

## **Holocaust Denial**



# Holocaust Denial

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The Politics of Perfidy

Edited by Robert Solomon Wistrich

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Robert Solomon Wistrich

## Introduction: Lying about the Holocaust

Holocaust denial is a postwar phenomenon at whose core lies the rejection of the historical fact that six million Jews were murdered by the Nazis during World War II. Alongside explicit repudiation of the Holocaust, denial includes the minimization, banalization, and relativization of the relevant facts and events, so as to cast doubt on the uniqueness or authenticity of what happened during the Shoah.<sup>1</sup> These softer variants of Holocaust denial are designed to gain public acceptance for its viewpoint as the “other side” of a legitimate debate. According to the hardline deniers or “revisionists” (as they misleadingly describe themselves), the extermination of the Jews never actually took place: the German authorities never planned to kill the Jews of Europe, and they never built or operated any death camps in which Jews were gassed. Most revisionist accounts rarely put Jewish losses between 1939 and 1945 above 300,000 persons, and these deaths are usually blamed on wartime deprivations, hardship, and disease.

According to the deniers, the Nazi concept of a “Final Solution” always meant only the emigration of the Jews, not their annihilation. The Jews “missing” from Europe after 1945 are assumed to have resurfaced in the United States (as illegal immigrants), in Israel, or elsewhere. The massive documentation on the Holocaust—including official papers of the Third Reich, statements by Nazi criminals, eyewitness accounts by Jewish survivors, diaries, memoirs, and the mountains of evidence from court trials—are invariably dismissed by deniers as unreliable and fantastic or as an outright lie.<sup>2</sup> For the deniers, no testimony by Jews is acceptable, because it was the Jews who invented the Holocaust “myth” in the first place, to serve their own financial and political ends. In the same way, all the volumes of

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1 For earlier overviews of the subject, see Gill Seidel, *The Holocaust Denial* (Leeds 1986); Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *Assassins of Memory. Essays on the Denial of the Holocaust* (New York 1992); and Deborah E. Lipstadt, *Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory* (Toronto 1993). A more recent study is Michael Shermer and Alex Grobman, *Denying History: Who Says the Holocaust Never Happened and Why Do They Say It?* (Berkeley, Calif. 2002). On French Holocaust denial, see Florent Brayard, *Comment l'idée vint à M. Rassinier, Naissance du révisionnisme* (Paris 1996); Nadine Fresco, *Fabrication d'un antisémite* (Paris 1999); and Valérie Igounet, *Histoire du négationnisme en France* (Paris 2000).

2 For typical examples of this literature, see Paul Rassinier, *Le drame des Juifs Européens* (Paris 1964); Thies Christopherson, *Die Auschwitz Lüge* (Mohrkirch 1973); Richard Harwood [pseud. of Richard Verrall], *Did Six Million Really Die? The Truth at Last* (Ladbroke 1974); and Arthur Butz, *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century* (Torrance, Calif. 1976). The last two works were published by the Historical Review Press in the United Kingdom.

documentation assembled by the Allies at the Nuremberg war crimes tribunal in 1946 are rejected: they are seen as part of a vengeful act of injustice by the victors, who stand accused by the deniers of having mistreated the Germans.<sup>3</sup>

According to the godfather of American “revisionist” historians, Harry Elmer Barnes, what Germans suffered at Allied hands—bombing of civilians in German cities, starvation, invasion, and the mass expulsions of ethnic Germans from Eastern Europe after 1945—was far “more brutal and painful than the alleged exterminations in the gas chambers.”<sup>4</sup> As for postwar Nazi testimony, the deniers allege that German defendants had no choice after 1945 but to confess guilt to false charges in the hope of receiving clemency. Confessions such as those of the Auschwitz commandant, Rudolf Höss, are routinely regarded by Holocaust deniers as having been extracted through the use of torture and humiliation.

The mendacious propaganda of the Holocaust deniers relies on a number of standard techniques. They like to focus relentlessly on any discrepancies in the testimonies of witnesses, contradictions in documents or disagreements among scholars, in order to undermine the credibility of what they call the Holocaust “story.” They make much play of the fact that no explicit order from Hitler for a mass murder of the Jews has been found; that the Wannsee Conference of January 1942 did not refer to gassings in the present or future; or that Allied aerial reconnaissance of Auschwitz did not indicate gas chambers or crematoria with constantly burning chimneys. The deniers also cynically exploit the ambiguity of Nazi euphemisms like *Sonderbehandlung* (special treatment) for the gassing of Jews to suggest that this term actually mean “privileged” treatment. They provide similarly fake interpretations for the forced “evacuation” of Jews to the East.<sup>5</sup>

The “revisionists” usually explain away the large number of crematoria in the death camps by claiming that these were a means of dealing rapidly with

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3 See Maurice Bardèche, *Nuremberg ou la Terre promise* (Paris 1948); Paul Rassinier, *Le Mensonge d'Ulysse* (Paris 1950); Richard Harwood [pseud. of Richard Verrall], *Nuremberg and Other War Crimes* (Ladbroke 1978); Austin J. App, “The Holocaust Put in Historical Perspective,” *Journal of Historical Review* (henceforth HJR) (Spring 1980).

4 Harry Elmer Barnes, *Blasting the Historical Blackout* (Torrance, Calif.: Liberty Bell Publications, 1976) and idem, *Barnes against the Blackout: Essays against Interventionism* (Torrance, Calif. 1991), both published by the Institute for Historical Review. On the American “revisionist” school, see Lucy S. Dawidowicz, “Lies about the Holocaust,” *Commentary* 70, no. 6 (Dec. 1980): 31–37; it also appears in idem, *What is the Use of Jewish History?* (New York 1992), 84–100.

5 See ADL, “‘Holocaust Revisionism’: A Denial of History,” *Facts* 26, no. 2 (June 1980); and Roger Eatwell, “The Holocaust Denial: A Study in Propaganda Technique,” in *Neo-Fascism in Europe*, edited by Luciano Chales et al. (London 1991), 120–43; see also Danny Ben-Moshe, “Holocaust Denial in Australia” in this volume.



the growing number of victims of typhus and other epidemics toward the end of the war. At the same time, they like to suggest that most photographs of the Holocaust showing the liberation of the camps are nothing but fakes or else have been presented in a distorted way to exaggerate German barbarity. In any case, the Allies themselves were to blame. Through their ruthless bombing, they had created the total breakdown in the supply of food and medicine that produced the epidemics and the emaciated victims, whose condition so shocked the eyes of a disbelieving world in 1945. Moreover, by juggling world Jewish population figures before and after World War II, the deniers generally maintain that Jewish losses in the camps remained in the hundreds of thousands rather than in the millions.<sup>6</sup> All these arguments and many other lies can be found in *The Six Million Swindle: Blackmailing the German People for Hard Marks with Fabricated Corpses* (1973) by Austin J. App, formerly a professor of English at La Salle College in Philadelphia. App, whose antisemitism was quite explicit, blamed Communists as well as Israel and world Jewry for inventing the myth of the gas chambers to divert attention from their own crimes.

