second feature of Tsion's personality that must now be mentioned was his highly unfortunate character—a peculiarity that seems to have been less prominent in his earlier years than it was after his experience at the Academy, about to be mentioned.

For all his intellectual power and scientific distinction, Tsion was, by anyone's standards, a difficult personality: vain, suspicious, touchy, devious, secretive, and vindictive. Tolerance, warmth of character, sincerity, humor, easygoing sociability—these were not for him. His hatreds and resentments, like his personal feuds and public polemics, were many and enduring; his friendships, if such could be said to exist, were few and fleeting. Misfortune dogged him, to be sure, throughout his life; but no one will ever know how much of it might have been avoided by a gentler and more balanced understanding on his part for the remainder of humankind. One suspects, here, the presence not only of deep psychic scars from some sort of earlier experience but also of a painful imbalance between intellectual precocity and emotional maturity. One of those who, in his memoirs, mentioned Tsion said that Tsion's face betrayed, along with its intellectual ferocity, a certain "helplessness." One can well believe it, and believing it, one can recognize that it was probably beyond his power to be much different
from what he actually was. His helpless ineffectiveness in all personal
and political affairs was as striking as his formidable scientific ability.

This brings us back, then, to January 21, 1873, the day of Tsion’s
inaugural lecture in the aula of the Medical-Surgical Academy. His
appearance on that podium—a small figure, resplendent in the military
uniform of the faculty of the Academy with all its gold braid and
epaulets, the face framed by the bushy sideburns of the period—must
have been, for him, the high moment of his life. Here he was, at the age
of thirty or thirty-one, for the first time a regular professor (ordinarius) at
Russia’s most prestigious center of medical and physiological studies,
addressing an audience that included not only the cream of academic
distinction in his chosen field but high dignitaries of the Russian
government as well. Yet he should have known, if he did not, that this
audience was in some respects loaded against him. As already noted,
the Academy was a hotbed of political radicalism, whereas he was a
conservative. The faculty majority, still smarting from the rejection
of its decision, sat (we may surmise) in stony-faced hostility and skepti-
cism. A portion of the male student body was decidedly unprepared to
hear or accept certain of the views Tsion was about to put forward. Only
the girls, fully as radical as the boys in their political opinions but
conscious of their responsibility as the cutting edge of feminism in
Russian higher education and unwilling to jeopardize this function by
public demonstrations, sat in demure impassivity, their faces composed
into that bright innocence that comes so easily to young ladies of that
age.

The lecture (a copy of which, in pamphlet form, still resides peace-
fully in the remarkable holdings of the New York Public Library) was a
brilliant one. It consisted mostly of a lucid and absorbing description of
the nerves of the heart: where they originated, what their function was,
how they affected the organ in question. The heart, he pointed out,
differed from most other human muscular organs in that it was not
responsive to the conscious will of the individual in whom it was
embedded. On the other hand, it was extremely sensitive to subcon-
scious emotional impulses. This had been marvelously well recognized
by the poets; the terms in which they had described these reactions (“my
heart stood still,” or “my heart leaped up,” for example) were extraordi-
narily accurate in the physiological sense. And because these reactions
were unintended and uncontrollable, they were unfailingly revealing.
If, for example, you had a criminal before the bar of justice and you tied a
cardiograph to his heart, the judge would be able to tell, from the
cardiograph’s reactions, when he was, and when he was not, telling the
truth. (This was, curiously enough, almost precisely a century before the
lie detector was actually invented.)
One may suppose that the lecture, thus far, was accepted without remonstrance by Tsion's listeners. But he then proceeded to fire at his listeners a cannon shot of startling boldness. All this, he reiterated, was observable, scientifically. But what was not observable—what could not be scientifically observed or explained—was what originally activated the nerve and caused these physiological reactions in the first place. Why? Because there was, in the psychic makeup of the human animal, something—let it be called the soul—that was beyond the reach of science and that was simply unknowable in scientific terms. Tsion said:

Between the knowledge of the mechanical processes that occur in thought and the understanding of the way in which these processes actually form the thought, there lies an entire great chasm that human intelligence will never be able to bridge. . . . The impossibility of understanding this connection is just as great with relation to the thoughts of a Newton as it is with relation to the creative imagination of a Shakespeare or a Rafael. . . . The recreation of the mechanism of the thought process is the final limit of possibility beyond which none of the natural sciences nor of any other science will ever be able to go in the study of the life of the human spirit.

It is not easy, in this more sophisticated age, to understand the violence of the offense such words as these brought to a large part of Tsion's audience. This was, as noted above, the golden age of belief in the endless powers of natural science—in its capability of providing the answers to all problems, personal and social, of the human predicament. This belief had attained the emotional intensity of a religious faith. The Medical-Surgical Academy was the high temple of that faith. And here was Tsion, placing limitations on the powers of science, implying the existence of something called the soul as distinct from, and supplementary to, indeed essential to, the body, and claiming that this entity, the soul, was beyond the reach of natural science. In the face of such assertions, what became of the entire structure of one's belief in the ultimate illuminative and redemptive capacities of science? What, indeed, was this heresy which suggested that there might even be some substance in the despised religious tenets (for many of these students, like Turgenev's Bazarov, were the rebellious children of priests) of one's parents? Were these not the utterances of a species of intellectual "anti-Christ," undermining the very foundations of the temples of science, opening the world to a relativistic chaos in which there could never be anything solid for anyone, ever, to hold on to?

