The “Franco-Russian Marseillaise”: International Exchange and the Making of Antiliberal Politics in Fin de Siècle France*

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In 1894, the Third Republic and tsarist Russia finalized a military alliance. In both countries, politicians and substantial segments of the public participated in elaborate performances of friendship celebrating this diplomatic milestone, which became known as the Dual Alliance. Appearing at a naval base to welcome a visiting French squadron, Tsar Alexander III shocked onlookers by standing at attention as an orchestra struck up “La Marseillaise,” that hymn of revolution hitherto banned in Russia.¹ Across France, republican politicians organized lavish feasts at which they toasted the health of the autocrat and his empire.² Hundreds of thousands turned out to witness official exchanges, consumers eagerly acquired books, posters, and food products commemorating the alliance, and people from all walks of life wrote songs and poems celebrating the newfound amity between the two countries. One enterprising author even penned a “Franco-Russian Marseillaise,” which saluted the autocracy as a steadfast friend of the republic.³

The diplomatic historians who have long enjoyed a monopoly on the story of the Franco-Russian Alliance do not dwell on these striking attempts to reconcile the political cultures of Europe’s first republic and its last autocracy. Their accounts trace how the two powers came to recognize their common interest in preventing German domination of the continent, and they reconstruct the secret exchanges between high-ranking military and diplomatic officials that ultimately produced an agreement. Focusing exclusively on the raisons d’état that motivated the rapprochement and the small circle of men who directed it, these studies suggest that diplomacy was driven by its own logic, protected from

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¹ François Bourmand, Russes et français: Souvenirs historiques et anecdotiques (Paris, 1898), 110.
³ I. S. Rybachenok, Rossija i Frantsiya: Soiuz interesov i soiuz serdets (Moscow, 2004); Bourmand, Russes et français, 134–70. On the “Marseillaise,” ibid., 154–55.

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the pressures of domestic politics and public opinion. Yet it was not preordained that the general public would accept this diplomatic fait accompli. For much of the nineteenth century, French and Russian patriots saw their national traditions as diametrically opposed to one another; as late as the 1870s and 1880s, many would have dismissed the prospect of a friendship between the two countries as impossible. Why, then, did so many politicians and citizens enthusiastically celebrate the alliance in the 1890s? How did a long history of Franco-Russian conflict give way to efforts to write Russia into “La Marseillaise”?

This article argues that the relationships between diplomacy and publicity, between foreign policy and domestic politics, were more interactive in the case of the Dual Alliance than previous accounts have suggested. It examines how a public campaign conducted by private citizens in favor of Franco-Russian friendship facilitated the rapprochement, and it connects the reconciliation of the two powers to profound changes in French politics. The idea of an alliance first coalesced in Paris’s salon scene in the 1870s, when Russian defenders of the autocracy established a dialogue with prominent French republicans. Over the next several decades, the members of this network tirelessly agitated in pursuit of this goal. Using their personal connections, they lobbied high-ranking politicians who would go on to play key roles in the diplomatic rapprochement. At the same time, they fostered cultural and political exchanges and used the mass media to carry out a campaign of public diplomacy. All of these activities aimed to explain the values of the autocracy in terms that French citizens could find acceptable—and to convince Russian patriots that the Third Republic could be a valuable ally. This network did not create the strategic interests that drove the Franco-Russian rapprochement. Nor was it in a position to make policy, since it operated largely outside of formal government structures. It did, however, play a crucial role in creating a political climate in which politicians and citizens of the two countries could begin to see each other as allies rather than adversaries.

The network that promoted the rapprochement was remarkably diverse, uniting elite aristocrats and self-made men and women, leftists critical of social injustice and conservatives terrified by revolutionary disorder. Yet through years

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of dialogue, its members managed to bridge their differences. They engaged in playful exchanges that identified points of convergence in seemingly divergent ideological systems. Many also reconciled contradictory ideas and experiences through the act of conversion, altering their creed, their citizenship, or their ideological views. Ultimately, the circle harnessed these cultures of transformation to benefit the cause of Franco-Russian friendship. Its Russian members came to admire—and even celebrate—the republican ideal of popular sovereignty. Its French associates became enamored with Russia’s autocracy and with the organic bonds that supposedly linked the tsar to his people. By the early 1890s, the network had produced a new ideological hybrid that reframed republican mass politics in a distinctly antiliberal and authoritarian vein, creatively reconciling political platforms drawn from the left and right and models of governance originating from France and Russia. These exchanges created new entanglements between the political cultures of the two powers, producing ideological styles and modes of thought that both French and Russian patriots could embrace. More than mere rhetoric, the “Franco-Russian Marseillaise” and the other performances of friendship that celebrated the Dual Alliance were culminations of this sustained process of convergence.

The curious ideological synthesis produced by the advocates of Franco-Russian friendship left an indelible mark on French political life. The boosters of the rapprochement played prominent roles in the antiliberal revolution that transformed France’s domestic politics at the same moment that the Dual Alliance redirected its foreign policy. They were involved in the Boulanger agitation of the 1880s, which married nationalist and socialist ideas, authoritarian visions and populist rhetoric.6 They played prominent roles in the Panama and Dreyfus affairs, which unleashed a flood of antisemitism and xenophobia.7 Historians have identified a host of internal economic, political, and intellectual transformations that colluded to undermine parliamentary democracy in late nineteenth-century France.8 This article identifies another current that flowed into France’s illiberal tidal wave: a Russian critique of liberal ideas that entered

French culture via the campaign for the rapprochement. The “Franco-Russian Marseillaise” celebrated a new era of international exchange and friendship, but it also marked the emergence of novel challenges to liberal democracy in France.

FRANCE’S THIRD REPUBLIC AND RUSSIA’S OLD REGIME

A mere decade before the Franco-Russian entente was formalized, the prospect of an alliance between the two countries would have seemed unthinkable to knowledgeable observers. The two countries had waged war on each other twice in the nineteenth century, and diplomatic relations remained tense at the birth of the Third Republic. Having remained neutral during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71, Russia moved even closer to France’s chief rival, Germany, in its aftermath. In 1873, the autocracy forged a formal alliance with Germany and Austria—a union of the continent’s conservative dynastic powers that became known as the Dreikaiserbund.9

The conflicting ideological foundations of the Third Republic and the tsarist regime intensified the geopolitical conflict between the two states. By the late 1870s, a democratic political culture that demanded the active engagement of the republic’s increasingly literate and politically conscious citizenry had become firmly entrenched in France.10 Boasting the continent’s broadest suffrage as well as its most developed mass media, the Third Republic presided over the birth of what one of its citizens called “the era of the public.”11 The Russian Empire, by contrast, had neither a constitution nor a parliament nor a free press; its autocratic ruler was empowered to flout the rule of law on a whim. Remarkably, on the archaic structures of the tsarist regime, one French observer dismissed Russia as a living anachronism that had no place in the “civilized” world. “Even the [Ottoman] sultan has become, perhaps despite himself, a constitutional sovereign; the emperor of Russia has remained an autocrat.”12

Yet behind the facade of an unchanged autocracy, some Russian patriots had begun to use ideas and a lexicon inspired by Western mass politics to reinforce the power of the tsarist state. In the 1860s Mikhail Katkov, the publisher of the influential daily Moskovskie vedomosti, developed a program of “state nationalism.” Katkov embraced the Western idea of national self-determination but stripped it of its liberal-democratic agenda. The journalist presented the autoc-

11 On suffrage, ibid., 1; on media, Raymond Kuhn, The Media in France (New York, 1995), 17. The quote is from Gabriel de Tarde, L’opinion et la foule (Paris, 1904), 11.
racy as the defender of Russia’s Orthodox believers, whom he argued needed protection from dangerous “internal enemies” lurking within the empire—namely, Poles and Jews. By the 1870s, Katkov’s antiliberal nationalism developed an international agenda. The journalist became a prominent activist in Russia’s Pan-Slavic movement, which demanded the “liberation” of the Orthodox believers of the Balkans from the Ottoman and Habsburg empires and their unification under Russian rule.

Pan-Slavic activists developed a complex relationship with the autocracy. On the one hand, the movement, which was dominated by aristocrats, provided a new means of enlisting the Russian elite in the service of the state and a novel response to the challenges that nationalism posed to the dynastic empire. As a result, tsarist officials offered moral and financial support to the movement at crucial junctures. On the other hand, Pan-Slavic leaders frequently criticized the foreign policy of Tsar Alexander II. They vigorously denounced the Dreikaiserbund, insisting that Germany threatened Russian interests in southeastern Europe. And when Orthodox uprisings began in the Balkans in the mid-1870s, they demanded that Alexander do more to assist these rebellions against Ottoman rule.

Paradoxically, the Pan-Slavic activists who hoped to change Russia’s foreign policy benefited from the autocracy’s reliance on personalized power. When they encountered resistance from imperial officials, they used their wealth and connections to circumvent formal bureaucratic channels. In the mid-1870s, Pan-Slavic committees organized an army of almost 5,000 volunteers to join the Balkan uprisings. Meanwhile, activists relentlessly lobbied the tsar’s brothers. In response to growing pressure, a reluctant Alexander II declared war on the Ottoman Empire in 1877. Within a year, Russian military campaigns had won new spheres of influence in the Balkans. However, military victory did not satiate the Pan-Slavs’ appetites. After the 1878 Congress of Berlin, which saw Otto von Bismarck strip Russia of some of its territorial gains, activists continued their crusade and intensified their anti-German agitation.

In their efforts to advance a more aggressive Russian foreign policy in the Balkans—and to challenge the unsatisfactory settlement of the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–78—Pan-Slavic activists looked abroad for help. Perhaps the most influential activist who operated outside of Russia was Olga Novikova, a representative of an elite noble clan and the London correspondent for Katkov’s Moskovskie vedomosti. Novikova established a legendary salon at Claridge’s Hotel and made frequent contributions to the British press. In both capacities, she worked to improve British opinions of the Russian Empire, ultimately earning a reputation as “the M.P. for Russia.” For example, she denied that Pan-Slavism demonstrated Russia’s lust for imperial expansion, reframing the movement as a Russian variation on the continent-wide struggle for self-determination—a cause that British liberals held dear. In Paris, Princess Liza Trubetskaia, another Pan-Slavic activist from an ancient family, operated a salon that cooperated closely with Novikova’s. Capitalizing on France’s vulnerability in the wake of the Franco-Prussian war, Trubetskaia sought to convince the republic’s leaders that friendly relations between France and Russia could protect both from German aggression.

Novikova and Trubetskaia managed to sway several influential policy makers. William Gladstone, the once and future prime minister, was a regular at Novikova’s gatherings. By 1876, under the influence of his Russian friend, he expressed interest in improving Anglo-Russian relations and echoed Pan-Slavic activists’ views on the “Eastern Question.” Adolphe Thiers, the second president of the Third Republic, became close to Trubetskaia and eventually endorsed the salonnière’s arguments in favor of a Franco-Russian rapprochement. Several high-ranking French officials shared the president’s interest in pursuing an alliance with Russia, including France’s ambassadors to Russia in the 1870s (both generals) and Raoul de Boisdeffre, who served as a military attaché to the embassy in St. Petersburg.

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19 Joseph O. Baylen, “Madame Olga Novikov, Propagandist,” American Slavic and East European Review 10, no. 4 (1951): 255–71. One of Novikova’s brothers was the first Russian volunteer to die fighting in Serbia.