Holocaust “revisionists” have for some time focused special attention on the gas chambers. The French revisionist and literary critic, Robert Faurisson, extrapolating from American gas chamber executions of single prisoners and evidence about the commercial use of Zyklon B as a disinfectant, deduced to his own satisfaction that mass gassings were impossible in Auschwitz.<sup>7</sup> This assertion was then “tested” by Fred Leuchter, an unlicensed American engineer financed by the revisionists, who took forensic samples in Auschwitz-Birkenau and Majdanek and could find no significant traces of hydrocyanic acid (the toxin in Zyklon B).<sup>8</sup> Leuchter’s evidence was dismissed at the 1988 trial in Toronto of Ernst Zündel, a German-Canadian neo-Nazi and “revisionist.” Leuchter’s complete lack of expertise and credibility was summarily exposed.<sup>9</sup> This did not stop the British his-

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6 For examples of “revisionist” juggling with figures, see Harwood, *Did Six Million Really Die?*, 6–7; and the English language compilation of Rassinier’s work, *Debunking the Genocide Myth* (Torrance, Calif. 1978). For an analysis, see Georges Wellers, *La Solution Finale et la Mythomanie Néo-Nazie: L’existence des Chambres à Gaz, Le Nombre des Victimes* (Paris 1979); also Wolfgang Benz, ed. *Dimension des Völkermords. Die Zahl der jüdischen Opfer des Nationalsozialismus* (Munich 1991).

7 Vidal-Naquet, *Assassins of Memory*, 61–62.

8 For information about Leuchter, see ADL, *Hitler’s Apologists: The Anti-Semitic Propaganda of Holocaust “Revisionism.”* (New York 1993), 8–10; Michael Schmidt, *The New Reich. Penetrating the Secrets of Today’s Neo-Nazi Networks* (London 1993), 198–99.

9 Shermer and Grobman, *Denying History*, 45–46, 64–67, 129–30; see also Alain Goldschläger, “The Trials of Ernst Zündel” in this volume.

torian and Holocaust denier, David Irving, from publishing the Leuchter Report in 1989, declaring that it was “the end of the line” for the Auschwitz “myth.”<sup>10</sup> Leuchter’s claims would be decisively refuted by Jean-Claude Pressac in his *Auschwitz: Technique and Operation of the Gas Chambers* (1990), but this has not prevented his lies from taking on a life of their own in “revisionist” circles.

Among present-day Holocaust deniers, apart from Irving, there are very few historians. As far back as 1977, in his best-selling *Hitler’s War*, Irving groundlessly asserted that the mass murder of Jews had been carried on behind Hitler’s back. In his published work, he has been a consistent apologist for the Nazis and a denigrator of Winston Churchill and Allied leaders. For many years, he maintained a close connection with the Deutsche Volksunion (DVU), an extreme Right grouping in Germany that consistently deplored Nazi war crimes trials and made no bones about its sympathy with the Hitler regime. As a result of the Zündel trial in May 1988, Irving embraced fully-fledged Holocaust denial. In May 1992, he was fined by a Munich court for claiming that the Auschwitz gas chambers were “fakes” built after the war to attract tourists to Poland. Banned from a growing list of countries, he still remains the most publicized personality involved in Holocaust denial in England, with a small but enthusiastic following in Canada, Australia, Germany and the United States.<sup>11</sup>

However, in the spring of 2000 in the High Court of London, Irving brought a libel suit against the American historian Deborah Lipstadt and her British publisher, Penguin Books, for having alleged that he was “one of the most dangerous spokespersons for Holocaust denial.” Irving lost his case, and the verdict undoubtedly dealt a serious blow to Holocaust denial in Western Europe, though by no means a decisive knockout. Already in his brief opening statement, Richard Rampton QC, representing Deborah Lipstadt, declared that Irving was “not an historian at all, but a falsifier of history. To put it bluntly, he is a liar.” The British judge, Charles Gray, in his 350-page verdict, was no less unequivocal. Not only did he determine that Irving qualified “as a Holocaust denier,” but he also characterized him as a “right-wing pro-Nazi polemicist,” content to mix with neo-fascists and sharing “many of their racist and anti-semitic prejudices.”<sup>12</sup> In 2006, Irving

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<sup>10</sup> David Irving, Foreword, *The Leuchter Report* (London: Focal Point, 1989). At the 1989 conference of the Institute for Historical Review in California, Irving characterized Leuchter as “the best-qualified specialist on gas chambers.” See *ADL Fact-Finding Report* (New York 1989), 9. Shermer and Grobman, *Denying History*, 129–33.

<sup>11</sup> On Irving’s neo-Nazi connections and popularity in far Right circles in Germany, see Schmidt, *The New Reich*, 195–99.

<sup>12</sup> Richard J. Evans, *Lying about Hitler. History, Holocaust, and the David Irving Trial* (New York 2002); for Judge Gray’s verdict on the case, see *ibid.*, 225–43.

was tried and sentenced to jail for three years in Austria, for negationist remarks he had made on a visit there seventeen years earlier. In Austria, as in Germany, Switzerland, France, Poland, Portugal, Spain, and a number of other European countries, denying the Holocaust is a crime. Nor is Irving the only denier to have been prosecuted. In the United States, however, denial is not liable to prosecution, despite its malicious falsehoods.

Holocaust denial in the United States began with Harry Elmer Barnes, a passionate opponent of America's entry into World War I and its involvement in the war against Nazi Germany. Toward the end of his life, Barnes became literally obsessed with what he termed the "historical blackout"—a conspiracy against publishing his "isolationist" views. By the mid-1960s, he was also denying that Nazi Germany had committed mass murder.<sup>13</sup> It was Barnes who encouraged a former Harvard student, David Hoggan, to go to a neo-Nazi publishing house with his *Der erzwungene Krieg* (The forced war, 1961)—the core of his dissertation about the origins of World War II, which presented the British as warmongers, the Poles as provocateurs, and Hitler as an angel of peace. Hoggan's book was warmly received by the German radical Right. Eight years later he brought out a booklet, *The Myth of the Six Million* (1969), which attacked all the existing eyewitness testimony about the murder of European Jewry while distorting, suppressing, and inventing sources in the classic revisionist manner. It was published by Noontide Press, a subsidiary of Liberty Lobby (headed by Willis Carto), the best-organized and wealthiest antisemitic organization in the United States.