During the final passages of the lecture, there had been an audible rumble of indignation on the student benches, rising to a crescendo of hissing as the lecturer completed the passages just quoted. Tsion commented bitterly on this to the Minister of War, as they left the hall.
“Mr. Minister,” he said, “did you notice the impression created upon a portion of the student body by certain parts of my lecture? So far as I am concerned, I am deeply embittered. I am no prophet, but I predict that if you do not put an early end to the demoralization of this student youth by drastically changing the system of instruction, Russia will be, within the space of fifteen to twenty years, in a state of total social disintegration.”

“You exaggerate,” replied Milyutin, “because you have no faith in the moral power of the natural sciences.”

“Yes,” replied Tsion, “no faith at all.”

(“And I was not wrong,” reflected Tsion, recalling this incident many years later. “Do you want to know what became of those young nihilists who protested against my doctrines? There were hundreds of them; and out of that number at least seventy were either hung or sent to Siberia.”)

With the conclusion of this inaugural lecture, the fat was fairly in the fire. The students, supported by a portion of the faculty, were up in arms. When Tsion began his regular lecturing, he encountered aroused and hostile audiences. Thinking that he had perhaps been too cryptic in what he had said in the inaugural lecture, he expanded on his views in a paper that he prepared as a pamphlet and attempted to distribute from the lecture platform. The students roared in anger and threw the pamphlets back in his face. He then further enraged them by disparaging the scientific achievements and capacities of his predecessor, Sechenov, who was a favorite of the students. (The attacks on Sechenov came with peculiar ill-grace on Tsion’s part, because it was actually the latter who had initiated his nomination for a faculty appointment.) And to all this insult he added the injury of flunking about half the sophomore class for neglecting their studies in favor of radical politics.

Student hostility soon grew into violence. Tsion found himself obliged to ask for the stationing of a military guard outside his laboratory to protect him from the students. The troubles continued, and grew. Finally, on October 17, 1874, less than two years after Tsion’s entrance onto the faculty, student disorders broke out on a serious scale, inspired largely by, or at least centering around, the demand for his removal. They soon spread to other Petersburg institutions of higher learning, particularly the School of Mines and the Technological Institute. Within a week they had achieved such intensity that troops eventually had to be called out, and it became necessary to close several of the institutions, including the Academy, for long periods of time.

The situation had now become impossible. What exactly happened is obscure; but on October 28, 1874, after what one suspects to have been a sultry interview between Tsion and the director of the Academy, the termination of Tsion’s lectures was announced, and he submitted to the
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Ministry of Education a request to be sent abroad on an official scholarly mission, to Leipzig, specifically, where he proposed to prepare and publish a work on the methodology of physiological research.

From this point on, the shadows of a deliberately created obscurity begin to envelop Tsion's life, lightening briefly only from time to time to afford fleeting glimpses of various disconnected—or seemingly disconnected—involvements, one more incongruous than the other. He certainly went abroad as proposed, perhaps initially to Leipzig, but then, for permanent residence, to Paris. He did indeed publish in 1876, in Petersburg (but with a German-language publishing house and in German), his work on the methodology of physiological experimentation.

At some point not long after Tsion's departure from Petersburg, there was set up an official commission, under the chairmanship of the brother of the Tsar, the Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolayevich, to investigate the recent disorders at the Academy. The commission vindicated Tsion insofar as his conduct vis-à-vis the students and the institution was concerned. This widely publicized decision was then warmly and publicly supported by the great conservative editor Mikhail Katkov in his influential Moscow newspaper the Moskovskie Vyedomosti. Tsion was never to lose his sense of indebtedness to both of these prominent conservative figures—the Grand Duke and Katkov—for their support.

The vindication appears to have been the stimulation for the conferring upon him in 1877, by order of the Tsar, the title of State Councilor, which made him officially a member of the gentry. But the commission's decision seems to have been coupled with a suggestion that it might thenceforth be better if Tsion's scientific and pedagogical talent were to find employment somewhere else than in Petersburg. There reposes, in any case, in the files of the Medical-Surgical Academy, a cryptic undated note signed by the Secretary of the Council of the University of St. Petersburg, to the effect that on October 24, 1875 (just one year after the blowup at the Academy), the Executive Director of the Ministry of Education had issued an order dismissing Tsion from the governmental service "pursuant to his request on grounds of illness." With this, Tsion's ties to the Russian academic world and to Russian society generally came to an end. He was never to resume residence in that country.

II

From that point on, it is a different story. The place of residence is now, and will be for the next fifteen years, Paris. The individual with whom we have to deal is no longer the Ilya Fadeyevich Tsion, preco-
cious child of the Jewish Pale. It is one Élie de Cyon, a well-heeled and cosmopolitan gentleman, installed in a fine apartment in the rue de la Bienfaisance, from which he writes his letters on elegant letterhead stationery. He speaks and writes, on all evidence, flawless French and German. Russia, for the time being, is behind him.

In the first year of his residence in Paris, Cyon continued his scientific work under the patronage of Claude Bernard, who encouraged him to hope for a professorship—presumably at the Sorbonne. With this in mind, he took a French doctorate (his third earned one) and pursued researches in the laboratory of another prominent physiologist, Paul Bert. This last proved to be an unfortunate arrangement. Acquaintance with the laboratory and with Bert's work left Cyon with nothing but contempt for the latter's scientific ability; whereas Bert's views and activities outside the scientific field were simply anathema in Cyon's eyes. For Bert, aside from being an impassioned positivist, was more the politician than the scientist. A Left-Republican parliamentarian, he was shortly to become Minister of Education in Léon Gambetta's "grand ministère," where he would lead the fight for the closing of the church schools and the complete secularization of education. No undertaking could have been more odious in Cyon's eyes than this one. Not surprisingly, the two men quarreled; and when, in early 1878, there occurred, with the death of Claude Bernard, another of those disasters that seem so often to have dogged Cyon's path, Bert's influence, now supreme among that of French physiologists, was exerted to assure that no French professorship was forthcoming for Cyon.