20 This phrase was coined by one of Novikova’s critics, but she ultimately embraced it. W. T. Stead, The M.P. for Russia, 2 vols. (London, 1909), 1:v.

21 For example, O. K., “M. Katkoff and the ‘Moscow Gazette,’” Northern Echo, December 3, 1877, 3; O. K., “A Chapter from Russian History,” December 12, 1877, 3. Novikova frequently wrote under the pen name “O. K.” (Kireeva was her maiden name.)


23 See W. E. Gladstone, Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East (London, 1876).


Back-channel lobbying—a technique that Pan-Slavic activists had perfected in Russia—yielded encouraging results in western Europe. However, the negative opinions of Russia that prevailed among Europe’s liberal powers constrained the political opportunities of Pan-Slavic activists. Critical of the tsarist regime’s abuses of its growing legions of political prisoners, both Britain and France offered asylum to thousands of Russian socialists, populists, anarchists, and nihilists.26 (Indeed, France’s 1880 refusal to extradite a refugee who had attempted to assassinate the tsar created a major diplomatic row with Russia.)27 A wave of pogroms in 1881–82 further damaged Russia’s reputation, leading journalists to blame the tsarist regime for the violence and the Paris-based Alliance Israélite Universelle to assist the emigration of more than ten thousand Russian Jews.28 In light of these challenges, even the most ardent supporters of a rapprochement conceded that it was a lost cause. A frustrated Trubetskaia eventually disbanded her salon and returned to Russia.29

REVIVING THE PROSPECTS OF A RAPPROCHEMENT

In the 1880s, two interlocking venues revived the campaign for Franco-Russian friendship initiated by Pan-Slavic activists. The first was the salon of Juliette Adam. Adam, the daughter of a provincial doctor, moved to Paris in the 1850s, where she became active in the capital’s republican opposition and in the salon of the writer and political activist Madame d’Agoult (who published under the pen name Daniel Stern). Having penned a feminist critique of Proudhon while still in her twenties, she went on to write paeans to Kossuth, Mazzini, and Garibaldi as well as a novel that celebrated the erotic exploits of a self-professed “pagan
woman” (païenne) who flouted religious and social conventions. After the death of her first husband in the 1860s, she married Edmond Adam, a financier, journalist, and rising star within republican circles.

By the late 1860s, the Adams had become one of Paris’s most well-connected and politically active couples. In 1864, Juliette established a salon of her own on the Boulevard Poissonnière. In 1870, at the height of the Franco-Prussian War, Edmond was appointed the prefect of the Paris police—a powerful position that reported directly to the minister of the interior. The Adams remained in the capital during the deadly German siege; both engaged in patriotic activism and established warm relations with the leaders of the Paris Commune. The couple was particularly close to the communard and radical journalist Henri Rochefort. In the aftermath of the war, when Rochefort was arrested for his participation in the commune, the couple defended him. Remaining in contact with him during his exile in New Caledonia, they raised money to assist him after he escaped from the island in 1874.

Juliette Adam’s gathering flourished in the two decades after the war. In the grand tradition of the French salon, it was a center of cultural and intellectual exchange, frequented by figures such as George Sand, Anatole France, Gustave Flaubert, Alexandre Dumas fils, and Pierre Loti. Adam’s salon also had an overtly political function as a brain trust for the republican politician Léon Gambetta, who served as prime minister and minister of foreign affairs in the early 1880s. It was in Adam’s gathering that Gambetta’s followers (the so-called Opportunists) crafted the strategy that allowed them to unite peasants and the urban bourgeoisie in a republican coalition—a success that forestalled the ongoing threat of a royalist restoration by producing a permanent republican majority. Although it is unclear whether the salonnière personally engineered the politician’s rise to power, as she claimed, Adam’s intimacy with Gambetta earned her gathering a reputation as the “premier political salon in Paris.”

30 Juliette Adam, Mes premières armes littéraires et politiques (Paris, 1904).
32 Ibid., 98–124.
33 Juliette Adam, Le siège de Paris, journal d’une Parisienne (Paris, 1873).
37 Juliette Adam, Mes angoisses et nos luttes (Paris, 1907), 168–70. The quote is from Montjoyeux, “Indiscrétions Parisiennes,” Le Gaulois, October 1, 1879, 1.
In spite of Adam’s strong republican credentials, she expressed growing concern about France’s future by the late 1870s and early 1880s. Noting that previous republican governments had struggled to navigate between revolutionary chaos and oligarchic self-interest, to strike a balance between popular democracy and the need for social order, she wondered if the Third Republic would manage to evade the pitfalls that had toppled its predecessors. Adam was even more alarmed by the defeatist attitudes that she believed had taken hold in France after Germany’s victory in the Franco-Prussian War and Bismarck’s annexation of Alsace and Lorraine. Questioning the value of the “internationalism, cosmopolitanism, humanitarianism” that republicans had long claimed to hold dear, she became one of France’s most impassioned proponents of la Revanche, insisting that the republic should stop at nothing to reclaim its lost territories.

Adam maintained that the solution to France’s present dilemmas could be found in its ancient traditions. She believed that the French had inherited a “sentiment of fraternity and a passion for liberty” from Latin civilization and a martial tradition of equality from Gaul. Rekindling both cultures, she argued, could strengthen a nation that faced a powerful external enemy as well as internal challenges. Although her ideas reframed republican traditions in a nativist vein, she insisted that France must seek help from abroad. Adam, who had befriended both Trubetskaia and Novikova in Paris’s salon scene, was impressed by the Pan-Slavs’ anti-German mettle, and she concluded that the tsarist empire could play a constructive role in France’s regeneration. “Russia is the only force that can render us anything other than victims without dignity or dupes,” she wrote. “A passionate and fierce foe of Germany,” she explained elsewhere, “I was logically a Slavophile. I would even dare to call myself a pan-Slavist.”

At first, Adam relied on Gambetta to promote a rapprochement between France and Russia. However, the salonnière’s longtime friend, like most mainstream republicans, expressed misgivings about aligning France with an autocratic regime. After a bitter public dispute in which she denounced Gambetta as a Germanophile, Adam turned to a new tool of influence: the media. In 1879,

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39 Quote from Juliette Adam, Mes sentiments et nos idées avant 1870 (Paris, 1905), 471; see also Juliette Adam, Après l’abandon de la revanche (Paris, 1910), 380.
40 “À nos lecteurs,” La Nouvelle Revue (hereafter LNR) 1, no. 1 (1879): 10–11.
42 Adam, Après l’abandon, 147.
43 Adam, Nos Amitiés, 166.
she founded *La Nouvelle Revue*, a monthly journal that promised to carry on the “battle against Bismarck and for the Russian alliance by means of the pen.”

That publication would allow Adam to introduce her ideas to a broader public.

The French security forces were the second actor that advocated for better relations between Russia and France in the 1880s. Juliette Adam was intimately connected to this world through her husband, Edmond, the ex-prefect of police, and through her relationship with Louis Andrieux, who headed the prefecture between 1879 and 1881. A veteran of the republican opposition under the Second Empire and the founder of *Le Petit Parisien*, Paris’s most popular daily, Andrieux was a regular at Adam’s salon. Sharing the salonnière’s interest in improving relations with Russia, Andrieux systematically undermined the rights of the Russian revolutionaries who had sought refuge in Paris. Characterizing the émigrés as dangerous agitators who aimed “to overthrow all authority,” he insisted that the French and Russian states shared a “common interest” in policing their activities. In 1880, at the request of the Russian government, Andrieux expelled from the French capital Russian subjects suspected of harboring revolutionary sympathies.

Collaboration between the prefecture and the tsarist state continued to deepen over the next decade. After the 1881 assassination of Tsar Alexander II, Andrieux assisted the Russian police investigators and conservative vigilantes who traveled to Paris to incapacitate the revolutionary circles that had sought asylum there; in addition to sharing intelligence, he offered the services of his agents to help the Russians. In 1883, the Russian Okhrana, or secret political police, opened a new office in Paris that was tasked with monitoring the activities of Russian radicals living abroad. The Paris Okhrana, which worked out of the Russian embassy, enjoyed substantial logistical support from the prefecture of police as well as from France’s national security forces, the Sûreté.

46 For Adam’s account of their falling out, see “Madame Juliette Adam chez elle,” *L’éclair*, April 13, 1891, in Archives de la Préfecture de Police (hereafter APP) EA29. The quote is from Adam, *Après l’abandon*, 380.


49 Agent Mercier to Baranov, July 21/August 2, 1880, Gosudarstvennyi arkhiw Rossiiskoi federatsii (hereafter GARF), f. 109, op. 3a, d. 711, ll. 71–72ob.

50 See, for example, undated memorandum to M. T. Loris-Melikov, in GARF, f. 109, op. 3a, d. 711, ll. 10–14; V. Ia. Bogucharskii, *Iz istorii politicheskoi bor’by v 70-kh i 80-kh gg. XIX veka* (Moscow, 1912), 268–303.

51 For the Sûreté’s overview of this relationship, see “La police russe en France,” Archives Nationales (hereafter AN) F 7 14605. Although extensive cooperation between
shall see, this agency did not limit its activities to monitoring and infiltrating revolutionary cells. It would become a key participant in the dialogues emerging from Adam’s salon and would actively attempt to shape public opinion about the tsarist regime and the Russian émigrés who sought refuge in France.

**CONVERSION AND CONVERGENCE**

The culture of the French salon revolved around the *salonnière*’s ability to forge harmony out of dissonance through the art of polite discussion.52 Juliette Adam excelled at this task. Having incorporated elements drawn from the left and the right in her own thought, which infused republican traditions with nativist and militaristic ideas, she continued the dialogue between these two poles in her salon, which attracted a diverse circle of associates. Rochefort, the left-wing firebrand, returned to Paris after Communards were granted amnesty in 1880, resumed his engagement with Adam, and founded a newspaper of his own, *L’Intransigeant*. He shared the *salonnière*’s interest in rekindling French patriotism, although he tended to highlight social inequality and capitalist exploitation as the main causes of the republic’s ills.53 Adam’s gathering also attracted prominent conservatives, among them Lucien Millevoye, a lawyer with monarchist leanings who operated a network of provincial newspapers, and Alphonse Daudet, a fervent opponent of the republic.54 Finally, several members of the salon in the 1880s were, like Adam, former republicans who had begun to migrate to the right. In addition to Andrieux, Paul Déroulède belonged to this camp. A poet, a veteran of the Franco-Prussian war, and a one-time associate of Gambetta, he founded the arch-revanchist League of Patriots in 1882 with Adam’s financial support.55

Adam also boasted several international collaborators. She remained in close contact with Novikova, who visited the salon when she was in Paris and contributed to *La Nouvelle Revue*.56 Besides Novikova, Adam’s most important international collaborator was Jules Hansen, a Dane who had fled to Paris and found work as an intelligence operative in the French Ministry of Foreign Af-

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fairs after Bismarck annexed his native Holstein.\textsuperscript{57} Hansen shared the \textit{salonnière’s} commitment to seeking revenge on Germany, and he too had an interest in Russia. A childhood friend of Princess Dagmar of Schleswig-Holstein, who went on to marry the future tsar Alexander III, Hansen maintained a cordial relationship with the tsar and tsarina and frequently visited them in Copenhagen, where they spent many of their vacations.\textsuperscript{58}

Adam’s admirers marveled at the \textit{salonnière’s} ability to facilitate exchange between the diverse individuals who frequented her gathering, and they celebrated her skill at reconciling the public sphere of men and the private world of women, aesthetic beauty and the naked self-interest of politics.\textsuperscript{59} Her goal to cultivate a friendship between the Third Republic and the tsarist regime, which she would pursue tirelessly, might be read as her most ambitious effort to create a harmonious synthesis between divergent systems and ideas. She championed the common interests of the two countries in combating German aggression and the emergent threat of international terrorism in her salon as well as in the pages of \textit{La Nouvelle Revue}.\textsuperscript{60} She organized banquets and lectures to educate French citizens about Russia and promoted authors who presented Russian history and politics in a positive light.\textsuperscript{61} Adam ultimately enlisted many members of her salon in her efforts to “sell” Russia and its culture to a republican audience. In addition to advancing her campaign of public diplomacy and cultural translation, Adam’s associates worked to create new points of convergence in the political cultures of France and Russia. For example, Déroulède penned a Russian-themed play that enjoyed a successful run at Paris’s Odéon theater. A celebration of the efforts of early modern Cossacks to free themselves from Polish domination, the play was also read by some observers as an allegory of the plight of the Alsatians under German rule. If the Alsatians could emulate the Cossacks’ patriotic fervor and their willingness to sacrifice themselves for their homeland, Déroulède suggested, they could eventually triumph in their struggle for self-determination.\textsuperscript{62}


\textsuperscript{59} “Les femmes qui écrivent,” \textit{Le Gaulois}, July 1, 1883, in APP EA29.