Carto, a racist and white supremacist, had for decades promoted the idea that international Jewish bankers were at the heart of a conspiracy that threatened the "racial heritage" of the white Western world. Like many other Holocaust deniers, he believed that the Western Allies in World War II fought against the wrong enemy in Nazi Germany.<sup>14</sup> Instead, they should have allied with Hitler against communism. In 1966, Carto took control of the *American Mercury*, an antisemitic monthly that almost immediately began to feature major articles on Holocaust denial. The theme was also given considerable prominence in the Liberty Lobby newspaper, *The Spotlight*, which could claim at its peak a circulation of around 300,000 copies. Carto was indeed the *eminence grise* of Holocaust denial in the United States. In 1979 he created the Institute of Historical Review and its annual *Journal of Historical Review* (which began publication in 1980 in Torrance, California). The journal succeeded in giving "revisionism" a deceptively scholarly

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<sup>13</sup> Dawidowicz, *What is the Use of Jewish History?*, 87–90.

<sup>14</sup> On Carto's background and beliefs, see Lipstadt, *Denying the Holocaust*; for a sample of his style, Willis A. Carto, "On the Uses of History," *JHR* 3, no. 1 (Spring 1982): 26–30.

format, learned footnotes, and involvement in organizing “revisionist” international conventions. It heralded the sinister determination of Holocaust deniers in the 1980s to win academic legitimacy.

The most significant example of new-style “critical” and “scientific” Holocaust revisionism appeared over thirty-five years ago in *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century* (1976) by Arthur Butz, a professor of electrical engineering and computer science at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. Butz adopted a pseudo-scientific tone, claiming that so-called “exterminationists” (by which he meant historians who believe in the death camps) had either misinterpreted or deliberately distorted the evidence. In his view, there had never been any exterminations at Auschwitz, which he described as a huge industrial plant and a “highly productive” work camp. The chemical Zyklon B had been nothing but insecticide for disinfecting worker’s clothing; the gas chambers were in fact baths, saunas, and mortuaries; the stench from the camp was due to hydrogenation and other chemical processes, not to the burning of dead bodies.<sup>15</sup> For the past three decades, similar falsehoods have been parroted by Holocaust deniers around the world.

Butz blamed the Holocaust “hoax” on three main sources: Allied propaganda designed to justify the high economic and human costs of war; Zionist machinations, which had successfully manipulated the Allied powers, especially the United States; and Communist self-interest in magnifying Nazi atrocities. But it was above all the Jewish and Zionist role in this world conspiracy that was central to Butz and his followers. The Holocaust was vital to Zionists in order to generate the popular sympathy necessary for creating the State of Israel.<sup>16</sup> Like most deniers, Butz also believed that the emotional grip of the “Holocaust myth” on the world enabled Israel to blackmail a prostate postwar Germany for reparations and to extract enormous political dividends from a guilt-ridden America. Moreover, the Holocaust, by becoming a new “canon of faith in the Jewish religion,” had strengthened the ties of the international Jewish community and made it more powerful than ever. Butz—himself a consummate falsifier of history—saw his task as debunking this “universe of lies” constructed by occult Zionist forces. The unemotional tone of his book, with its seemingly meticulous investigation

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<sup>15</sup> See Eatwell, “The Holocaust Denial,” 120 ff; and Peter I. Haupt, “A Universe of Lies: Holocaust Revisionism and the Myth of Jewish World Conspiracy,” *Patterns of Prejudice* 25, no 1 (Summer 1991); for information about Butz, see *Facts* 26, no 2 (June 1980): 7–8.

<sup>16</sup> For the connection between anti-Zionist antisemitism and Holocaust denial, Alain Finkelkraut, *L’Avenir d’une négation. Réflexions sur la question du génocide* (Paris 1982), 135 ff.

of the facts, provided a convenient mask for its underlying belief in a secret and sinister Jewish conspiracy controlling international events.

In Great Britain, a role analogous to that of Butz's work was played by the 1974 booklet, *Did Six Million Die? The Truth at Last* by Richard Harwood (the pseudonym of Richard Verrall, editor of the British National Front journal, *Spearhead*). Harwood borrowed heavily from Hoggan's *Myth of the Six Million* and from Frenchman Paul Rassinier, one of the founders of the so-called "revisionist" school in Europe. Typically, he rationalized Nazi antisemitism, describing it as a legitimate response to attacks by "international Jewry." He pretended that Hitler only wanted to transfer all Jews to Madagascar. Like other deniers, he also concocted the fabrication that population figures after the war proved Jewish losses to have been minimal. The diary of Anne Frank, as in all the denial literature, was naturally dismissed as a hoax.<sup>17</sup>

The political significance of Harwood's pamphlet lay more in its comments on race problems in Britain than in its ludicrous scholarly pretensions. The author maintained that Anglo-Saxons could not speak out openly about the need for racial self-preservation because the Holocaust "lie" had placed the subject beyond the pale. Britain and other European countries faced the gravest danger from the presence of "alien races" in their midst (Africans, Asians, and Arabs, as well as Jews), which was leading to the destruction of their culture and of their national heritage. The Jews had allegedly poured millions into supporting "race-mixing," in the hope of securing their global domination by weakening nationalist identities throughout the world. Self-defense against this "Jewish" peril had been sapped by the Holocaust, which had given Nazism and other forms of self-assertive racial nationalism a bad name. If the mass annihilation of the Jewish people could be deconstructed as a myth, then movements like the National Front in Great Britain could once again become feasible options.<sup>18</sup> This mania for rehabilitation has clearly been a major consideration in the widespread

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17 Harwood, *Did Six Million Really Die?*, 19; Butz, *Hoax of the Twentieth Century*, 37. The assault on the authenticity of the Anne Frank diary is an obsession with many Holocaust deniers. The Swedish antisemite and negationist, Dietlieb Felderer in 1978 in his own Bible Researcher Press published an attack on the diary; it was republished by the Institute of Historical Review under the title, *Anne Frank's Diary—A Hoax*. The French "revisionist" Robert Faurisson two years later published *Le Journal d'Anne Frank est-il authentique?* (Paris 1980). See David Barnouw and Gerrold van der Stroom, eds., *The Diary of Anne Frank. The Critical Edition* (New York 1989), 84–101, which deals with the Holocaust deniers and others who have raised doubts about the diaries, by providing exhaustive and detailed documentation of all editions.