This last, it appears, was too much. All openings were now barred. Return to the Petersbourg professorship was impossible. In Germany professorships were governmental appointments and would scarcely go to a foreigner and a Jew, however distinguished. And now—this cold shoulder from the official French scientific community. Frustrated and embittered, Cyon abandoned science and turned to other things.

For the ensuing twenty years—all years of residence in Paris or in Switzerland—there would be a profusion of non-scientific involvements. Of these involvements, given Cyon's congenital secretiveness and the paucity of the historical record, we have only scattered and confusing, if often tantalizing, bits of evidence. Here are only a few of the high spots.

The reader will recall that it was the Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolayevich who had chaired the commission that investigated the disorders at the Medical-Surgical Academy and vindicated Cyon in his part in the affair. The Grand Duke had gone on, not long thereafter, to command the Russian forces in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–78. At the end of 1879, fresh from—and exhausted by—this arduous and frustrating military experience, he came to Paris to seek the restoration
of his shattered health. Like many another such commander in chief, he came in a state of violent embitterment against the government on whose behalf he had fought, blaming it, not himself, for the reverses and frustrations he had been obliged to endure on the field of battle. Senior French officers, having always in mind the possibility of an eventual alliance with Russia, now invited the Grand Duke to be the guest of the French army on a series of visits to French military installations over the winter of 1879–80. Cyon, mindful of the debt he owed to this eminent personality, attached himself to the Grand Duke's suite as a physician, and accompanied him on these various visits.

It was, presumably, in the course of these travels that Cyon formed connections of some sort with at least one senior French military figure—connections that were to have much to do with his activities of the ensuing years on behalf of a Franco-Russian alliance. This figure was General Félix Gustave Saussier—a professional soldier who had commanded forces in combat in several parts of the world in earlier years and who was later to become, for many more years, military commandant of Paris and supreme commander-designate for all the French forces in the event of war. Saussier, like a number of other French commanders, was (after the Franco-Prussian War) implacably anti-German; and he was notorious for his devotion to the cause of a Franco-Russian alliance. His relationship to Cyon appears to have been a close one, at least in the political sense, and to have endured and to have had significant consequences in later years.

The Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolayevich had brought with him, on this visit to France, the confidential official diary of his general staff in the recent Turkish war. This was a document of great political delicacy; for the grievances it brought forward were ones directed largely against the Grand Duke's brother, the Tsar Alexander II, and in part against the future Tsar Alexander III, then still Crown Prince. Towards the latter, in particular, who had commanded a division in the recent campaign, the Grand Duke's feelings were not exactly ones of familial affection.

In the course of their travels around the French military bases, the Grand Duke showed this diary to Cyon, and either ordered him or authorized him to arrange for the publication of the gist of it, in anonymous form, in Paris. In addition to this, upon completion of his visit to France, the Grand Duke left a copy of the diary itself in Cyon's custody, with orders that it was not to be published until three years after his own death and not to be revealed to anyone before that time. This arrangement was to have consequences, to be noted below, when the time limit expired.

Pursuant to the Grand Duke's wishes, Cyon drew up an anonymous
article based on the diary, and took it to the well-known publisher and editor of the magazine known as La Nouvelle Revue (a competitor of the Revue de deux Mondes)—Madame Juliette Adam. A woman of boundless energy and temperament—a fiery chauvinist who lived primarily for her hatred of Germany and of Bismarck personally (whom she never met) and devoted most of her long life to the cause of French revanche—Juliette Adam was a strong partisan of the recently established Republican regime. She conducted for many years her own républicain salon, in competition with those of the great aristocratic hostesses of the French capital. She accepted and published Cyon’s anonymous article (much to the fury of the Tsar and the Crown Prince, who instantly recognized its provenance when it came to their attention). Whether Cyon had known Juliette Adam before is not clear; but from this time on, in any case, his connection with her—a relationship more political than personal—was also to have an important place in his Paris life.

Not long after the Grand Duke’s departure, in the early 1880s, Cyon became for one or two years the editor of a Bonapartiste periodical, Le Gaulois—a daily newspaper founded some years earlier with the help of Russian money and strongly committed to the idea of a Franco-Russian alliance. Here, too, characteristically, Cyon’s involvement seems to have been a stormy one, and did not long endure.

In the meantime, however, Cyon functioned from time to time as a scientific and occasionally political correspondent for Katkov’s Moskovskiye Vedomosti. In 1884 he paid a visit to Moscow to thank the great editor for the support the latter had given in connection with his troubles at the Medical-Surgical Academy. This was the beginning of a close attachment between the two men. They obviously discussed on that occasion the prospects for a Franco-Russian alliance, of which Cyon claimed already to be a protaganist. Katkov, who as a Monarchist-conservative had previously supported the close Russian tie to the royal house of Prussia, was not yet ready to go this far. But some two years later, under the influence of certain complications in the Balkans which he mistook for the results of German and Austrian intrigues against Russia, Katkov was brought to change his mind and to launch himself into that campaign for a Franco-Russian alliance which was to become his obsessive preoccupation over the year that was about to ensue before his own death.

During these final months of Katkov’s life (from the summer of 1886 to that of 1887) Cyon’s involvement, through Katkov, with Franco-Russian relations was, as always, somewhat mysterious but obviously intensive. He persuaded Madame Adam to hand over to him for that year, at least nominally, the directorship of her Nouvelle Revue. There is no evidence that he actually took any part in this running of the
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magazine; but it is clear that the appointment had something to do with his desire to be useful at the French end to the campaign Katkov was conducting in Russia.