\textsuperscript{61} See, for example, the records of the Franco-Russian Literary and Artistic Association, which Adam founded: Lilly Library, Indiana University, Juliette Adam Papers, folders 13 and 14.

In the early 1880s, Adam added new Russian associates to her circle. Participating in her efforts to demystify Russia, they also influenced the ideological evolution of her network. One of these Russians, Princess Catherine Radziwill, was the product of an illustrious Polish noble family from Ukraine and a veteran of the Pan-Slavic movement. She spent the 1870s in Berlin, where her husband (also a Polish aristocrat) occupied an ancestral estate. A Catholic, she became an outspoken opponent of Bismarck’s *Kulturkampf*. Radziwill moved to St. Petersburg in the 1880s and spent part of the 1890s in London, but she remained in contact with Adam through letters and visits.\(^{63}\)

Another addition to Adam’s circle, Iustin’ia Glinka, had served for decades as a lady-in-waiting to the tsarina. In 1880, Glinka moved to Paris, where she launched a one-woman crusade to undermine its Russian radicals.\(^{64}\) She infiltrated nihilist circles, gathering compromising information on the émigrés; having befriended Andrieux, she used her access to the prefect to orchestrate a lobbying campaign against political “refugees.”\(^{65}\) She contacted French media outlets as well as the prefecture to claim that nihilists had brazenly attacked her on the streets of Paris and to express her outrage that the republican government continued to offer the “right of asylum” to “a group of foreign malefactors.”\(^{66}\)

The most crucial addition to the Adam circle in the 1880s was Il’ia Tsion. Born into a modest Jewish family in present-day Lithuania, Tsion went on to earn a medical degree in Germany. In the 1860s, he accepted a position in a prestigious Leipzig laboratory, where he discovered the nerve that stimulates the heart (still called “Cyon’s nerve” in his honor). Having gained international acclaim while still in his twenties, Tsion accepted a professorship in St. Petersburg. (Jews were barred from the Russian professoriate, but Tsion had converted to the Russian Orthodox faith while living in Germany, which enabled him to accept the position.)\(^{67}\) Although he had been active in socialist groups as a student, he grew more conservative as a young professor.\(^{68}\) Sometime in the early 1870s he met Katkov, with whom he discussed his alarm about “the materialist and revolutionary current” that he saw as prevalent within the Russian intelligentsia.\(^{69}\)

\(^{63}\) Catherine Radziwill, *My Recollections* (New York, 1904); Catherine Radziwill, *Memories of Forty Years* (New York, 1915).


\(^{65}\) “Extrait d’un rapport du contrôle général,” December 23, 1881, APP BA926.

\(^{66}\) “Une mystérieuse affaire,” *Le Figaro*, July 22, 1881, 3; Glinka to Prefect of Police, June 18, 1881, in APP BA926.


\(^{68}\) I. Tsion, *Nigilisty i nigilizm* (Moscow, 1886), 23–24.

\(^{69}\) Cyon, *Histoire*, 122.
In an 1873 lecture at his university, Tsion suggested that a whole series of subconscious stimuli affected the functioning of the heart, concluding that the human body was a divine creation whose mysteries would never be fully understood.\(^70\) Outraged young positivists initiated a public campaign against the professor, and in light of the controversy he had fomented, the institution refused to renew his contract.\(^71\) Tsion’s efforts to appeal his case and to publicize his story failed, leading him to conclude that a liberal conspiracy had seized control of the Russian academy, press, and government.\(^72\) Declaring himself a “refugee” from Russian liberalism, Tsion fled to Paris, taking French citizenship in 1881.\(^73\)

Upon his arrival in France, Tsion—who henceforth would go by a rather affected French version of his name, Élie de Cyon—attempted to rehabilitate his scholarly career. He accepted a temporary position in the laboratory of the physiologist Paul Bert; colleagues promised that he would soon receive an appointment at the Collège de France. However, Cyon became embroiled in conflict with his new boss, who was a devoted positivist, an anticlericalist, and a republican delegate to the National Assembly. In 1878, Cyon learned that he would not receive an academic position in France after all—a development that he attributed to Bert’s meddling.\(^74\) His academic dreams dashed, Cyon opened a private medical practice and began to work as a journalist on the side, becoming a regular contributor to Katkov’s *Moskovskie vedomosti* and the author of many pamphlets, essays, and articles directed at French audiences. In 1882, using his wife’s fortune, he acquired editorial control of the French monarchist daily *Le Gaulois*\(^75\).

Cyon acquired a scandalous reputation in his adoptive homeland. Critics charged that he had absconded with an actress after spending his wife’s fortune and that he had physically assaulted a famous Russian artist who was visiting Paris.\(^76\) But if many regarded the journalist as an unstable scoundrel, Juliette Adam found something to admire in his personality. Cyon lived a life full of conversions that reconciled seemingly contradictory life experiences: he was a Jew who became Russian Orthodox, a man of the left who turned conservative, a scientist who chose mysticism over positivism, and a Russian subject who adopted a new identity in France. Multilingual and equally conversant in French


\(^{71}\) “Stranny protivorechia,” *Otechestvennye zapiski* 215, no. 8 (1874), sec. 2:123–56.

\(^{72}\) Tsion, *Nigilisty*, 15–19.


\(^{74}\) Kennan, “Curious Monsieur Cyon,” 460; Cyon, *Histoire*, 181.

\(^{75}\) Report of agent H-, July 1, 1882, in APP BA1023, 15.

\(^{76}\) Unidentified newspaper clipping, October 25, 1881, in APP BA1023, 7; report of Agent Dumont, August 5, 1892, in ibid, 54.
and Russian culture, Cyon had much to offer to Adam’s efforts to forge a bond between the republic and the autocracy. The *salonnière* and the Russian émigré became close friends and collaborators, and by 1887 Cyon would assume control of *La Nouvelle Revue* from Adam.

The final Russian of note who entered Adam’s orbit in the 1880s was Piotr Rachkovskii, the visionary second director of the Paris Okhrana. An impoverished noble who hailed from Ukraine, Rachkovskii had experienced several conversions of his own. In the late 1870s, when he was working as a journalist, Rachkovskii was implicated in a revolutionary conspiracy. Threatened with arrest, he agreed to become a police informant in exchange for the charges against him being dropped. The one-time suspect proved an immensely capable clandestine agent, and in 1885, at the age of thirty-two, Rachkovskii secured the key post in Paris—a position that he would hold for the next thirty years.77

Thanks to his personal familiarity with the political underground, Rachkovskii understood the psychological burdens that Russian émigrés carried. He used sabotage, blackmail, and a network of double agents to demoralize radicals and to convince them to abandon their activities.78 Drawing on his experience in journalism, he also understood that public opinion played a key role in the Russian government’s struggle against revolutionaries. Endeavoring to build sympathy for the tsarist government among the European public, he organized a formal press agency that published pamphlets, paid Western journalists to write stories that portrayed the autocracy in a positive light, and even placed its own agents at media outlets.79 French security officials, who continued to maintain a warm relationship with the Russian police during Rachkovskii’s tenure, praised the cunning and “zeal” of the Okhrana chief, remarking that “he was treated as a equal by the very highest French officials.”80

Although it is unclear whether Rachkovskii himself visited Adam’s salon, he engaged with many of its associates and participated in the discussions that they initiated.81 Jules Hansen was among Rachkovskii’s most valued colleagues: he helped the Okhrana chief to correct grammatical errors in his French-language publications and to place his agents at European media outlets, and he would even become the editor of an Okhrana-funded newspaper by the turn of the cen-

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79 Records of the Okhrana press agency can be found in the Hoover Archive (hereafter HA), Zagranichnaia okhrana (hereafter ZO), index IXb, reel 134, folders 1–1C.

80 “La police russe,” AN F 7 14605.

81 Rachkovskii’s agents also monitored the circle: see outgoing dispatch of May 18/30, 1887, HA, ZO, index XIIIb(1), reel 189, folder 1.
tury. Rachkovskii also maintained warm relations with *Le Petit Parisien*, the paper founded by Andrieux, which was one of France’s most pro-Russian dailies.

Juliette Adam’s engagement with Russian associates, as we shall see, helped to facilitate the diplomatic rapprochement. At the same time, it instigated open-ended discussions about governance and culture across borders that ultimately entangled French and Russian politics. Beginning in the early 1880s, Adam, Radziwill, Cyon, Glinka, and Novikova collaborated on a series of dispatches from Europe’s capitals that were published by *La Nouvelle Revue*. Passed off as “unpublished letters” penned by a Russian diplomat named Count Paul Vasili, they were filled with salacious gossip about the continent’s *beau monde*. The first dispatch, “Berlin Society” (1884), was soon followed by reports from Vienna (1885), London (1885), St. Petersburg (1886), Paris (1887), and other cities.

The consumers of the “Society” series, which went on to be translated into several languages, seem to have most appreciated its scandalous disclosures. Yet serious political agendas lurked behind the titillating content of the dispatches. Each advanced Adam’s revanchist program, excoriating Bismarck as well as the European politicians whom the contributors to the series accused of acquiescing to the chancellor’s every whim. “Vasili’s” depiction of Europe’s capitals through Russian eyes also afforded Adam and her associates the opportunity to present their own critiques of continental society. The contributors to the “Society” series aligned themselves with the “working masses,” expressing sympathy for the plight of Irish peasants and German workers. But they also launched vigorous attacks on the liberal system, charging that the self-satisfaction of Western liberals had prevented meaningful reforms and that parliamentary democracy and capitalism had betrayed the interests of ordinary people instead of advancing them. “Vasili’s” opinions thus melded the republican devotion to mass politics with the skepticism toward liberal institutions and ideas expressed by Katkov and Pan-Slavic activists.