18 For the British far Right background, see Gill Seidel, *The Holocaust Denial*; and on the ideological continuities between old and new fascists, see Michael Billig, "The Extreme Right:

adoption of Holocaust denial by extreme Right groups worldwide during the past four decades.

It was, however, in France that Holocaust “revisionism” put down its firmest roots and attained for awhile a modest degree of academic respectability. Already in 1948, the prominent French fascist, Maurice Bardèche had published his *Nuremberg ou la Terre Promise* (Nuremberg or the Promised Land), which bluntly insisted that World Jewry and the Allies had instigated World War II; they had shamelessly falsified facts at the Nuremberg war crimes trials, and invented the fiction of the gas chambers.<sup>19</sup> But it was a former socialist, Paul Rassinier, himself a prisoner at Buchenwald and other concentration camps, who first gave “revisionism” a certain plausibility for true believers.<sup>20</sup> Rassinier was partly motivated by a bitter hatred of communism, which gradually drove him toward developing an apologia for Nazism. Initially, he did not deny the Holocaust, though he dismissed all survivor testimony about death camps as grossly exaggerated. After 1950, Rassinier began to attack Jewish historians and scholars as “falsifiers” and to bitterly denounce Israel and world Jewry for hugely magnifying the death toll to increase their “ill-gotten gains.”<sup>21</sup>

By the early 1960s, Rassinier was adamant that the “genocide myth” had been invented by the “Zionist establishment.” At the same time, in his writings he transformed the Nazis from perpetrators into benefactors, insisting that there was no official German policy of extermination. He even managed to praise the “humane” behavior of the SS. Already in 1955, Rassinier’s book, *Le mensonge d’Ulysse* (Ulysses’s lie), with a preface by Albert Paraz (a neo-fascist friend of the fanatically antisemitic French writer Céline), had been published by an extreme Right firm. So were his books on the trial of Adolf Eichmann and *Le Drame des Juifs Européens* (The drama of European Jews, 1964), which categorically denied the existence of the gas chambers. By the mid-1960s, Rassinier had become closely identified with the French far Right. In 1964, he lost a libel case against

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Continuities in anti-Semitic Conspiracy in post-war Europe,” in *The Nature of the Right*, edited by R. Eatwell and N. O’Sullivan (London 1989).

<sup>19</sup> Bardèche was the brother-in-law of the French literary fascist Robert Brasillach (hanged for collaboration in 1945), and edited the neo-fascist journal *Défense de L’Occident*. A number of his books and articles in the early postwar period anticipated “revisionist” theses. See Pierre Vidal-Naquet and Limor Yagil, *Holocaust Denial in France. A Unique Phenomenon* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, Project for the Study of Anti-Semitism, 1995), 27–31.

<sup>20</sup> For Rassinier, see Vidal-Naquet and Yagil, *Holocaust Denial*, 31–35; and Finkelkraut, *L’Avenir d’une négation*, 118–31.

<sup>21</sup> Vidal-Naquet, *Assassins of Memory*, 31–38 for an analysis of Rassinier’s bizarre calculations.

Bernard Lecache (head of the International League against Antisemitism [LICA]), who had publicly accused him of making common cause with neo-Nazis in his revisionist writings.

Rassinier's most influential successor in France during the following decade was Robert Faurisson, formerly a professor of literature at the University of Lyon, and a critic who claimed to be entirely apolitical while in practice whitewashing the Germans and constantly invoking the enormous power of the Jews. In 1978, Faurisson published his first major article denying the existence of gas chambers. That same year, Darquier de Pellepoix (former commissioner for Jewish questions in the Vichy government) created a scandal in France with his notorious remark, "Only lice were gassed in Auschwitz."<sup>22</sup> Two years later, on December 17, 1980, Faurisson declared on French radio:

The claim of the existence of gas chambers and the genocide of Jews by Hitler constitutes one and the same historical lie, which opened the way to a gigantic political and financial fraud of which the principal beneficiaries are the state of Israel and international Zionism, and the principal victims the Germans and the entire Palestinian people.<sup>23</sup>

In 1981, Faurisson published his *Mémoire en défense contre ceux qui m'accusent de falsifier l'histoire: la question des chambres de gaz*, with a preface by the American Jewish scholar, virulent anti-Zionist and left-wing libertarian, Noam Chomsky. Although Chomsky claimed that he had not read Faurisson's work, he publicly deplored efforts to silence Faurisson, saying that he was the target of "a vicious campaign of harassment, intimidation, slander," and strongly supported his right to free speech. Chomsky absurdly referred to Faurisson as a liberal and praised his associate Serge Thion (a prolific left-wing Holocaust denier) as a "libertarian socialist scholar." Amazingly, Chomsky even wrote that he could see "no hint of antisemitic implications in Faurisson's work" or in denial of the Holocaust as such.<sup>24</sup> Nor did Chomsky, himself a savage critic of the United States and

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**22** On the background to the scandal, see Henry H. Weinberg, *The Myth of the Jew in France, 1967–1982* (New York 1987), 59–64; see also the book's introduction by Robert S. Wistrich.

**23** C. Columban, "Des universitaires s'affrontent sur le cas Faurisson," *Le Monde*, 30 June 1981; Nadine Fresco, "Les Redresseurs de Morts," *Temps Modernes* (June 1980); Vidal-Naquet and Yagil, *Denial*, 49–60.

**24** On Faurisson and Chomsky, Vidal-Naquet, *Assassins of Memory*, 65–73 (first published in 1981); and the booklet by Werner Cohn, *The Hidden Alliances of Noam Chomsky* (New York 1988), 11–12. The Holocaust deniers of the Institute for Historical Review approvingly published Noam Chomsky's article, "All Denials of Free Speech Undercut a Democratic Society," in its house organ, the *JHR* 7, no. 1 (Spring 1986): 123–27.



Zionism for decades, find anything antisemitic in the claim that the Holocaust “is being exploited, viciously so, by apologists for Israeli repression and violence.”

Faurisson’s writings were distributed in France by both the extreme Right, associated with the Parisian bookstore Ogmios, and the extreme Left publishing house La Vielle Taupe (The old mole) under the leadership of Pierre Guillaume.<sup>25</sup> Not surprisingly, Guillaume and Ogmios joined forces in 1987 to found a quarterly journal specializing in Holocaust denial, *Annales d’Histoire Révisioniste*. For the extreme Left, neither antisemitism nor identification with Nazi ideology or nostalgia for totalitarianism was the primary motivation for their assault on the “myth” of the gas chambers. They began from a dogmatic revolutionary position that Nazism was no worse than Western bourgeois capitalism and that both were equally guilty of crimes against the working class. By adopting the arguments of Rassinier and Faurisson, the revisionist far Left around Guillaume and Thion believed it could undermine the postwar anti-fascist consensus of the democratic world, based on the idea that Nazism and fascism were somehow unique evils.<sup>26</sup> If there were no gas chambers, they argued, then there was nothing unique about Nazi oppression. Eccentrics on the anarchist Left like Gabriel Cohn-Bendit even suggested that Soviet propaganda had concocted the “legend” of the gas chambers to cover up Stalinist crimes and make the Gulag (the Soviet prison camp system) seem less oppressive. Stalin in their eyes was no better than Hitler—a position also widely shared on the far Right and among some German and European conservatives.