The winter of 1886–87 witnessed the development of the Franco-German "war scare" of 1887—one of those hysterical and wholly unjustified outbursts of alarm that, under the influence of a sensational European press, periodically took possession of portions of the European public during those final decades of the last century. In February 1887, in the midst of this fever, Cyon paid another mysterious visit to Russia, remaining there, this time, for several weeks. He was probably bearing with him, upon his arrival, a message from someone in high position in France to military circles in Petersburg. He certainly spent days on end in agitated consultation with Katkov and with senior people in the immediate entourage of the Tsar, all with a view to promoting the earliest possible conclusion of a Franco-Russian military alliance. Among other things: certainly with a view to making himself more acceptable in senior Russian officialdom, but perhaps also out of genuine conviction, he sought and received baptism as a Christian.

The war scare soon died away; and with Katkov's death on the first of August 1887, Cyon's involvement with all these agitations came to an end. Learning of the editor's final illness, Cyon hastened to the scene, partly out of sincere devotion to his influential friend but partly, too, by all indications, in the hopes of being appointed the latter's successor as editor of what was then considered the most influential of Russian newspapers. But it was characteristic of his experiences that he arrived too late for the funeral and missed out when the new editor was selected.

With Katkov's passing, Cyon's personal part in the campaign for a Franco-Russian alliance came to an abrupt end, as did that of the senior French commanders with whom he seems to have been in touch. From now on the efforts to achieve such an alliance would be carried forward much more quietly and skillfully through the French and Russian foreign offices, and general staffs, all of them entities which neither had nor wished to have any relations of confidence with Cyon. His involvement with this particular enterprise would consist, from now on, primarily in the preparation of a semi-autobiographical book on the Franco-Russian Alliance (Histoire de l'entente franco-russe. 1886–1894. Documents et souvenirs: Librarie Charles, 1895), in which he and Katkov not surprisingly appear as the pioneers and leading protagonists of that particular arrangement.

The next of Cyon's involvements consisted of his efforts to play a role in the long and celebrated series of French loans to Russia that were to extend over the years down to the First World War. Katkov, shortly before his death, had placed Cyon in contact with the Russian finance
minister of the day, I. A. Vyshnegradski; and Cyon did indeed negotiate, with the bankers of Paris and Berlin, the first of these arrangements. The loan in question was a relatively small one, almost experimental in nature from the Russian standpoint, but nonetheless significant. Its aftermath, however, true to form, was one of suspicion, conflict, and fury. Cyon and Vyshnegradski each charged the other more or less publicly with having taken much too large a cut on the deal. Cyon was therefore ejected from his brief tenure as an unofficial agent of the Russian finance ministry and proceeded to launch himself upon a series of violent public polemics, directed first against Vyshnegradski and then, after the latter's retirement in 1892, against his successor, the famous Count Sergei Yulyevich Witte. Both were charged by Cyon with the egregious mismanagement of Russia's public finances. Appearing in pamphlet form sometimes in Russian, sometimes in French or German, these tirades, launched at intervals over the years of the 1890s, were violent and at times even personally abusive, particularly in relation to Witte. "Where is the parvenu Witte leading Russia?" and "S. Yu Witte and his projects for the deliberate bankruptcy of Russia" were among their titles. By this means Cyon succeeded in adding to his numerous Russian enemies a man who was rapidly becoming the country's most powerful figure, the Tsar excepted.

Witte's revenge seems to have taken the form of pressures by the Russian government to deprive Cyon of the French citizenship he had by that time acquired. The French government, frantically eager at just that moment to obtain Russian ratification of the military convention secretly negotiated between the two countries the previous year, and anxious to please the Russians at all costs, not only complied with this request but denied to Cyon permission to reside further in France, thus compelling him to move to Switzerland, where he took a villa on the shores of Lake Geneva.

These attacks on the two Russian ministers of finance were, however, only the smallest part of Cyon's literary activity in the years of the early 1890s. Faced with the loss of his influential patrons in both France and Russia, Cyon abandoned high finance and the promotion of the alliance and applied himself with furious energy to other forms of literature. His book La Russie contemporaine, which first appeared serially in Madame Adam's La Nouvelle Revue, contained an interesting chapter on the Jewish problem in Russia—the only instance in which Cyon was to set forth at length his views on this question. Sharp and extreme, as always, it was the work of an impassioned assimilationist. Both the Russian government and the traditional Jewish religious establishment were taken to task: the government for confining the Jews to the Pale instead of giving them full rights, dispersing them throughout Russia,
and striving for their conversion; the Jewish establishment for segregating itself by its own religious-social customs and its fussy exclusiveness. "The true solution to the Jewish question," he wrote, "and the only means of protecting the Empire from the economic dangers with which the continued rise in the Jewish population threatens it, is to cause them to lose all their peculiarities of custom and religion, to convert them to Orthodoxy by all means compatible with the spirit of Christian charity, and to assimilate them as rapidly as possible into the population of Russian origin." In accordance with this view, he firmly opposed the *numerus clausus* for their acceptance into official employment. Conversion alone, not numerical limitation, should henceforth, in his view, be the decisive factor governing the admission of Jews to governmental service.