In later works, Adam’s Russian interlocutors expanded on their critiques of the liberal order. Cyon charged that capitalism and individualism had created an

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82 V. K. Agafonov, *Zagranichnaiia Okhranka* (Petrograd, 1918), 34–36; Departament obschikh del to I. F. Manasevich-Manuilov, January 13, 1904, HA, ZO, index IXb, reel 134, folder 1C.
83 HA, ZO, index IXa, reel 135, box 67.
87 Vasili, *La société de Londres*, 176–89.
unjust society driven by self-interest and riddled with animosity, that parliamentarianism only encouraged radicalism, and that the republican project of laïcité had given rise to a full-fledged “war against God” that had corroded France’s national traditions.\(^8^8\) A pamphlet published by Rachkovskii echoed Cyon’s ideas. Concluding that the republic’s claims to promote liberty, equality, and fraternity were nothing more than an “illusion,” he complained that a capital-\(^9^9\) oligarchy had merely replaced the old landed aristocracy overthrown in 1789. Bemoaning the pitiful conditions in which French workers and peasants lived, Rachkovskii presented suffering, injustice, and anarchy as natural by-products of the liberal system.\(^8^9\)

In an era in which antisemitism remained confined to the fringes of acceptable political discourse in France, the Russians who surrounded Adam carried out aggressive attacks on Jews.\(^9^0\) “Paul Vasili’s” works contained long passages blaming Jews for the injustices of capitalism.\(^9^1\) Novikova went so far as to describe the Russian pogroms as a laudable popular rebellion against “Jewish usurers.”\(^9^2\) Adam’s Russian interlocutors were also early proponents of political antisemitism, claiming that Jews were responsible for the failings of the liberal system as well as for revolutionary disorder. A work attributed to Rachkovskii argued that the French experience had proved that Jews were “charlatans of liberalism.” Instead of serving the nation that had emancipated them in 1791, he charged, French Jews maintained their “system of exclusive existence” and “their [separate] nationality through the shameful means of usury.”\(^9^3\) Meanwhile, pamphlets produced by the Okhrana insisted that Jews dominated the ranks of the Russian radicals who sought refuge in Paris. Embellishing Glinka’s earlier denunciations of this group with antisemite language, Okhrana-authored works expressed outrage that these “criminals” benefited from the republic’s lib-
eral asylum laws, which supposedly had been created by Jews to benefit their co-confessionalists.  

If Adam’s Russian interlocutors painted a bleak portrait of a continent threatened by Jewish plots, “parliamentary follies, liberal musings, socialist aspirations, and anarchist tendencies,” they presented Russia’s autocratic system as a laudable alternative to liberalism and capitalism. Cyon insisted that autocracy elegantly reconciled the need for social order with the interests of the masses. Contrasting the Russian model to France’s ancien régime, which he claimed had been driven by crude self-interest, he described the former as a system guided by popular “acclamation.” Although tsarist subjects did not enjoy “political rights,” their leader invested them with “political duties,” forming a social contract that obligated each Russian “to defend the rights of the supreme authority and to tend to the interests of the state.” The autocracy, in turn, repaid its debt to its subjects by promoting “liberty for citizens and progress for institutions.” (For those who might challenge his portrayal of autocracy as a progressive force, he pointed to the alacrity with which Alexander II had emancipated tens of millions of serfs.) Autocracy, according to Cyon, produced a harmonious society that strove for equality and justice; by contrast, “the emancipation of individual initiative” in liberal Europe only encouraged unbridled egoism. “In Europe,” he wrote, “Communism is only the utopia of a few dreamers. But in Russia, where the vast majority of peasants recognize only collective ownership [propriété collective], [Communism] has existed from time immemorial.”

Others in Adam’s network echoed Cyon’s argument that Russia’s autocrats had discovered the most efficient means of balancing the need for social order with the interests of the masses. Novikova argued that autocracy was best equipped to enact “speedy and drastic reforms” that could benefit the population at large. Rachkovskii went further still, presenting autocracy as a manifestation of true mass “democracy.” Claiming that Russians’ strong traditions of communalism and their devotion to the service state promoted “philanthropic ideas that often efface and reduce class distinctions,” he concluded that “the

94 P. Ivanov, Confession d’un nihiliste, précédée d’une étude sur les nihilistes en général (Paris, 1887), 5, 14–15; Wolski, La Russie juive, 2, 255. Notes in the Okhrana archive reveal that the first work was authored by Rachkovskii’s agents. See HA, ZO, index XVIA–XVIb(1), box 189, folder 3.
95 The words are Cyon’s (La Russie, 15).
96 Élie de Cyon, Nihilisme et anarchie (Paris, 1892), 286. This is an expanded and translated version of Cyon’s 1886 Nigilisty i nигilizm.
98 Quote from Cyon, Nihilisme et anarchie, 290; see also Cyon, La Russie, 66–67.
99 “Que faire?,” LNR 4, no. 16 (1882): 250, 247.
100 O. K., Skobeleff, 338; see also 376–77, 403.
101 Jehan-Préval, Anarchie, 124.
Russian worker and the Russian peasant are much happier than their French brothers.” The citizens of “republican France” should “envy” the autocracy, he added.\(^{102}\)

These boosters of the autocracy differed as to whether its achievements could be replicated beyond Russia’s borders. Novikova viewed Russia’s political system as an expression of centuries-old traditions; Russian values and practices therefore could not simply be implanted on foreign soil.\(^{103}\) Rachkovskii and Cyon, by contrast, insisted that the continent could learn from Russia’s example. The Okhrana chief argued that Europe’s “Aryans” could draw inspiration from the tsarist empire’s long-running struggle against “the Semitic world” [sémitisme].\(^{104}\) Cyon vested Russia with a “high and noble mission”: “It is up to her to prove that a hereditary and absolute power . . . is perfectly compatible with all beneficent advances, with all civil liberties, that it is the best safeguard of rights for all, and the political institution best suited to protect the weak and to improve the lot of the poor. . . . Standing above every internal division, every individual desire, it personifies justice on earth better than any other system.” “In one hundred years,” he predicted, “either autocracy or anarchy will reign in Europe.”\(^{105}\) Confident of his ability to replicate the Russian example in France, Cyon announced his intention to use his newspaper, Le Gaulois, to mobilize a “republican right” capable of unifying the masses behind a strong, antiliberal power.\(^{106}\)

Juliette Adam’s Russian interlocutors were experts in conversion. Cyon and Rachkovskii interpreted this act in a literal sense: in order to circumvent the restrictions that Russia’s illiberal state placed on Jews, revolutionaries, and other groups that it imagined to be threats to its power, the former had changed his faith and the latter his political orientation. Novikova, Radziwill, and Glinka expressed their own interest in conversion, attempting to explain their devotion to the autocratic system to the skeptical residents of the foreign nations in which they had established new lives. Having reconciled seemingly contradictory views, identities, and experiences in their own life trajectories, Adam’s Russian interlocutors also discovered creative methods of synthesizing the political cultures of the Third Republic and autocratic Russia. They shared republicans’ interest in popular sovereignty and social justice, and they benefited from France’s mass media, which allowed them to peddle their ideas to the public. Yet they insisted that France’s liberal system had corrupted its democratic aspirations,

\(^{102}\) Ibid., 106–7, 79.


\(^{104}\) Wolski, La Russie, vi, 253. La Nouvelle Revue helped Rachkovskii advance this goal, publishing a glowing review of his book: LNR 9, no. 45 (1887): 821–22.

\(^{105}\) Cyon, La Russie, 150–51.

\(^{106}\) Cyon, Histoire, 125, 134.
which could only be realized by an autocratic strongman committed to progressive reform. This political hybrid defined the basic motifs of the “Franco-Russian Marseillaise,” producing a common language that both French and Russian patriots could speak.

A MODEL FOR FRANCE AND THE WORLD

In the 1880s, Juliette Adam’s French collaborators continued to develop the project of political convergence that her Russian interlocutors had defined, discovering their own methods of reconciling the cultures of France and Russia. In 1882 Adam traveled to Russia. Bearing introductions from Cyon, Trubetskaia, Glinka, and Novikova, she met with Katkov, Pan-Slavic activists, and K. P. Pobedonostsev, the Ober-Procurator of the Holy Synod and a close confidant of Tsar Alexander III. The salonnière’s trip to Russia was a transformative experience that helped her envision novel solutions to the challenges that her own nation faced. Inspired by the Russians’ religious devotion, Adam renounced her long-held atheism when she returned to France. Coming to see the Catholic Church as a repository of “authentic” French traditions, she eventually converted to Catholicism and purchased a neglected abbey on the outskirts of Paris, which she lovingly restored. Adam also became a follower of the Russian occultist Madame Blavatsky, whose program of theosophy advanced its own program of convergence by enriching Western faith traditions with Eastern mysticism.

The Russian idea of the charismatic leader intrigued the salonnière as well. Yet it was not the personalized power of the tsar that most impressed Adam; rather, it was the heroic bearing of General M. D. Skobelev, a longtime Pan-Slavic activist and a popular hero of the Russo-Turkish War. In a paean to the general written for a French audience, the salonnière produced her own synthesis of mass political impulses and authoritarian ideas. On the one hand, she championed the general as a Napoleon for the modern age—a savior for a continent that appeared to be adrift. On the other, she insisted that the crowds of “soldiers, bourgeois, women” who followed him and “cheered wildly” at his

every utterance were the real source of his power. Novikova and Katkov joined the salonnière’s efforts to build a personality cult around Skobelev, producing their own homages to a man whom they hailed as the very embodiment of Slavic genius.

Indeed, Adam had invited Skobelev to Paris in 1882, hopeful that the general could convince her countrymen of the benefits of a Franco-Russian rapprochement and inspire them with his heroic example. At public meetings, Skobelev delivered an incendiary series of speeches in which he called on Slavs and Frenchmen to unite in the fight against German domination. “The German is our enemy,” he proclaimed. “His hand is in everything. We are dupes of his politics, victims of his intrigues, slaves of his force.” German oppression, he concluded, could only be ended by a racial war that would lead Latin and Slavic confederations to victory against the Teutons.

Outraged by Skobelev’s comments, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which remained a strong supporter of the Dreikaiserbund, ordered the general to return to Russia and dispatched envoys to Berlin to apologize to Bismarck. Skobelev died shortly thereafter, ending Adam’s hopes that the general could mobilize an international coalition against Germany. The Russian officials monitoring the fallout from the Skobelev affair concluded that in spite of the embarrassment it had caused to the government, it would have few lasting effects. A political attaché in Paris reported back to St. Petersburg that the effort to marry radical Pan-Slavism with French revanchism had few prospects; a movement led by “a woman and a poet” (i.e., Adam and Déroulède) would never go far.