Faurisson’s attractiveness to the far Left and even to some liberals in France was increased by the court trials he underwent between 1979 and 1983, which in the eyes of civil libertarians made him into a victim of censorship and repression, not to mention a symbol of free speech. Like Butz in the United States, Faurisson claimed to be challenging the “religious dogma” of the Shoah in the name of “enlightened” visions of science, progress, and a dispassionate search for the truth. Holocaust “revisionism,” in a pathetic parody of the Dreyfusard struggle for “revision” a century earlier, assumed the mantle of martyrdom for dissident views, of a sect wrongly persecuted solely for its pursuit of truth and justice.<sup>27</sup> The

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25 See Pierre Guillaume, *Droit et Histoire* (Paris 1986); and Vidal-Naquet, *Assassins of Memory*, ix–xxi.

26 See Serge Thion, *Vérité Historique ou vérité politique* (Paris 1980); Finkelkraut, *L’avenir*, 135ff; Vidal-Naquet, *Assassins of Memory*, 19, 24–25, 71–72.

27 The analogy and its bitter ironies are touched on in Jeffrey Mehlman’s perceptive introduction to *Assassins of Memory*, ix–xxi.



ultimate lie was now masquerading under the banner of Emile Zola's passionate war-cry of 1898 that "the truth was on the march."

Another strategy adopted by "revisionists" of all colors is to emphasize that there have been several holocausts in history (the lower case is deliberate), and that the Jews cannot therefore claim a monopoly on suffering. The left-wing lawyer Jacques Vergès, who defended the Nazi criminal Klaus Barbie in France in the late 1980s, consistently compared French colonial oppression in Algeria with the Holocaust precisely in order to relativize and neutralize its uniqueness.<sup>28</sup> Although Vergès stopped short of denying that the Holocaust actually happened, there were others who used such relativist arguments as part of a more wide-ranging effort to negate the Shoah. Thus Pierre Guillaume and his followers could find no difference between the Holocaust and American internment of Japanese-born U.S. citizens during World War II; between French official harassment of Spanish Republicans or anti-Nazis before 1939, and German concentration camps in wartime; or between what happened to millions of Russians, Poles, and Ukrainians who were shot or died in German camps, and the fate of the Jews.

The infiltration of the universities by so-called "negationists" was particularly striking in France. In 1985, Henri Rocques, who had been active in extreme Right movements for decades, received a doctorate in history with honors from the University of Nantes for a dissertation that challenged the existence of gas chambers at Belżec, rejecting the eyewitness testimony of Kurt Gerstein on the subject.<sup>29</sup> The judges for his dissertation included some distinguished academicians, who were mostly influenced by the ideas of the French New Right. Among Rocques's sympathizers was Bernard Notin, a professor of economics at the University of Lyon, who, writing in 1989 in a prestigious journal, relied on Faurisson and Thion when calling into question the number of Jewish victims in World War II.<sup>30</sup> Not only in the academy could one find such syntheses of rightist or left-wing extremism. Negationist publications like *Révision* in the late 1980s (though harassed by government legislation) were even more radical than their predecessors in the 1970s, with roots in the anarchist Left as well as the New Right. Holocaust denial provided the link between conspiracy theories about Jews and

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<sup>28</sup> Jacques Givet, *Le Cas Vergès* (Paris 1986); Vidal-Naquet, *Assassins of Memory*, 129–36.

<sup>29</sup> Henri Rocques, *Les confessions de Kurt Gerstein: Étude Comparative des Différentes Versions* (Ph.D. diss., University of Lyon, III, 1985). On the Rocques affair, see Henry H. Weinberg, "Revisionism: The Rocques Affair," *Midstream* 33, no. 4 (April 1987): 11–13; and Vidal-Naquet and Yagil, *Holocaust Denial in France*, 61–64 for useful information about Rocques and the academicians at the University of Nantes who unanimously approved his dissertation.

<sup>30</sup> See Henry Rousso, *Le dossier Lyon III. Le rapport sur le racisme et le négationnisme à l'université Jean-Moulin* (Paris 2004), 134–71. On the Rocques affair, see *ibid.*, 95–133.

freemasons, anticommunism, and virulent anti-Zionism. It has indeed become one of the most attractive weapons for those determined to demonize Jews and defame the State of Israel.

Holocaust denial in France, as in other European countries, was linked from the outset to efforts on the far Right to restore the “positive” image of Nazism and prewar fascism. Its impact grew from the early 1980s with the rise of the ultranationalist Front National of Jean-Marie Le Pen, which became solidly entrenched in the French political landscape. The Front National did not, it is true, openly and officially circulate Holocaust denial propaganda, but it has had a clear interest in minimizing and casting doubt on the Shoah. Negationism also appealed to a number of anarchists, dissident Marxists, and ex-Trotskyists, as well as to some Catholic integrist and disoriented liberals.

A revealing example of how Holocaust denial crosses political boundaries can be found in the scandal involving Abbé Pierre, a missionary Catholic, populist defender of the poor and former member of the Résistance. Abbé Pierre, an extremely popular media star in France, was already in his eighties when he came out in support of his old friend Roger Garaudy, whose 1995 book, *Les Mythes Fondateurs de la politique Israélienne*, was an unadulterated piece of Holocaust denial. Garaudy, an ex-Stalinist, ex-Catholic, and leftist convert to Islam, was immensely appreciated in the Arab world for his vitriolic hostility to Israel and the “Judeo-Christian” West, further reinforced by *Les Mythes Fondateurs*—which was not only anti-Zionist but clearly anti-Jewish. When Abbé Pierre nonetheless rallied to Garaudy’s Holocaust “revisionism,” it caused a considerable stir.<sup>31</sup>

In pre-unification West Germany, as in France, efforts to repudiate the Holocaust had begun in the 1950s, and ever since it has become a staple theme of neo-Nazis, German nationalists, the far Right, and the *Deutsche National Zeitung*. But it was only in the 1970s that books published by Germans which openly denied the Holocaust, began to attract attention. In 1973, a former SS officer and neo-Nazi, Thies Christopherson (who had actually worked on the periphery of Auschwitz in 1944), published his scurrilous *Die Auschwitz Lüge* (the Auschwitz lie).<sup>32</sup> He was followed by the jurist Wilhelm Stäglich, whose book, *Der Auschwitz-Mythos* (The Auschwitz myth, 1979), led Göttingen University to deprive him of the title of doctor. Both authors were determined to prove that the Holocaust was a propaganda hoax designed to stigmatize and shame the Germans

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31 “Le faux pas de l’abbé Pierre,” *L’Express*, 25 Apr. 1996, 33; Eric Conan and Sylviane Stein, “Ce qui a fait chuter l’abbé Pierre,” *L’Express*, 2 May 1996, 20–25.