Even more interesting, from the standpoint of Cyon's person rather than his views, was a venture into fiction. At the end of 1891 there began to appear in Madame Adam's magazine an anonymous novel, entitled *L'Abîme*, unquestionably from Cyon's pen. The scene was laid in Russia. The plot, characteristically, contained no heroes—only anti-heroes; but one of the latter—the best of the lot—was in part clearly autobiographically conceived. The traditional religious Jewish background is here transformed into that of the pious Orthodox "Old-Believer" community of the district "beyond the river" in Moscow—a community that, in its exclusiveness, in the Old Testament quality of its beliefs, and in its frequent commitment to a mercantile calling, did indeed bear certain resemblances to the one in which Cyon was born and raised. The hero/anti-hero is, like Cyon, a precocious child. Here, too, the pious father opposes the son's receiving a secular education; but an elderly relative insists successfully that he must have one. Like Cyon, then, he is trained as a physiologist, first at the Medical-Surgical Academy and later abroad. He is all right, one is allowed to understand—not a bad fellow actually; but he is too much the scientist and the agnostic—too smug in his worldly success, too resistant to higher impulses, too willing to sacrifice the life of the spirit to the life of the mind. Precisely because of this dry contentment with a scientific career, he fails to appreciate fully the young heroine and is unwilling to accept the burden of a genuine emotional commitment. This gives the villain—a demonic radical revolutionary who functions as the lady's tutor—the opportunity to lure the young lady away into the fearful recesses of the underground revolutionary movement. We find ourselves, at this point, thrust down into the familiar dark world of Dostoyevskian conspiracy: Nechayev, the Petrashevsky circle, and the cold-blooded murder of the suspected student-informer. The young lady, after years of enmeshment in the toils of underground violence, is finally caught and imprisoned.
She is eventually released; but by this time she is ill, ruined, and abandoned, and she suffers an early and lonely death. Her onetime admirer, meanwhile, our hero/anti-hero scientist, has had great worldly success—wealth, public acclaim, all that one could wish—all but the richness of love and intimate companionship (all, that is, that Cyon could have had, had he sacrificed his principles and played the usual game). Receiving a letter from her as she nears her death, he rushes to her bedside but arrives too late. Repenting of his earlier misplacement of priorities, he attends the funeral, arranges for the grave, and returns to Petersburg to live out his luxurious but lonely life mourning the wasted opportunities of one who has made a fetish of science, has attempted to place it on a pedestal above the values of love and faith, and has paid the price.

There is something deeply pathetic and revealing about this short novel (which never saw publication as a book). There is in it, albeit in this curious form, all the tragedy of the mid-nineteenth-century Russian intellectual, sent spinning back and forth as in some great game of blindman’s bluff, among the turbulent forces of the age: between the attractions and repulsions of the burgeoning scientific revolution; between the power of established religious faith and the fascination of a new rationalism; between love for parents and repugnance for all they stood for socially and philosophically. Small wonder that so many people, tossed about in this way, lost their balance and ended badly—even worse, in many instances, than did Cyon himself.

The novel, which one suspects to have been carried in the magazine by Juliette Adam only as an act of friendship, failed to attract significant attention. This must have been chalked up, in Cyon’s battered psyche, as only the last of many disappointments; and this justifiably, for the book, compared to other and more widely published offerings of the time, was not all that bad.

But more disappointments were to come. The Grand Duke died in 1889. Cyon was still in possession of his wartime diary. In 1892 the interval before he was supposed to publish it expired. The question arose: what to do with it? It was presumably highly publishable, but did he really want to take this step? It could play into the hands of the Germans. Besides, he himself now needed the sympathy of high Russian quarters for support in his feud with Witte. Would he not do better by taking the question up personally with the Tsar—by using it as a channel of reconciliation with the Russian government? Instead of publishing it, in any case, he prepared a letter to the Tsar explaining the circumstances, and set off (we are now in September 1893) for Copenhagen, where Alexander III was spending what was destined to be the last of his many Danish vacations.

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It had long been a widely and firmly held conviction in official French circles that if you wanted to get through to the Tsar over the heads of his protective bureaucracy, the way to do it was to approach him during his vacations in Denmark where he had no one around him but his family and his intimate suite. This supposed verity (supposed, because the device seldom worked) had evidently even got through to Cyon. In his letter to the Tsar, after telling how he came into possession of the diary, he went on to say that the time had now come for him to make good on the promise he had made to the Grand Duke. But this, he continued, put him in some difficulty. The diary was replete with awkward revelations, and included many diplomatic and military documents, the publication of which would not be desirable at any time. To publish it in these circumstances would bring real harm to the vital interests of the Russian state. (What he had in mind was presumably the rumored recent conclusion of the Franco-Russian Alliance.) All this he felt obliged to bring to the monarch’s attention. “The wise words of the Tsar,” he concluded, “will determine the course to be followed.”

Not surprisingly, the visit to Copenhagen was in vain. Cyon never got anywhere near the Tsar, and was reduced to presenting his letter to one of the latter’s high-ranking personal aides, who accepted delivery of it and promised to submit it to the ruler. But no response was forthcoming; and Cyon, unable to wait indefinitely, was obliged to return to Switzerland, still clutching the diary, but no wiser than he was before.

Six months later, nothing still having been heard, he wrote to the Russian minister of education, a man who had at one time been well-inclined towards him, asking that the matter be brought to the Tsar’s attention. To that communication, too, there is no record of any reply. The Tsar was by this time a very ill man. It may not have been possible to get his attention to the matter. In April 1895, the Tsar having in the meantime died, Witte convened a special high-level meeting, attended by the minister of justice and of internal affairs as well as by the head of the new Tsar’s personal chancery, to consider Cyon’s activities and to decide what to do about him. The decision taken was to forbid him any further residence abroad and to demand his return to Russia within a two-month period. It was privately agreed, though not so stated to Cyon, that he would, upon crossing the Russian border, be at once arrested and confronted with criminal charges.