By the mid-1880s, however, the French members of Adam’s circle, like their Russian interlocutors, had begun to converge around an antirepublican consensus. Disavowing her liberal past, the salonnière lamented that France’s republican democracy had produced an “antinational” impulse no less destructive than a foreign invasion. Andrieux, for his part, complained that the entire constitutional-parliamentary experiment had produced only “financial disorder, . . . anarchy in the administration, . . . isolation in foreign affairs, . . . [and] the enervation [énervement] of all national forces.” “Democracy and parliamentarism,” he argued, were fundamentally incompatible. Rochefort, who had grown increasingly troubled by France’s economic inequality, charged that the republic had

112 See, for example, O. K., *Skobeleff, Sobranie peredovikh statei Moskovskikh vedomostei. 1882 god.* (Moscow, 1898), 330.
degenerated into a dictatorship of high finance that was incapable of realizing its
democratic aspirations.118

In their agitation against the republic, the French members of Adam’s network
often blamed the nation’s frailty and social inequality on Jews. A short-lived
newspaper launched by the salonnière in 1884 proudly advertised its “antisem-
ritic” views, portraying Jews as agents of both capitalist exploitation and revolu-
tionary disorder in both Russia and France.119 Rochefort’s furious denunciations
of the corruption and greed inherent in the capitalist system devolved into
antisemitic attacks against the Jewish financial interests that had supposedly de-
stroyed the republic’s ideals.120

Indeed, France’s most outspoken antisemitic activist, Édouard Drumont, en-
tered Adam’s orbit in the mid-1880s. The introduction was probably made by
Alphonse Daudet, who helped the young journalist publish his 1886 antisemitic
screed _La France juive_.121 Shortly thereafter, Drumont initiated a correspond-
dence with Cyon, whose work would eventually figure prominently in the French-
man’s writings.122 (It is clear that Drumont was also familiar with the antisemitic
work produced by Rachkovskii’s Okhrana, which the Frenchman cited in his
own writings.)123 A self-professed Russophile who actively agitated for a Franco-
Russian rapprochement, Drumont, like Novikova and Rachkovskii, saw the Rus-
sian Empire as Europe’s one bastion against Jewish influence. Praising Russia’s
laws that limited where Jews could work, live, and study, he suggested that these
efforts at containment might be replicated throughout the continent.124 The liter-
ary networks associated with the Adam circle enthusiastically promoted Drumont’s
ideas. _L’Intransigeant_ and _La Nouvelle Revue_ both praised the journalist for rais-
ing awareness of the threat that Jews supposedly posed to European civilization.125

By 1886, many in Adam’s inner circle, including Cyon, Rochefort, Mill-
evoye, and Déroulède, had begun to form a cult of personality behind France’s
minister of war, General Georges Boulanger, who shared the central preoccupa-

118 “Tous les républicains,” _L’Intransigeant_, July 23, 1886, 1. On the problem of in-
equality and Rochefort’s concerns: Lehning, _To Be a Citizen_, 99–106.
119 _L’Union Franco-Russe_, January 28, 1884, 1. After a brief run in 1884, this pub-
lication was revived in 1890.
120 Roger L. Williams, _Henri Rochefort: Prince of the Gutter Press_ (New York, 1966),
185–86.
122 Rollin, _L’Apocalypse_, 449–51. Rollin cites correspondence between Cyon and
Drumont that seems no longer to exist; both men’s personal archives were destroyed af-
ter their deaths.
123 Édouard Drumont, _Le testament d’un antisémite_ (Paris, 1891), 143.
125 “Petite gazette,” _L’Intransigeant_, July 15, 1886, 3; “Bulletin Bibliographique,”
_LNR_ 9, no. 41 (1886): 456.
tions of the salon. A sharp critic of the parliamentary system, Boulanger insisted that only a strong authority figure confirmed by a nationwide plebiscite could restore order to a nation in disarray. Denouncing the suffering and injustice created by capitalism, he courted Paris’s working-class citizens with populist rhetoric. An ardent revanchist, Boulanger favored a Franco-Russian rapprochement, which he presented as France’s best insurance policy against German aggression.  

The general’s rise marked the most notable convergence in French and Russian politics yet. Boulanger’s backers frequently referenced the cult of Skobelev that Juliette Adam had created, insisting that the Frenchman shared the heroic bearing and political charisma of his Russian predecessor. (A pamphlet by an anonymous “Russophile” almost certainly connected to the Adam salon even christened the general “the French Skobelev.”) Efforts to “pair” the two heroes ultimately transcended Adam’s circle, achieving broader cultural resonance in France and Russia. A play staged in Kiev in 1887 portrayed Boulanger conversing with the apparition of Skobelev—a scene that provoked wild ovations from the crowd. In 1888, at the very height of Boulanger’s popularity, a full-length equestrian show about the exploits of the Russian general was staged at Paris’s Hippodrome. This spectacle received a rave review from La Nouvelle Revue, which inserted excerpts from Adam’s earlier paean to Skobelev into its description of the show.

As French and Russian political culture grew more entangled in the 1880s, Adam’s project of convergence became more ambitious. If Europe’s first republic and its last autocracy could be reconciled, might a new synthesis of antiliberal ideas and mass politics guide the entire international system toward a better future? A beneficiary of cross-border travel and exchange, Adam’s circle also encouraged transnational transfers by engaging new associates who exported the ideas that the salon had generated to other settings. One newcomer was the Irish actress and revolutionary Maud Gonne, who was Millevoye’s lover. (Political calculation as well as romance drew her to the circle—many Irish nationalists in exile in Paris gravitated to French revanchists, whose enmity toward England was second only to their hatred for Germany.) In the mid-1880s, Adam also established contact with W. T. Stead, the British pioneer of “new journalism.” The son of a nonconformist minister and an advocate of social reform, Stead had professed strong Russophile views since the 1870s, presenting the tsarist

126 Ducray, Déroulède, 162–63, 166–68.
127 Ibid., 154; M. Mermieux, Les coulisses du Boulangisme (Paris, 1890), 284, 287.
128 Russophilos, Le Skobeleff français (Paris, 1887).
131 Nancy Cardozo, Maud Gonne (New York, 1990), 50–57.
Empire as a bastion of Christian values and as a possible model of an alternate path to modernity that avoided the shortcomings of the liberal-democratic system. His writings won the admiration of Novikova, who became one of his closest friends and fiercest proponents. By the 1880s, Stead had become the editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette* and Britain’s most outspoken Russophile activist.

The expansion of Adam’s network brought her circle’s efforts to demystify tsarist Russia to new audiences. Complementing the salon’s work in France, Stead endeavored to mobilize British public opinion in favor of the autocracy. He deemed Alexander III the “peace-keeper of Europe,” described the peasant commune as the apotheosis of the “republican, democratic spirit” that Britons so valued, and declared the Pan-Slavs “the only party in Russia . . . to which an Englishman could belong if he were Russian-born.” The diversification of Adam’s circle also created an international media network that amplified its ideas through repetition. “London Society” heaped praise on Juliette Adam and on Stead’s *Pall Mall Gazette*; Stead’s publications aggressively promoted Boulanger. The Adam circle’s effective use of the media would greatly enhance the influence of the informal networks that it had assembled.

**Diplomacy and Publicity**

Although Juliette Adam and her associates had created new convergences between Russian and French politics, several factors thwarted the rapprochement of which they dreamed. The tsarist government and especially Minister of Foreign Affairs Nikolai Girs remained firmly committed to Russia’s alliance with Germany. Meanwhile, the government of Jules Ferry, which came to power in France in 1883, showed little interest in revanchist politics, instead working to enhance French power through colonial expansion. In the mid-1880s, however, two developments enhanced the Adam circle’s influence in the affairs of both states. In 1884, Baron Artur von Mohrenheim was appointed Russia’s ambassador to France. The new envoy happened to be Katkov’s former schoolmate and a friend of Jules Hansen, whom he had met during a diplomatic posting in Copenhagen in the 1860s. Two years later, Émile Florens, an associate of Adam’s, became France’s minister of foreign affairs.

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132 For example, “Our Russian Guest,” *Northern Echo*, May 15, 1874, 2; “England’s Immediate Duty,” *Northern Echo*, September 22, 1876, 2–3.
133 For insight into Stead’s interest in Russia, see Estelle W. Stead, *My Father, Personal and Spiritual Reminiscences* (New York, 1913), 56–80.
138 Kennan, *Fateful Alliance*, 60.
Eager to take advantage of the unprecedented access that it now enjoyed to the highest ranks of the Russian and French governments, the Adam circle initiated a vigorous lobbying campaign that aimed to influence decision makers in both countries. Déroulède, Millevoye, and Flourens made multiple trips to Russia in the late 1880s, where they championed the cause of Franco-Russian friendship before tsarist officials, cultural luminaries, and intellectuals. Using the salonnière’s network of contacts, Boulanger himself attempted to circumvent official channels and to establish direct contact with Alexander III. Defying the authority of the Russian foreign ministry, Mohrenheim denounced the alliance with Germany and endorsed a Franco-Russian rapprochement. Katkov, too, proved a valuable ally, besieging the tsar’s advisors with visits and letters and publishing an open letter to Alexander III that urged him to rethink his foreign policy.

Meanwhile, the Adam circle worked to forge new bonds between the two societies. Cyon proved the most successful in this effort. In 1887, he approached the Russian minister of finance and offered to use his connections in Paris to explore the possibility of securing French loans to Russia. Shortly thereafter, he managed to procure a major loan from the Danish-French financier Émile Høskier, a close friend of Hansen’s. Next, Cyon approached the Rothschild and Paribas houses. They too offered enormous loans, which injected 3 billion francs into the Russian economy.

An intense public outreach campaign accompanied these behind-the-scenes efforts to sway the opinion of policy makers and to create new dependencies between France and Russia. Déroulède’s League of Patriots—which by the mid-1880s claimed tens of thousands of members, including Cyon—was an ardent promoter of Franco-Russian friendship. The group’s newspaper covered

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139 Ducray, Déroulède, 166; Toutain, Alexandre III, 102–5. Déroulède spent more than two months in Russia in the summer of 1886, visiting Moscow, St. Petersburg, Odessa, and Kiev. “M. Paul Déroulède,” Le Drapeau, September 18, 1886, 448.


143 Cyon, Histoire, 237.


145 On Cyon’s membership, see Morcos, Juliette Adam, 505. On the League of Patriots more generally, see Bertrand Joly, Nationalistes et conservateurs en France, 1885–1902 (Paris, 2008), 117–53.
Déroulède’s visits to Russia, reported on the warm welcome he had received there, and preached that Slavs and Latin peoples were natural allies against their “common enemy,” the Teutons.  

Cyon also promoted a rapprochement before a French audience, using a press agency run by Millevoye to place his commentary in more than sixty provincial newspapers. In Russia, Cyon breathlessly covered Boulanger’s rise in Katkov’s Moskovskie vedomosti, arguing that Russia could establish an effective working relationship with a France led by “General Revanche.” Complementing Cyon’s campaign, Katkov launched attacks on Girs and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Russian press.

Eager to bring its project to fruition, Adam’s network turned to a strategy that it had first tested in the “Society” series—fabrication and outright deceit. While on vacation in Denmark in 1887, Alexander III received a series of documents purporting to show that Bismarck was once again conspiring to undermine Russian influence in the Balkans by meddling with the succession to the Bulgarian throne. These documents ultimately turned out to be a forgery produced by a Belgian follower of Boulanger at the behest of Adam and Flourens. (It is likely that either Rachkovskii, who acted as Alexander’s bodyguard during his trips abroad, or Hansen, with his long-standing connections to the tsarina, gave the documents to the tsar.) On his way back to Russia, Alexander passed through Berlin, where he angrily confronted Bismarck. The chancellor refuted the claims made in the documents and produced documentary evidence that cast doubt on their authenticity. Desperate to retain their credibility with the tsar, Adam’s associates turned to forgery yet again, fabricating a new set of documents that purported to discredit those that Bismarck had produced. Millevoye then sought the aid of Maud Gonne, whom he correctly suspected could ferry them to Russia without attracting suspicion. She sewed the documents into her dress and departed for St. Petersburg. Upon her arrival, Gonne delivered the documents to Radziwill, who passed them on to Pobedonostsev to share with the tsar.