32 See Schmidt, *The New Reich*, 224–27 for some information on Christopherson.

into an unjustified sense of guilt.<sup>33</sup> The aim of the deniers was to decriminalize German history by presenting a more favorable picture of National Socialism and above all by denying the existence of the gas chambers.

Since the late 1980s, the emphasis in Germany moved, however, to more scientific and technical arguments to prove the impossibility of mass murder in any of the death camps. Hence the macabre concern with the capacity of the crematoria, the time needed to burn a body, and the properties of Zyklon B poison gas. In 1992, Germar Rudolf, a chemist then employed at the prestigious Max Planck Institute for Solid State Research, wrote an expert opinion on “The Formation and Provability of Cyanide connections in the ‘Gas Chambers’ of Auschwitz.” Rudolf’s “chemical analyses” had been commissioned by one of Germany’s veteran and best-known neo-Nazis, Otto Ernst Remer, a former major-general in the Wehrmacht, who had suppressed the July plot of the German resistance to assassinate Hitler in 1944.<sup>34</sup> In 1992, Remer stood trial for denying the genocide of the Jews, and the Rudolf Report (rejected by the court) was part of his defense. In an accompanying letter to the report, Remer wrote that in an age of religious freedom, “all of us must oppose the ‘holocaust religion’ which the courts have forced upon us.”<sup>35</sup>

Also in 1992, the then-chairman of the extreme Right NPD, Günther Deckert, was fined and given a suspended sentence for inciting racism and insulting the victims of the Holocaust. In June 1994, in a judicial review of the case that rescinded the sentence, Deckert was described as a man of “strong character with a sense of responsibility,” who was motivated by the understandable wish “to strengthen resistance among the German people to Jewish claims based on the Holocaust.” The Karlsruhe High Court’s empathy extended to Deckert’s bitter resentment of financial, moral, and political reparations fifty years after the war, and the judgment even considered his historical “revisionism” to be an extenuating circumstance. The judge’s substantiation several times called Jews “parasites” who had misused their situation as survivors to place a heavy financial burden on the German people. This ruling aroused a storm of public indignation.<sup>36</sup> It was denounced as a disgrace by Chancellor Helmut Kohl and condemned at the time by the German justice minister. By December 1994, it had

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33 Wilhelm Stäglich, *Der Auschwitz-Mythos* (Tübingen 1979). Stäglich’s approach is more straightforwardly Nazi.

34 N.a., *Gutachten über die behaupteten Gaskammern von Auschwitz* (Bad Kissingen, October 1992).

35 For a portrait of Remer, see Schmidt, *The New Reich*, 105–11.

36 On the Deckert case, see *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 11 and 15 Aug. 1994.

been reversed by the federal German court. The Deckert case underlined the fact that in Germany, Holocaust denial was not only an expression of extreme Right nationalists and illiterate skinheads, but also served as a code for a new kind of antisemitism offering a bridge between the old and newer generation of Nazis. However, since 1994, a bill has been enacted which permits sentences of up to five years in jail for denying the Holocaust. One of the first to be imprisoned under this act was Ewald Althans, a leading Munich-based neo-Nazi activist of the younger generation, who openly spouted Holocaust denial propaganda in a documentary film, *Profession: Neo-Nazi*, subsequently banned throughout most of Germany.<sup>37</sup>

Open or latent antisemitism is undoubtedly the key factor behind the spread of Holocaust denial. At the same time, “revisionists” play on the widespread German desire to be released from shame and guilt, to “normalize” the Nazi past, and reassert a robust patriotism. Even notable scholars like the German historian Ernst Nolte have used arguments in their writings which are clearly taken from the “revisionists.” Nolte, for example, has stubbornly and irrationally insisted that a statement by Dr. Chaim Weizmann (president of the World Zionist Organization) in September 1939 that Jews would support Britain and the democracies amounted to a declaration of war on Germany, thereby justifying Hitler’s treatment of them as hostages. This is a classic negationist thesis. Moreover, Nolte has argued that the Holocaust (except for the “technical detail” of the gas chambers) was no different from any other massacres in the twentieth century. Even more provocatively, he suggested that the Nazi genocide was nothing but a pale copy of the Soviet Gulag—the Bolshevik extermination of the kulaks and other class enemies; indeed, for Nolte, the Nazi extermination of Jews was essentially a preventive measure against “Asiatic” barbarism from the East.<sup>38</sup>

These relativizing arguments of Nolte gave rise to the well-known *Historikerstreit* (battle of the historians) in Germany in the mid-1980s. They were sharply rejected by most established German historians. Nevertheless, Nolte received considerable support from a younger generation of conservative and nationalist historians, scholars, and writers, who regard his claims as constituting a liberating act. This has been especially troubling, since in a book published in 1993, Nolte wrote that the “radical revisionists [i.e., Holocaust deniers] have presented

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<sup>37</sup> On Althans, see Schmidt, *The New Reich*, 200–201.

<sup>38</sup> On Nolte, the West German *Historikerstreit*, and its implications, there is already a significant literature. See Richard J. Evans, *In Hitler’s Shadow. West German Historians and the Attempt to Escape from the Nazi Past* (New York 1989), 24–91. A good example of Nolte’s own approach can be found in Ernst Nolte, “Between Myth and Revisionism? The Third Reich in the Perspective of the 1980s,” in *Aspects of the Third Reich*, edited by H. W. Koch (New York 1985), 17–38.

research which, if one is familiar with the source material and the critique of the sources, is probably superior to that of the established historians in Germany.”<sup>39</sup>