Were these dispositions connected with the diary? There is nothing in the record of the meeting to prove it. Nor is there any direct evidence, anywhere, that Witte even knew about the diary. But the timing of the meeting, the extremely high level of the participants, and the inclusion of a representative of the Tsar’s personal chancery all suggest that something more important than just Cyon’s public attacks on Witte was
involved. The congenital Russian preoccupation with the prestige of the imperial family would have explained why no mention of the diary episode was made in the record of the meeting. But there is strong evidence that those few highly placed Russians who were familiar with the matter were quick to sense in Cyon’s approach to the Tsar, coupled with his continuing retention of the diary, a delicate form of blackmail, and that they reacted accordingly.

Cyon, in any case, upon receiving the summons to return to Russia, replied evasively, accepting the order in principle but professing inability to come at that time on account of illness. The Russian government, however, was having none of this. The response was the immediate issuance of a decree depriving him of Russian citizenship as well as of all his Russian titles and of whatever property he might own in Russia.

Two years later the head of the Paris office of the Russian secret police (the okhrana), an individual known as Petr Ivanovich Rachkovski, organized and caused to be carried out a raid, in Cyon’s absence, on his villa in Switzerland. There is some evidence that this was done at the personal insistence of Witte, without the knowledge or approval of Rachkovski’s police superiors. The fruits of the venture would appear to have been meager: all the intruders got, they reported officially, was a few pages of the draft of another pamphlet attacking Witte. But was there not something else they got and failed, for good reason, to report to their own immediate superiors? The available documentation provides no answer.

III

Eighteen ninety-seven, the year of the raid on Cyon’s villa, marked, in any case, the abandonment of his public feud with Witte, and the beginning of his return to science. But at just this point, a new mystery, deeper and still more tantalizing, enters the literature surrounding his person.

That year of 1897, the reader might care to recall, marked the high point of the Dreyfus case in France. It must have been an excruciating experience for Cyon to follow these excitements in the French press; for while he himself was Jewish, some of his closest contacts in France, particularly on the military side, were among the most prominent of the anti-Dreyfusards—one of them, General Saussier, even, in all probability, a leading culprit of this dreadful miscarriage of justice. And it was in that same year of 1897, three or four years after Cyon’s removal to Switzerland, that there took place, in the Swiss city of Basle, under the chairmanship of Theodor Herzl, the First Zionist Congress.

Cyon, of course, was no Zionist—quite the contrary. His views on the
most desirable future for the Jewish people ran in precisely the opposite direction. While he must, of course, in the light of his background and preoccupations, have been interested in the Congress, taking place as it was so near to his Swiss residence, he obviously had not the faintest connection with it.

However. . . .

During the first years of the present century there surfaced and saw publication in Russia at least two versions of a document usually entitled the “Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion.” It purported to set forth the plans of these supposed “Elders,” or of the masonic lodges to which they were supposed to have belonged, for subverting and bringing under their control the societies and governments of the entire world. It was sometimes brought into connection with the Basle congress, the inference being that the so-called elders were the leaders of that gathering. Liberally translated at later dates into a number of other languages, this document came with the years to take a leading place among the various anti-Semitic forgeries of all time. It was extensively used by Russian reactionaries, before and after the Russian Revolution. It was used by the Nazis. Henry Ford, Sr., is said to have believed in its authenticity and to have recommended it to others for their enlightenment.

This was not, strictly speaking, an original forgery. It was rather a plagiarism, or, more precisely, a paraphrase, of a document written some thirty to forty years earlier. This last was a pamphlet, published in Brussels and circulated in Paris, written by a young French intellectual by the name of Maurice Joly, then an employee in the Bibliothèque nationale. It was entitled: Dialogue aux enfers entre Machiavel et Montesquieu; la politique du XIX siècle. A disguised attack on the regime of Napoleon III, biting, beautifully written, and held to a high level of political-philosophic discourse, the document was well worth reading in its own right. It was noteworthy in particular for the prophetic divination of the great totalitarian tyrannies of the twentieth century—horrors towards which, in Joly’s view, Napoleon III was leading Europe.

Joly, punished by some two years in prison for his authorship of this document, survived the overthrow of the Napoleonic regime, and lived to the late 1870s in Paris. And it was this document that, many years after his death, someone in France picked up, paraphrased, and distorted, attributing its origin to an apocryphal body called the “Elders of Zion.” The intent of the forger or forgers was evidently to show that either international Jewry or international freemasonry or both (it was hard to tell which) formed the center of a vast conspiracy for the gradual, non-violent, but insidious, conquest of world power.

Who did this work of falsification, and when and where was it done,
has never been clarified. The document surfaced for the first time in Russia around the year 1905, when it was published there by Russian religious reactionaries associated with some of Russia’s most viciously anti-Semitic circles. But there is no evidence that it originated in Russia. All the evidence suggests that it was drafted in France or Switzerland, in the French language, at some time in the period 1897–1900, was then taken to Russia, translated there into Russian around the year 1901, and published there, for the first time, three or four years later. The reader will note the coincidence of the supposed date of authorship—the final years of the 1890s—with the high point of the Dreyfus case in France, the convening of the First Zionist Congress in Basle, the raid on Cyon’s villa, and the culmination of his attacks on Witte.