Remark ing on the Adam circle’s reliance on deceit to accomplish its political ends, one contemporary argued that it created a “cult of the false document.”

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146 Quote from “France et Russie,” Le Drapeau, August 7, 1886, 2. See also Henri Deloncle, “La presse russe,” Le Drapeau, August 14, 1886, 292; “M. Paul Déroulède,” Le Drapeau, September 18, 1886, 448.
147 Cyon, Histoire, 222.
149 Moskovskie vedomosti, July 19, 1886, 3; Dnevnik V. N. Lamsdorfa, 9, 47.
150 The forger was named Adalbert-Henri Foucault de Mondion. For biographical details, see Morcos, Juliette Adam, 286, 293.
151 Kennan, Fateful Alliance, 167.
152 Hansen, L’Alliance, 71; Cyon, Histoire, 360–61; Kennan, “Mystery.”
154 Rollin, L’Apocalypse, 424.
The network’s interest in forgery (like its broader obsession with illegality and circumvention of formal bureaucratic processes) was shaped by the culture of the autocracy—a system in which convincing a single crucial individual of one’s case could redirect the affairs of an entire state. However, Adam’s associates also adapted the technology of forgery for Western settings permeated by the media. Using the circular press networks that they controlled, they imbued their fabrications with the trappings of legitimacy through constant repetition.

Although the German press insisted that the allegations levied against Bismarck were baseless, *La Nouvelle Revue*, *Moskovskie vedomosti*, and Stead’s *Pall Mall Gazette* reprinted the “Bulgarian documents” in full, amplifying their impact.\(^{155}\) And in 1889, the very Belgian Boulanger who had forged the Bulgarian documents published an exposé that purported to reveal Bismarck’s continued machinations in *La Nouvelle Revue*; this piece presented the chancellor’s vigorous denials of the veracity of the documents as proof of his complicity in a cover-up.\(^{156}\)

The Adam circle orchestrated the “Bulgarian documents” affair at a low point in Russo-German relations. By the late 1880s, rising nationalism and economic competition had strained the alliance between the two countries; tensions only multiplied after the 1888 accession of Wilhelm II to the German throne and the new kaiser’s ouster of Bismarck two years later. In light of these events, Alexander III began to express interest in pursuing an alliance with France.\(^{157}\) However, political factors continued to complicate the prospect of a rapprochement. A failed attempt by Boulanger to seize power in 1889 led to the installation of a moderate republican cabinet in France. The new government moved decisively to suppress Déroulède’s League of Patriots and to rein in the revanchist agitation that had become so pronounced in recent years. Furthermore, it charged Boulanger and Rochefort with treason, forcing both to flee to England.\(^{158}\)

With the rapprochement seemingly at risk, it was Rachkovskii who stepped forward to revive the fortunes of the flagging project. Again, he turned to illegal methods and deceit. On his orders, one of the Okhrana’s experienced *agents provocateurs* infiltrated Russian nihilist circles in Paris and opened a bomb-building operation with his new associates. As the conspirators planned an at-

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\(^{156}\) A compilation of these articles appears as Charles de Maurel, *Le Prince de Bismarck Démasqué*, 1887–1888 (Paris, 1889). Charles de Maurel was one of several pseudonyms used by Foucault de Mondion.

\(^{157}\) Nolde, *L’Alliance*, 536–76.

tack, Rachkovskii informed the French government of the plot. At first, the moderate republican cabinet, which remained suspicious of his intentions, hesitated. Under pressure from Mohrenheim and Hansen, however, the minister of the interior, Jean Constans, finally moved to arrest the nihilists. (Rachkovskii’s agent, warned about the impending raid, slipped away.) The remaining defendants were quickly arrested, tried, and sentenced to several years in prison.159

The arrests led to a dramatic improvement in Franco-Russian relations. Unaware that the entire affair had been staged by the Okhrana, even the most sceptical republican politicians now began to see Russia as a valuable partner in an international war against terror.160 When informed of the arrests, an overjoyed Alexander III reportedly exclaimed, “Finally, France has a government!”161 The case, which received extensive coverage in the French media, turned public opinion decisively in favor of the tsarist state. In the aftermath of the arrests, letters from French citizens poured into the Russian embassy, identifying Russian émigrés whom they considered suspect—an action that several of these correspondents presented as a fulfillment of their patriotic duty.162

Shortly after the Paris nihilist affair, Wilhelm II refused to renew the alliance with Russia. The abrogation of the agreement offered French patriots the opportunity to capitalize on the relationships they had cultivated in Russia in recent years. In 1891, General Boisdeffre entered into negotiations with his Russian counterparts, which yielded a secret defensive agreement in 1892. More expansive diplomatic negotiations began in 1893, resulting in the formal alliance finalized in early 1894.163 Although the Adam circle was not directly involved in these discussions, its members served as intermediaries between the two sides: Hansen and Rachkovskii delivered memoranda and even a draft of a treaty from French proponents of the rapprochement to the tsar.164 Adam and her associates realized their long-standing dream of a Franco-Russian alliance only when high-ranking government officials embraced their interest in a rapprochement. However, the men who negotiated the Dual Alliance owed a debt to the salonnière’s

160 Hansen, L’Alliance, 56–57. Hansen, Constans, and the prefect of police all received medals and financial awards from the Russian government for their role in this affair: see “Liste des personnes ayant rendu des services dans l’affaire des terroristes russes à Paris,” HA, ZO, index Vb, reel 67, folder 1. The French government and public learned that the whole affair had been manufactured by the Okhrana only in 1908. For an overview of the resulting scandal, see AN F 7 12894, dossier 2.
161 Albin, La Paix, 277.
162 For example, letters of Alexis Trébaux and “Honest French woman,” 1890, HA, ZO, index XIIIb(1), reel 189, folder 1.
164 Hansen, L’Alliance, 88–91. For the draft treaty, see “Note confidentielle,” September 3, 1891, AD, Archive privée de Jules Hansen, 85PAAP/1, 166.
network. Through tireless public diplomacy as well as brazen deceit, Adam’s circle had forged new ties between the two countries, helping one-time adversaries to see each other as allies.

**IN PURSUIT OF UNIVERSAL CONVERGENCE**

Juliette Adam and her associates played a prominent role in the official celebrations that accompanied the Dual Alliance. But even as they participated in public performances of Franco-Russian friendship, the salonnière and her network expanded their ambitions. Adam celebrated the “mystical” force of the alliance, insisting that it would usher in a new epoch of mutual understanding and world peace. An updated dispatch from “Paul Vasili” claimed to have overheard French workers cheering the tsar as their savior, implying that the Franco-Russian Alliance would benefit French citizens from all walks of life. Florenets and his admirers situated the Russian autocracy in the vanguard of a new political movement that would destroy the superficial differences that divided populations, forming a “collective soul . . . of hundreds and millions of men.” Each of these formulations presented the entente not merely as a turning point in international affairs but also as the beginning of a new process of universal convergence capable of uniting all humanity.

The growing ambitions of the Adam circle were evident in its actions as well as its rhetoric. In 1890, Stead founded the *Review of Reviews*, a comprehensive digest of global news. Like other publications connected with Adam, the *Review* aggressively promoted the circle’s own members, lavishing praise on Novikova, Adam, and Cyon. But Stead’s goals for this publication were grander than ever before: he expressed his desire to see it become a “journalistic syndicate that will also encircle the world” and a “world-wide organization which would be to journalism what the Catholic Church in its palmy days was to Christendom.” Radziwill shared Stead’s global vision, attempting to export the Adam circle’s in-

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170 Unidentified press clipping, ca. 1890, Emil Dillon papers, Stanford University Library Special Collections, series 1, box 27, folder 1.
interest in charismatic, authoritarian leadership to a new setting. In 1896, she met Cecil Rhodes, who struck her as a worthy successor to Skobelev and Boulanger. Scheming with Stead to unify South Africa into a federation and to install Rhodes as its head, she launched a newspaper in Cape Town to promote him as an ideal modern “strong man.” Meanwhile, Novikova and Stead, who insisted that Russia would preside over a new era of world peace, lobbied Russian officials to organize an international conference to limit armaments—and praised the tsarist regime’s role in spearheading the Hague Convention of 1899.

Adam’s associates also reached out to the Vatican, which they viewed as a potential partner in their efforts to promote global convergence. Catholic and Pan-Slavic activists had first established contact in the 1870s in an effort to bring about a new age of universal Christian brotherhood by reconciling the Catholic and Orthodox faiths. The conclusion of the Franco-Russian Alliance and the publication of Pope Leo XIII’s encyclical Rerum Novarum—a vision of social emancipation under conservative auspices that had much in common with the program of the Adam salon—renewed the momentum behind this effort. Cyon, who converted for a second time, this time to the Catholic faith, insisted that “the Kremlin and the Vatican” could serve as the dual “summits” of the “civilized world.” Radziwill and Rachkovskii, who deemed Leo a “man of genius,” each met several times with the pontiff in an attempt to reach an agreement with him.

The Adam circle’s dreams of realizing a new world order defined by universal harmony were grandiose, but they were not entirely deluded. Adam and her associates had both benefited from and contributed to a more open and integrated world. Eager to break down the boundaries that divided different ideological systems, national traditions, and religions, they reconciled seemingly opposed ideas through dynamic processes of conversion and convergence. Through the effective use of personal networks and the mass media, this circle that brought women, immigrants, and parvenus in contact with elite politicians and aristocrats had helped to steer the evolution of French domestic and international politics. However, the Adam circle’s efforts to create harmony out of chaos also produced striking contradictions. Its attempts to reconcile Russians and French-

173 Eduard Winter, Russland und die Slawischen Völker in der Diplomatie des Vatikans, 1878–1903 (Berlin, 1950). I am grateful to Mark von Hagen for bringing this source to my attention.
174 Quote from Cyon, Nihilisme et anarchie, 315. See also Morcos, Juliette Adam, 507 n. 140. France’s Catholic right strongly supported the Franco-Russian Alliance: Caron, “Catholic Political Mobilization,” 318.
175 Radziwill, My Recollections, 297–302; Rollin, L’apocalypse, 488–90.
men presented Germans and Jews as incorrigible enemies who threatened both countries. And its efforts to create a universal synthesis relied on distortions, outright fabrications, and illegal acts.