By contrast, in the former Soviet Union, under Communist rule, there was no denial of Nazi war crimes, at least with regard to the fate of the Soviet population as such. However, Soviet writings consistently masked the fact that Jews were murdered only because they were Jews, presenting them instead as Russians, Ukrainians, and citizens of different European countries. Hence there was no monument under Soviet rule to the overwhelmingly Jewish victims of the Babi Yar massacre on the outskirts of Kiev in September 1941, or at other Holocaust sites. The specificity of the Shoah was deliberately dissolved under the rubric of millions of Soviet victims of all nationalities who suffered under German fascism.<sup>40</sup> Things changed for the worse in the 1970s when a group of “anti-Zionist” publicists, sponsored by the Soviet government, began to propagate the slander that Zionist leaders had callously “collaborated” with the Nazis in the murder of their own people. This was part of an intensive antisemitic campaign by the USSR and the Communist bloc to present the state of Israel, Zionists, and pro-Israel diaspora Jews as fascists who had cynically manipulated the Holocaust in order to cover up their own crimes.<sup>41</sup>

Some Soviet “anti-Zionist” publicists also began to challenge the veracity of the figures concerning the number of Jews killed in the Shoah. In June 1982, Lev Korneev wrote: “The Zionists’ vile profiteering at the expense of the victims of Hitlerism places in doubt the number, which is current in the press, of 6 million Jews who were allegedly destroyed during World War II.” For Korneev and his ilk, there were no limits to Zionist perfidy.<sup>42</sup> This was also a favorite theme of left-wing revisionists in the West like Lenny Brenner (an American Jewish Trotskyist), whose book, *Zionism in the Age of the Dictators* (1983), was based on the premise

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39 Ernst Nolte, *Streitpunkte, Heutige und Künftige Kontroversen um den Nationalsozialismus* (Berlin 1993), 304.

40 Lucy S. Dawidowicz, *The Holocaust and the Historians* (Cambridge, Mass. 1981), 68–87; William Korey, “Soviet Treatment of the Holocaust: History’s ‘Memory Hole,’” in *Remembering for the Future: The Impact of the Holocaust on the Contemporary World* (Oxford 1988), 1357–1365.

41 For a detailed analysis of this phenomenon, see Robert S. Wistrich, *Hitler’s Apocalypse. Jews and the Nazi Legacy* (London 1985), 194–225.

42 Ibid., 205–206, 214, 217. Korey, “Soviet Treatment,” deals with Korneev in his 1988 article, and in his book, *Russian Antisemitism, Pamyat, and the Demonology of Zionism* (London 1995). The article by Korneev which best represented the Soviet-style revisionism appeared in *Voenno-Istoricheski Zhurnal* (6 June 1982) examining the Second World War and the “myths of Zionist propaganda.”

that Zionism and Nazism were essentially congruent. The Zionists, he insinuated, had cynically profited from the Holocaust after their leaders had first colluded in the genocide of Jews.<sup>43</sup> Brenner's main political purpose was to morally delegitimize Israel and Zionism. He found a worthy successor in the ranting of another American Jewish leftist, Norman Finkelstein, whose best-selling book, *The Holocaust Industry*, has been a godsend to the far Right, far Left, and Arab antisemites.<sup>44</sup>

With the end of the Cold War and the overthrow of Soviet communism, the trend toward Holocaust denial has steadily grown in Russia and Eastern Europe. The revolutions of 1989 restored free speech and thereby provided new openings for political antisemitism and for popular prewar conspiracy theories like the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* to be revived. Moreover, some post-Communist countries, such as Croatia and Slovakia initially looked to wartime models on which to build their newly found statehood. During World War II, as satellites of Nazi Germany, they had briefly enjoyed the illusion of national independence, carrying out genocidal policies against Jews, as well as Serbs and Gypsies. The nationalist efforts at rehabilitating Father Josef Tiso in Slovakia or Ante Pavelić in Croatia inevitably involved excusing, denying, or even justifying their genocidal actions. In 1989, Croatia's president, Franjo Tudjman, wrote a book entitled *Wastelands of Historical Reality*, which not only greatly minimized Jewish casualties during the Holocaust, but also displaced the blame for Croat massacres of Serbs in World War II onto the Jews.<sup>45</sup> In Slovakia, despite recent efforts to commemorate the murdered Jews and publicize the real story of the Holocaust, there are still many Slovaks who regard their wartime leader, Monsignor Tiso, as a national hero and martyr. To bolster this belief, they falsely claim that the Slovak rulers were forced by the Nazis to deport Jews, and were unaware of the true nature of the crimes being committed in the East.

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<sup>43</sup> See Robert S. Wistrich, "Perdition: a 'tawdry political pamphlet,'" *Patterns of Prejudice* 21, no. 4 (Winter 1987): 48–50 for an analysis of left-wing "revisionism" in Great Britain, prompted by the controversy over Jim Allen's play *Perdition* about the Holocaust, Zionism, and the Kasztner Affair. Allen, a British Trotskyist, was much influenced by Brenner's theses.

<sup>44</sup> See Ruth Ellen Gruber, *The Struggle. The Rehabilitation of Fascist Heroes in Europe* (New York: American Jewish Committee, 1995), 32 pp; and on Slovakia, the very detailed survey by Zora Bútorová and Zuzana Fialová, *Attitudes towards Jews and the Holocaust in Slovakia* (Bratislava: Center for Social Analysis, 1993). For the wider picture, see Randolph Braham, ed. *Antisemitism and the Treatment of the Holocaust in Postcommunist Eastern Europe* (New York 1995).

<sup>45</sup> Norman G. Finkelstein, *The Holocaust Industry* (New York 2000). The German edition reached the top of the best sellers list; Gruber, *The Struggle*, 22–23.

In Romania, the drive to rehabilitate the wartime leader and ally of Hitler, Marshal Ion Antonescu, also produced serious distortions of the Holocaust. Already under the Communist dictator Nicolai Ceausescu, the official party line was to pretend that the Romanian Holocaust did not happen, though the deportation of Jews to Auschwitz from Hungarian-controlled northern Transylvania was deliberately emphasized in order to embarrass Hungary. After 1990, right-wing politicians and much of the media harshly attacked President Iliescu whenever he criticized the Antonescu regime or seemed sympathetic to Jewish efforts to have Romanian complicity in the Holocaust recognized. His attendance at the opening of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. over a decade ago was denounced by Romanian nationalists as a “pitiable lack of dignity in front of the global Zionist trend of stigmatizing peoples and nations in order to control humankind unchallenged.”<sup>46</sup> Since 2000, the tendency to deny that Romanians were complicit in murdering the Jews during the Holocaust was still present, even at the highest level.<sup>47</sup> The 2005 report by an independent group of scholars on the Holocaust in Romania nonetheless represented an important breakthrough in this regard.

In Poland, on the other hand, the blatantly antisemitic Catholic radio station, Radio Maryja (directed by Father Tadeusz Rydzyk), which enjoys a mass audience of several million listeners, has accused Jews in Poland and beyond of being part of a global “Holocaust industry.” In July 2007, Father Rydzyk even asserted that the Polish president was in the hands of the “Jewish lobby” who were supposedly pressing extravagant restitution claims against Poland.