The most searching investigation of the origin of the “Protocols” was one conducted, just before and after the Second World War, by a French writer, evidently of Russian origin, now deceased, by the name of Henry Rollin. Rollin is said (the writer cannot vouch for the accuracy of these statements) to have headed, during the Second World War, the intelligence service of the Vichy regime; to have been, however, throughout that period, a secret agent of the British; to have fled successfully when the Vichy regime was liquidated by the Germans, and to have been picked up and flown clandestinely out of France by the British—to England, where he spent the rest of his days. He was, in any case, a man who had a great nose for secret and conspiratorial movements of one sort or another, and particularly for the reactionary ones connected with, or made use of by, the Nazis. He had written, just before the war began, a strange, learned, somewhat confusing but fascinating book entitled L’Apocalypse de notre temps. At least one edition of this book (it may have been the only one) was just appearing in Paris when the Germans occupied that city in 1940. The Nazis allegedly found the unsold stock, confiscated it, and destroyed it. Only a few copies—advance copies, perhaps—seem to have survived. Although it figures in the holdings of three or four American libraries, the book is now extremely rare. In it, Rollin dwelt at some length on the mystery of the “protocoles.” And while he was, at the time, unable to solve this mystery, being able to trace the origins of the document no further than to the entourage of Cyon’s onetime friend and associate, Juliette Adam, Rollin later, in the 1950s, shortly before his death, came to the conclusion that the author was none other than our Cyon. He corresponded about this with the late Boris Nikolayevski, the historian and erudite bibliographer of the Russian revolutionary movement; and Nikolayevski, shortly before his own death, came to accept the hypothesis of Cyon’s probable complicity.

The evidence for this hypothesis, aside from certain of Cyon’s
associations in Paris and from the pun on his name in the title of the "protocoles," was the fact that these latter contained several passages that were wholly absent in Joly's pamphlet but did indeed seem to coincide with certain of the charges Cyon had been levying against Witte in his various polemic tracts. The similarities are indeed evident. There was certainly some connection, here, between the "protocoles" and the person of Cyon. But I am persuaded that this connection was not, and could not have been, what Rollin and Nikolayevski thought it was.

There are a number of reasons for this conclusion. Cyon hated many Jews, but not because they were Jews. He hated many non-Jews with equal intensity. His hatreds, in fact, were racially quite impartial. He deplored the exclusiveness of the traditional Jewish religious community and favored, everywhere, assimilation (of which he presumably saw himself as a shining example). But the incitement of hatred against Jews as a community, and this on a racial basis, never had a place among his enthusiasms. Witte, to be sure, married as he was to a Jewess, was sometimes charged in anti-Semitic circles with being "the friend of the Jews"; and Cyon did indeed attack him, as minister of finance, for his dealings with certain of the western European bankers—the Rothschilds and others—who were Jewish. The greatest object of Cyon's hatred, furthermore, seems to have been one of Witte's leading assistants, one Rothstein, who had evidently obtained under Witte the position that Cyon himself had coveted, and who was also presumably Jewish. But there is no evidence that Cyon ever saw Witte as involved in any sort of international Jewish conspiracy, as suggested by the "protocoles," or indeed that he ever believed in the existence of such a conspiracy. Engaged as he was in public attacks on Witte, he had no reason to embed further criticisms of that statesman in a spurious anonymous document of this nature where, even if they had eventually come to public attention, they might not have been traced to him, and might only have discredited him if they were so traced.

Most important of all are two other considerations. While Cyon loved to draw veils of semi-obscurity and mystery over his various enthusiasms and involvements, he rarely if ever concealed them entirely; he usually revealed something about them, if only to boast about them in later years. It is most unlikely that he could have been involved with other people, as he would have had to be, in a venture of this nature, and that no word of it ever leaked out. He was, after all, not living in France at the time; nor was he in touch with the people who might have joined him in such a venture. On the contrary, he was, at the time the "protocoles" were presumably written, already returning, with energy and dedication, to the scientific activity, even including lectures at the University of Bern, to which he was to devote most of the rest of his life. It is hard to
imagine him combining such activity with the concocting of an anonymous paraphrase of Joly’s pamphlet, then embedding in the pamphlet some of the very charges he has just been levying publicly against Witte, and smuggling the whole thing into Russia.

Finally, and most important of all: one must do Cyon the justice to say that he was too much the scholar—too much the scientist—too proud of his reputation as a man of facts and of scrupulous factual analysis—to lend himself to cheap falsification of the sort the “protocoles” represent. He was all that one will in certain of the less admirable qualities of the human species—oversensitive, contentious, suspicious, secretive, vindicative; but closest to his heart lay his pride as a scientist; and he was scarcely the man to betray this dedication in the way that his alleged authorship of the “protocoles” would suggest.

A much more likely source of the authorship of this document will be found somewhere around or between two colorful denizens of the Paris of that period. One was the notorious anti-Semitic publicist Edouard Drumont, author of *La France juive* and editor of the well-known and radically anti-Semitic paper *La libre parole*. The other was the same Petr Ivanovich Rachkovski, head of the Paris office of the Russian *okhrana*, and bitter enemy of Cyon, who masterminded the raid on the latter’s villa. Drumont, it appears, had once been associated with Joly, as a journalist writing for the Paris paper *La Liberté*, in the early 1870s, and presumably knew of Joly’s pamphlet. He is known to have made use, at one time, of another notorious and widely credited Russian forgery: the spurious “Will of Peter the Great.” Whether he knew this was a forgery and made use of it anyway, or was unable to spot it as such, is unimportant. He was never choosy in his methods. Rachkovski, for his part, was a most disreputable character, once a member of the radical underground People’s Will movement, but one who, upon being arrested by the authorities, apparently saved himself by turning informant and becoming, later, a regular foreign agent of the Russian Department of Police. Rachkovski is charged with the authorship of a number of false documents designed to incriminate Russian revolutionary exiles living in Paris, or—in some instances—to sow among them suspicion of one another. He is also said to have edited, on one occasion, a spurious document concocted by Drumont. These are all murky affairs; and the historian can be wholly sure of nothing. But both men, Drumont and Rachkovski, seem to have been anything but loath to employ the methods of falsification; they are known to have collaborated; Rachkovski evidently hated Cyon; and it would scarcely have been above either of them to introduce into the paraphrased passages of Joly’s paper thoughts taken from Cyon’s attacks on Witte—precisely as a means of throwing off the track any who might inquire too anxiously
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into provenance and authorship of the falsified document.