If Adam and her associates reveled in their ability to influence policy and to forge international networks, they also expressed fear that nefarious forces could do the same. The paranoid vein in the thought of the Adam circle was evident even in its first activities in the early 1880s. Rochefort blamed assassins for Skobelev’s untimely death, in spite of the fact that the general was widely known to have died in a brothel. If “Berlin Society” charged that Bismarck had consolidated his control over the globe through pacts that were so secret that even the parties to them were unaware of their existence. Eventually, the Adam circle accused any party with which it had a disagreement of participating in grand conspiracies. “London Society” implicated Benjamin Disraeli—a longtime critic of Novikova and her friend Gladstone—in a plot to undermine Russian interests. An anonymous “diplomat” who contributed to La Nouvelle Revue charged that the moderate republicans who had opposed a Franco-Russian rapprochement in the 1880s aspired to foment war and to degrade France. As we have seen, the Adam circle was precocious in implicating Jews in plots to control international finance and to corrupt both France and Russia. By the 1890s, Jews played a central role in the web of conspiracy theories spun by the salonnière and her associates. Adam and Rochefort presented Jews as servants of German interests, charging that they sought to sap France of its national traditions and to enslave it under an international financial syndicate run from Berlin. Novikova claimed that Jews intended to destroy Russia and murder its people, presenting the catastrophic famine that ravaged the Russian countryside in 1891–92 as the first step in this plot. Rachkovskii identified “Jewish propaganda intended to harm Russia” as the chief threat facing the autocracy and composed an exposé that purported to reveal “Judeo-masonic plots” to subordinate the entire world to Jewish rule. Even Cyon, himself of Jewish origins, propagated antisemitic conspiracy theories. He charged that the Rothschild house—from which he had obtained one of the earliest French loans to support Russia—wished to achieve world domination, and he complained that the char-

176 “Mort de Skobelev,” L’Intransigeant, July 11, 1882, 1.  
177 Vasili, La Société de Berlin, 250.  
178 Vasili, La Société de Londres, 204–5.  
179 “La Russie et le Quai d’Orsay,” LNR 13, no. 76 (1892): 251–63.  
181 Stead, M. P. for Russia, 2:276–95.  
182 Undated memo to Director of Department of Police, HA, ZO, index IXb, boxes 206–7, reel 134, folder 1; V. L. Burtsev, “Protokoly Sionskikh Mudretsov” Dokazannyi Podlog (Paris, 1938), 46.
itable activities of the Alliance Israélite Universelle were nothing more than shameless efforts by its leaders to become “Jewish royalty.”

The recycling of these claims within the Adam circle amplified and radicalized them. In 1892, Drumont founded a newspaper of his own, *La Libre Parole*, which popularized and embellished the antisemitic allegations frequently heard in the *salonnière*’s network. Repeating Novikova’s claims that Jews were to blame for the Russian famine, the paper added that Jews intended to poison the grain that relief groups had sent to starving peasants. Drumont went on to organize a relief fund of his own, encouraging his readers to extend assistance to needy tsarist subjects. Thousands of French citizens who identified themselves with monikers such as “a Judeophobe,” “the avowed enemy of the Jews,” and “a concierge victimized by Jews” donated small sums that amounted to more than ten thousand francs. The Antisemitic League, an organization in which Drumont played a leading role and in which Millevoye and Rochefort participated, also promoted antisemitic ideas before a broader audience. In 1898, the league republished a copy of Rachkovskii’s earlier pamphlet on the “Jewish question,” subsidizing its cost so that it would be accessible to readers of the most modest social standing.

In 1894, the same year that the Franco-Russian Alliance was finalized, the French-Jewish officer Alfred Dreyfus was arrested and accused of passing military secrets to Germany. The detractors of Dreyfus, according to historian Ruth Harris, were driven by the “lure of the lie, the audacity of deceit,” and promoted a “climate of fear and conspiracy” that pervaded all of French society. Many of Adam’s associates, who had peddled lies and conspiracy theories for at least a decade, saw Dreyfus’s arrest as proof of the existence of an international Jewish plot directed against France. Agents at the Paris Prefecture of Police, which continued to maintain warm relations with Rachkovskii’s Okhrana, were among the first to implicate Dreyfus in the crime. The prefecture’s noted criminologist Alphonse Bertillon, who would be honored in 1896 for unknown services rendered to the Russian state, compared the handwriting of the accused

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183 Cyon, *La Russie*, 322, 317.
184 E. Drumont, “Pour la Russie!,” *LLP*, July 22, 1892, 1.
185 “Souscription pour les victimes de la famine et du choléra en Russie,” *LLP*, July 24, 1892, 1.
186 “Bulletin officiel de la ligue antisémite de France,” no. 1, January 1, 1898, in AN F 7 12459.
187 Quotes from Harris, *Dreyfus*, 243, 177.
188 Indeed, Henri Rollin has argued that the Adam circle’s obsession with conspiracy theories and forgery helped to provide an intellectual framework in which large segments of French society could see a loyal officer as a treacherous turncoat—and in which representatives of the French military establishment could fabricate evidence to implicate Dreyfus in the crime. See Rollin, *L’apocalypse*, 419–24.
with the script in which the leaked intelligence was written. Acknowledging the differences between the two samples, he concluded that they were a result of “auto-forgery”—that is, Dreyfus’s effort to disguise his own hand. Dru- mont, who was among the first journalists to draw attention to Dreyfus’s arrest, spun the affair into a broader narrative of Jewish perfidy, claiming that Jews had also led Boulanger to his downfall and fed rotten meat to French soldiers. The Russian influence on Drumont’s thinking remained evident even as the journalist marshaled all of his resources to draw attention to “The Treason of the Jew Dreyfus.” Remarkably, one of La Libre Parole’s first reports of the arrest was preempted by its coverage of the death of Alexander III, whose efforts to protect peasants from supposed Jewish exploitation the paper praised.

Adam insisted in La Nouvelle Revue that German denials of a connection with Dreyfus only proved the existence of a conspiracy, and she denounced her one-time republican allies who defended the officer as embarrassments to France. The anti-Dreyfusard fervor of some of Adam’s oldest French associates surpassed that of the salonnière. Rochefort, who referred to Dreyfus as an “abominable Jew,” complained that the French state had not been aggressive enough in prosecuting the officer—a “new concession of the French government to Germany,” in his view. Déroulède’s League of Patriots, revived by the affair, publicly brawled with the officer’s defenders.

With the beginning of the Dreyfus affair, the distinctive brand of politics that had coalesced in the Adam salon a decade earlier—a worldview guided by antiliberal and antisemitic ideology and equally devoted to authoritarian fantasies and the idea of mass politics—entered the mainstream of French political life. In 1895, Drumont’s La Libre Parole celebrated Adam as a visionary, describing how her activism had given rise to the “antisemitic world” that had begun to reclaim “France for the French”: “She hates Cosmopolitanism and the mentality of foreign upstarts [le rastaquouèrisme], detests the Hebrews across the Channel and across the Rhine . . . all of these bastards of the Patrie, with souls as foreign as their physiognomies, these traitors and semi-traitors whose unbelievable com-

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189 Harris, Dreyfus, 23–24. On Bertillon’s honor, Memorandum to Department of Police, July 31/August 18, 1907, HA, ZO, index Va, reel 67, box 34.
190 Harris, Dreyfus, 54.
191 See “La Mort du Tsar: La Trahison du Juif Dreyfus,” and “Alexandre III,” LLP, November 2, 1894, 1.
placency allows them to betray with ease and without shame.”\textsuperscript{195} As Drumont himself must have known, though, Juliette Adam’s vision of a “France for the French” owed a significant debt to the “foreign upstarts” such as Cyon who had joined her salon.

**The Costs of Convergence**

Although the Adam circle benefited from its ideological flexibility and its effective use of the politics of scandal, its activities had a tendency to spin out of control. The multiple conversions that the salonnière’s associates had experienced and their fervent attempts to reconcile conflicting ideas could induce serious cases of intellectual vertigo. The network’s members often found themselves embroiled in practices that they openly denounced; some even became victims of their own conspiracies.

In the early 1890s, it came to light that Cyon had accepted large kickbacks on the French loans to Russia that he had negotiated—a revelation that led to his being dismissed from his position at the Ministry of Finance.\textsuperscript{196} When Count Sergei Witte was appointed minister of finance in 1892, Cyon approached him and asked to be reinstated. When Witte refused, Cyon declared war, denouncing the minister in *La Nouvelle Revue* and in pamphlets that he circulated in France and Russia.\textsuperscript{197} Cyon charged that Witte had imperiled the empire’s economic future with crude speculation schemes, chief among them his effort to place Russia on the gold standard.\textsuperscript{198} These attacks on Witte frequently invoked ideas and images associated with antisemitic conspiracy theories. Cyon implicated Witte in an international plot to undermine Russia, characterizing him as “an all-powerful Minister who has the venal press of all Europe at his disposal and is supported by the high cosmopolitan bank in every capital.”\textsuperscript{199} He also insinuated that Witte was a servant of Jewish interests and a lackey of the Rothschilds.\textsuperscript{200}

The minister of finance—who shared Cyon’s interest in and aptitude for influencing public opinion—fought back.\textsuperscript{201} In 1895, Witte convened a special


\textsuperscript{196} Harcave, *Memoirs of Count Witte*, 129.

\textsuperscript{197} In addition to the works cited below, see Élie De Cyon, “Choses russes,” *LNR* 13, no. 79 (1892): 863–69; Élie de Cyon, *Où la dictature de M. Witte conduit la Russie* (Paris, 1897).

\textsuperscript{198} *M. Witte et ses projects de faillite devant le Conseil* (Paris, 1897), 47–97.

\textsuperscript{199} Élie de Cyon, *M. Witte et les finances russes après des documents officiels et inédits* (Paris, 1895), vi.

\textsuperscript{200} Ibid., 96–100.

commission of high-ranking tsarist officials to study Cyon’s activities abroad. That commission ultimately demanded that Cyon cease his journalistic activities and return to Russia. (Cyon had once again taken Russian citizenship in the late 1880s in order to work for the Ministry of Finance.) When the journalist refused, the tsarist government pressured France to expel him. Russia’s new ally complied, forcing Cyon to move to Switzerland. Undeterred, he continued to denounce Witte. The minister now turned to Rachkovskii—with whom he had established a close and trusting relationship—for help. Thus began a fierce struggle between two of the key promoters of Franco-Russian friendship. Tracing Cyon’s every move in Switzerland, the Okhrana chief sent regular reports on his activities (and copies of his publications) back to St. Petersburg. In 1897, on Witte’s instructions, Okhrana agents burglarized the villa of the journalist whom Rachkovskii now called “our little Jew.” The agents ransacked the house and confiscated manuscripts that they found there, including a draft version of a new anti-Witte polemic.

Shortly after Cyon’s attacks on Witte began, news broke that a number of French politicians and journalists had accepted bribes to suppress negative information about the international conglomerate building the Panama Canal. Andrieux, Drumont, and Rochefort all played a key role exposing the so-called Panama affair—and in popularizing the notion that this egregious case of corruption was the result of Jewish influence. However, it eventually came to light that Adam, Cyon, and Ambassador Mohrenheim were among those who had received kickbacks, which they used to fund their agitation in favor of the Franco-Russian rapprochement. These critics of capitalist injustice had themselves become dependent on international finance. And in spite of their claims to promote a more open and united world, they continued to rely on shadowy backroom deals.