The final years of Cyon's life—the first decade of this century—were devoted almost entirely to science. The structure of the inner ear; the relationship of that organ to the human sense of three-dimensional space; the relationship of all this to Euclidean geometry; the physiological structure of the hypophysis; the errors of Kantian philosophy—papers on these and other scientific-philosophical topics now poured forth again from his untiring pen; some were in French, some in German, some in both languages, none in Russian. At the end of the decade there appeared what he, surely, regarded as his magnum opus: a hefty volume in the French language entitled Dieu et Science. A curious work it was—the combination of a fine scientific discipline and great erudition in the philosophy of science with sudden outcroppings of old personal aversions and resentments. Its purpose was to prove, first, that no a priori structure of thought is any stronger than the premises from which it proceeds; secondly, that no such premises may be regarded as sound unless they are substantiated by research in the natural sciences; thirdly, that no such research—great, and indeed fundamental, as this may be in other respects for the advance of civilization—can provide answers to the ultimate questions surrounding the origins and the nature of human life; fourthly, that man has no choice but to turn, for those answers, to religious faith; and finally, that this returning to religious faith is, indeed, precisely what an impressive proportion of the great scientists of all time have done. Intermingled with the elevated tone of the scientific and philosophic exposition are flashbacks to Cyon's views, experiences, and intellectual battles of the past, but particularly to his inaugural lecture at the Medical-Surgical Academy in 1873 and to his polemic with Paul Bert of the early 1880s. These, obviously, had been the high moments of his life, moments of bitter personal disappointment but—he remained convinced—of profound and unchallengeable insight—insight misunderstood and unappreciated at the time, to be sure, by what he saw as an intellectually corrupted and unworthy generation, but destined ultimately to be vindicated and recognized at their true worth by posterity.

Cyon died in Paris (when he moved back there nobody knows) in 1910, just as the second edition of Dieu et Science was appearing. He was given a Christian burial. Before his death, he donated his library to the University of Lausanne and his laboratory, together with an endowment for a prize in experimental physiology, to the University of Bologna. His death produced highly respectful obituary articles in the Western scientific journals, usually punctured with brief and tactful references to his many other involvements. Outside these scholarly circles, memory of him rapidly faded. Some thirty years later, on the eve
of the Second World War, an interested French scholar succeeded in unearthing his widow, living in an old ladies' home on the outskirts of Paris. He had been told that she had a trunk full of her husband's papers in a box under her bed; but she claimed that Cyon had actually burned them all before his death. After the war Henry Rollin, still in pursuit of the author of the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion," corresponded with her. She was proud of her husband's scientific distinction but was most reluctant to talk about his political and other involvements—she begged Rollin, in fact, not to inquire further into such matters. The right-wing circles to which Cyon had once attached himself "had ruined him," she said; and he, too, before his death, had come to curse them in retrospect.

IV

So much, then, for the bare outlines of the major involvements in the career of this most curious man, insofar as they are discernible through the clouds of obscurity behind which he loved to conceal them. Certain mysteries remain unpenetrated: ones concerning his personal life (a wife and daughter are known to have existed; a footnote in his last book refers to a son) and his relations with the Germans (he is known to have corresponded at some length with Bismarck's banker and confidant, Baron Bleichroder).

But enough is enough. In view of the hand of failure that rested with such regularity on the outcomes of Cyon's various undertakings, it might well be asked: why go to the trouble of recording the evidence of them at all? And why inquire into them, at the cost of so much effort, in the first place?

The answer lies partly in the fact that Cyon was, after all, a talented person, whose career touched upon a number of interesting and important historical questions. Of course, his faults were grievous ones and, for him, ultimately disastrous. His great thirst in life was really for recognition—recognition commensurate with his talents. Had he ever received this recognition, he would perhaps have been even more insufferable than he was. But his brilliance and originality as a scientist have been attested to at many points, and not least in the obituary notes and encyclopedia articles that have appeared since his death. His erudition was extensive, particularly in science, philosophy, and literature, as were his powers of communication. He wrote, with professional grace and ease, in at least three modern languages. Many of his views, especially with relation to the philosophy of science, were ahead of his time. Given a livelier sense of humor, a greater tolerance for the foibles of other people, a higher ability to associate his efforts successfully with those of others, and a willingness to concentrate, rather than to scatter,
his various interests and undertakings, his achievements might well have earned him greatness.

But beyond this, Cyon’s life finds historical value in its very comprehensiveness as a reflection of a given epoch (and a very fateful epoch it was) in the development of European civilization. The story of his career—neither entirely a Russian story, nor a Jewish one, nor a French one, nor one of the history of science, but a bit of all of these things—brings together in a single human experience most of the significant aspects of the age in which he lived: the excitements of its intellectual and spiritual life; its preoccupation with the interrelationships of science and religion; the various social and racial fermentations that racked its progress; the sweeping power of romantic nationalism, chauvinism, and militarism; and above all the abundant social affectations of a time when affluence was endeavoring to arrogate to itself the privileges and pretensions of a landed nobility which was now passing from the scene but which had until so recently been the leading arbiter of customs and conduct in Europe. In Cyon’s time, these were ubiquitous, international phenomena; and they all found their reflection, in a manner seldom observable elsewhere, in the strivings and experiences of this one brilliantly gifted, but tragically handicapped, man.