In the end, it was not always possible to reconcile the curious mixture of ideas brought together by the cultures of conversion and convergence that the Adam circle generated. Although Drumont maintained that a strong relationship

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202 Harcave, Memoirs of Count Witte, 129.
203 Witte described Rachkovskii as “a remarkably intelligent man, in fact the most gifted and intelligent police official I have ever met.” Ibid., 291.
204 “Doklad,” April 29/May 14, 1895, HA, ZO, index XIIb(1), folder 1. While Cyon was still in France, the Prefecture of Police had intervened in an attempt to prevent the publication of his writings—presumably under pressure from the Okhrana. Report on Cyon, June 21, 1895, APP BA1023.
205 “Kar’era P. I. Rachkovskogo,” 84–85.
206 The most comprehensive overview of the affair is: Jean-Yves Mollier, Le scandale de Panama (Paris, 1991).
207 Morcos, Juliette Adam, 179; Cyon, Histoire, 437–46. According to Morcos, the salonnière received almost 60,000 francs in kickbacks. Morcos, Juliette Adam, 480 n. 191.
with Russia was the best means of protecting France from the influence of "Jewry [and] the high bank, which are only loyal to Germany," the journalist and his followers expressed concern that the Dual Alliance had fallen victim to Jewish exploitation. As early as 1892, *La Libre Parole* condemned the Rothschild loans to Russia negotiated by Cyon, charging that they had crowned new "Jewish kings" whose power now superseded the tsar’s. “We want very much to loan our money to Russia, but we don’t want to fill the sacs of Jewish usurers,” wrote one critic. Drumont concurred, charging that the Rothschild loans had enabled “cosmopolitan Jewry” to assume “control of the Alliance for its own profit, just like it seized the French revolution, the Republic, Panama, and even Boulangism.” Yet here Drumont became ensnared by contradictions in his own thought. In order to prove that Russia had been “sold” to the Jews, he quoted extensively from Cyon’s anti-Witte screeds. Drumont’s call to recover a “pure” Russia untouched by Jewish influence was inspired by the work of the very apostate from Judaism whom *La Libre Parole* accused of mortgaging Russia’s future to the Rothschilds.

Divided by internal schisms and compromised by inconsistencies in their own ideological projects, the architects of the Franco-Russian rapprochement rapidly lost their political influence in the late 1890s. Cyon’s acquaintances ridiculed the journalist’s penchant for self-reinvention as evidence of his hypocrisy and opportunism. Rachkovskii’s meddling in French politics, his engagements with the Vatican, and his raid of Cyon’s villa—all of which he had conducted without the approval of St. Petersburg—earned him rebukes from his superiors. In 1902, Tsar Nicholas II demanded Rachkovskii’s resignation and his return to Russia. Accused of having furnished the information that served as the basis of “Paul Vasili’s” report from St. Petersburg, Glinka was also recalled to Russia and condemned to exile. Radziwill too fell afoul of the law. After Cecil Rhodes—her ideal strongman—rebuffed her romantic advances, she forged a banknote in his hand, which she intended to use to launch a newspaper of her own. Arrested and convicted of forgery, she would serve time in a British prison for her offense.

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By 1900, Adam, who was nearing the age of seventy, had all but retreated from politics. However, her influence lived on among a new generation of young men who constituted the core of the Action Française, which pledged to defend national traditions, the Catholic faith, and the welfare of the masses from putative enemies within and outside of France.²¹⁵ Léon Daudet (Alphonse’s son), Maurice Barrès, and Charles Maurras presented Adam’s circle as “the hearth of the idea of Revanche and the gathering place for a France regenerated” and thought of themselves as the salonnière’s successors.²¹⁶ Like the earlier circle from which they drew inspiration, the men of the Action Française were ardent Russophiles, inspired by the autocracy’s resistance to liberalism, individualism, and secularism.²¹⁷

There is another respect in which the cultures of the Adam circle might have survived its demise. In 1921, a British journalist revealed that The Protocols of the Elders of Zion—which were published in Russia in 1903 and rapidly proliferated across the globe after the 1917 revolution—was a forgery of an 1864 work entitled Dialogue in Hell between Machiavelli and Montesquieu by the French journalist Maurice Joly. Catherine Radziwill, who had by then settled in New York, resurfaced to claim that Rachkovskii’s press agents had created the text, and that she had personally seen the first version of the forgery in Paris in the early twentieth century.²¹⁸ One of Rachkovskii’s French agents, who served the Paris Okhrana for some three decades, stepped forward to confirm Radziwill’s story, claiming to have been personally involved in the fabrication.²¹⁹ Contemporaries familiar with the Adam circle as well as later researchers claimed that Justinia Glinka had ferried the forgery from France to Russia.²²⁰

The testimony of Radziwill and her associates can hardly be accepted at face value, and no definitive proof of the text’s origins has ever emerged.²²¹ Nevertheless, there is strong circumstantial evidence that the Protocols originated in

²¹⁵ For an overview, see Sternhell, La droite.
²¹⁶ The quote is from Léon Daudet, L’entre-deux-guerres (Paris, 1915), 231; see also Charles Maurras, L’idée de la décentralisation (Paris, 1898), 18–22.
²¹⁸ The exposé was penned by Philip Graves and appeared in the Times of London. For a detailed account of the turn of events that led up to this revelation, see Lev Aronov, Khenrik Baran, and Dmitrii Zubarev, “Kniaznia Ekaterina Radzivill i ’Protokoly sionskikh mudretsov’: Mistifikatsiia kak obraz zhizni,” Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie 96 (2009): 76–133.
²¹⁹ Henri Bint to S. G. Svatikov, April 7, 1921, Bakhmeteff Archive, Columbia University, S. G. Svatikov Papers, box 71, folder 1.
²²¹ For a critical evaluation of Radziwill’s claims, see Aronov et al., “Kniaznia Ekaterina Radzivill.” On the enduring mysteries connected with the Protocols, see Mi-
the very circles reconstructed above. In addition to the work of Joly, the text borrows from several other sources. One is Cyon’s writings on Witte and the gold standard, which serve as the basis for the text’s discussions of Jewish financial conspiracies. The other is an 1868 novel by the German author Hermann Gödsche that features a scene in which a rabbi gathers the twelve tribes of Israel and directs them to achieve world domination. The “rabbi’s speech” was published in three Russian pamphlets in the 1870s, which passed off the fictional scene as fact. In 1881, an author writing under the name “De Wolski,” which was one of the pseudonyms that Rachkovskii later used in France, republished this scene in the Catholic journal Le Contemporain. The episode appeared again in La Russie juive, Rachkovskii’s 1887 manifesto on the “Jewish question,” and it would be frequently referenced and quoted in France’s antisemitic press.

Textual evidence thus suggests that someone close to the Adam circle was involved in the fabrication of the Protocols. Yet several mysteries continue to bedevil scholars of the text. One concerns the curious combination of sources that inspired the forgery. Joly’s work would seem an odd template for history’s most famous libel against the Jews. A denunciation of the despotic tendencies of Napoleon III, Dialogue in Hell contains no antisemitic content; indeed, it promoted an ideological program very different from that espoused by the author of the Protocols, reflecting the longing of the republican opposition of the 1860s for a more open and democratic system. Furthermore, that text, which

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222 Rollin, L’apocalypse, 450–60.
223 This excerpt is reprinted in full in Herman Bernstein, The History of a Lie: “The Protocols of the Wise Men of Zion” (New York, 1921), 22–41.
225 De Wolski, “Les juifs en orient,” Le Contemporain 22 (1881): 110–52. “De Wolski” claimed that the fictional account was a description of real events written by a British diplomat.
227 Cesare De Michelis makes a strong counterargument. Based on linguistic analysis of the Russian-language text, which features parlance peculiar to the southwestern borderlands of the tsarist empire, he concludes that there never was an original French version of the Protocols; rather, the text was concocted by antisemites in what is today Ukraine in the first years of the twentieth century. Cesare G. De Michelis, The Non-Existent Manuscript: A Study of the “Protocols of the Sages of Zion,” trans. Richard Newhouse (Lincoln, NE, 2004). It is worth noting, however, that his linguistic analysis may not preclude the work’s Parisian origins: recall that Rachkovskii and Radziwill both hailed from the southwestern borderlands, as did many of the Okhrana chief’s agents.
landed its author in prison and was banned under the Second Empire, had become an obscure relic by the time the Protocols were created some thirty to forty years later.228 How did the fabricator of the Protocols “rediscover” Joly’s text? And what inspired him/her to pair it with the writings of Cyon and Gödsche (mediated by “De Wolski”)?

The second question that has troubled researchers is the precise identity of the work’s author. Some have accepted Radziwill’s claims that Rachkovskii and his agents were responsible.229 Others have pointed to Cyon, suggesting that a draft of the Protocols was one of the documents stolen during the raid of his Swiss villa.230 Still other accounts, noting that the work’s Russian-language title could be read as a pun on Cyon’s name (Tsionskie mudretsy/Tsion), suggest that either Rachkovskii or Drumont might have created and circulated the text in an effort to discredit or embarrass the journalist.231

Our reconstruction of the circles that were likely involved in the forgery of the Protocols may provide new insights into these enduring questions. It is clear that multiple members of Adam’s network were acquainted with Joly and his Dialogue in Hell, the main source of the Protocols. The writer had been a close associate of Gambetta in the 1870s, and in the first years of the Third Republic he had worked with Drumont at the newspaper La Liberté.232 Connections between Joly’s world and that of Juliette Adam persisted even after his death.

The Adam circle can thus be linked directly to each of the texts from which the Protocols were drawn. Furthermore, the Protocols might be read as an embodiment of the cultures of collaboration, conversion, and convergence that flourished in the salonnière’s circle. Enlisting the democratic yearnings in Joly’s text in the service of an antisemitic, anticapitalist, and antibloliberal crusade, the text mimics the transformation of Adam and her associates, who evolved from champions of the republican experiment into its harshest critics. Melding sources borrowed from France and Russia into a distinctive synthesis, the Protocols, like

229 For example, Burtsev, “Protokoly”; Taguieff, Les Protocoles.
230 A summary of this case can be found in Frank Fox, “The Protocols of the Elders of Zion and the Shadowy World of Elie de Cyon,” East European Jewish Affairs 27, no. 1 (1997): 3–22. Henri Rollin and Boris Nicolaevsky, who spent much of their lives searching for the author of the Protocols and advanced several theses themselves, agreed by the 1940s that this was the most likely scenario. See the correspondence between the two in HA, Nicolaevsky Collection, series 248, box 498, folder 9.
231 Kennan, “Curious Monsieur Cyon,” 472–73; Cohn, Warrant, 106–7.
233 On the careers and the associates of the Joly brothers, see APP BA1129.
234 Rollin, L’Apocalypse, 402.
the “Franco-Russian Marseillaise,” could be seen as a product of the political entanglements that developed between the two countries in the late nineteenth century. The text’s conspiratorial mindset and the process of forgery through which it was created are also consistent with the moral universe and the tactics of the Adam circle. It is conceivable that the search for the author of the Protocols has remained fruitless thus far because there never was a single author in the first place. The text, like the “Society” series and the Bulgarian documents, could well be a collaborative effort compiled over the course of several years by multiple individuals.

The Protocols of the Elders of Zion encapsulates the ironies of the aggressive antiliberal politics that emerged from fin de siècle France. On the one hand, the forgery presented entire segments of the population as existential threats to the welfare of the nation, promoting violent forms of xenophobia. On the other hand, the moral universe of the Protocols—and the broader ideological project that produced the document—were themselves products of transnational exchange. The long and fruitful series of collaborations between one-time republicans in France and defenders of the tsarist regime synthesized democratic and authoritarian impulses and the political cultures of West and East. In the process, these exchanges produced a universal antiliberal style capable of bridging divides between ideological camps and national political traditions. The remarkable staying power of history’s greatest hoax—which has been promoted by groups ranging from the White Army to the Nazis, from Hamas to American white supremacists—is no doubt a legacy of its international heritage and its global ambitions.