In Hungary, attempts to rehabilitate the wartime leader, Admiral Miklós Horthy, which coincided with his reburial amid much public fanfare in September 1993, led to serious distortions that ignored his complicity in the deportation of Jews from Hungary. True, on October 5, 1994, the Hungarian government did officially apologize for its country’s role in the Holocaust. On the other hand, antisemitism in recent years has grown apace in Hungary, some of it connected with Holocaust denial. When the Hungarian Jewish novelist and Auschwitz survivor, Imre Kertész, was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2002, he was the butt of sharp criticism on the Right. A year earlier, he told the Spanish newspaper,

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**46** Michael Shafir, “Marshal Ion Antonescu and Romanian Politics,” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Report*, 3, no. 6 (11 Feb. 1994); see also Carol Iancu, *La Shoah en Roumanie* (Montpellier 2000); and Tuvia Friling, Radu Ioanid, Mihail E. Ionescu, eds., *Final Report of the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania* (Bucharest 2005).

**47** On the notorious interview of Romanian President Iliescu in which he denied there was a Holocaust in Romania, see *Haaretz*, 27 Aug. 2003.



*El País*: “Today I live in a very anti-Semitic [Hungarian] society that does not like Jews. I always felt that they forced me to be Jewish.”<sup>48</sup> In Hungary, as in the Baltic States and elsewhere in post-Communist Europe, the role played by Jews in the Soviet-dominated system before 1989 has been used to downplay the extent of local collaboration in the Nazi Holocaust.

Negationism enlists a wide variety of strategies and assumes many different forms adapted to the history and political cultures in which it operates. It nonetheless developed into an international movement with its own networks, gatherings, public forums, propaganda, and pseudo-scientific journals. Since the mid-1970s, when it first began to crystallize in an organized way and achieve a certain cultural legitimacy, it managed to attract considerable media attention. Though it failed to penetrate the broad mainstream of informed public opinion and serious scholarship in the United States or Europe, it made some inroads in its drive to be accepted as an “alternative school” of history, especially through the internet. Cyberspace is today the chosen highway of the Holocaust deniers, especially in the United States. They have learned to use the Internet as a tool to amplify and to spread their bigoted arguments and poisonous theories to a mass audience. An early pioneer in exploiting the World Wide Web for this purpose was the German-born Canadian hater, Ernst Zündel, an inveterate showman who ran a mini-multimedia empire out of Toronto. Though finally extradited to Germany, Zündel was able for several decades to cast himself as a heroic warrior “against the lie of the century,” seeking to vindicate Hitler and the Nazis while maligning the Jews.<sup>49</sup> The Internet provided him with a way to circumvent increasingly stringent European legislation designed to punish neo-Nazi propagandists and Holocaust deniers. Similarly, the Institute for Historical Review in California developed its own web sites to promote the notion that the Holocaust was a Zionist (or Stalinist) fiction. One of the institute’s most active collaborators, Bradley Smith, exploited the Web as an extension of his “Campus Project” to promote lies about the Holocaust at American colleges and universities. His aim was to legitimize denial as an authentic part of Holocaust study by perverting the commitment of universities to open inquiry and academic freedom.

On American campuses a decade ago, the advertisements sponsored by Smith’s deceptively-named Committee for Open Debate on the Holocaust sparked an intensive debate about the limits of free speech. Through a misguided understanding of the First Amendment, some campuses even accepted his texts, despite their blatant falsification of history and gross insult to the memory of survivors.

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<sup>48</sup> “Exista medios para dominar al hombre, *El País*, 11 Mar. 2001.

<sup>49</sup> ADL, *Hitler’s Apologists*, 37–40.



In these deliberate misinformation campaigns, deniers learned to present themselves as martyrs for free speech, fearlessly challenging the “religious dogmas” and the so-called taboos of what they called the Holocaust establishment and its “thought police.”<sup>50</sup>

The “truths” of the deniers were, of course, fabrications which ignored a huge mass of evidence that ran counter to their conclusions. As part their academic façade, they would borrow freely from one another in a never-ending merry-go-round of incestuous falsehoods, while pompously cultivating a veneer of scientific objectivity. The “revisionists” were often engaged in rehabilitating Nazism, fascism, and racism, under the guise of free speech and seeking “the truth.” Antisemitism played a crucial role in this endeavor—especially in the Arab world—since the Holocaust “hoax” was defined from the outset as a Jewish or Zionist conspiracy.<sup>51</sup> For others, anti-Zionism, allied to an unconditional pro-Palestinian enthusiasm was the primary driving force. This is particularly common on the Left and has begun to infiltrate parts of the liberal mainstream. For the anti-globalist Left, anarchists, Trotskyists, and Third World ideologues, their eagerness to indict Western colonialism at any price and to highlight other injustices they feel have been overshadowed by the Holocaust, acts as an additional motivation.<sup>52</sup>

But the most potent and widespread form of Holocaust denial today is undoubtedly to be found in the Middle East.<sup>53</sup> Arab and Muslim Judeophobes have annexed the symbols and expressions of European antisemitism, including Holocaust denial, as an integral part of their war against Israel.<sup>54</sup> In recent years,

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50 See, for example, the full-page advertisement published in *Student Life* (Washington University, St. Louis), 18 Feb. 1992. Written by Bradley R. Smith, it is entitled “The Holocaust Controversy: The Case for Open Debate.” For the increasing use of the Internet, see ADL, *Web of Hate. Extremists Exploit the Internet* (New York: 1996), 25ff.

51 For a probing analysis of the links between Arab anti-Zionist and antisemitic demonology, the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, and Holocaust “revisionism,” see Pierre-André Taguieff, *Les Protocoles des Sages de Sion. Faux et Usages d'un Faux* (Paris 1992), 295–363.

52 On Auschwitz and the Third World, see the discussion in Vidal-Naquet, *Assassins of Memory*, 126–36.

53 Goetz Nordbruch, *The Socio-Historical Background of Holocaust Denial in Arab Countries*, ACTA no. 17 (Jerusalem: Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2001); see also Pierre-André Taguieff, *La Judéophobie des Modernes. Des Lumières au Jihad mondial* (Paris 2008); Robert S. Wistrich, *A Lethal Obsession: From Antiquity to the Global Jihad* (New York: Random House, 2010).

54 See Ibrahim Alloush, director of the Free Arab Voice website <http://freearabvoice.org>. He told the *JHR* (May–June 2001) that the Arab world was a fertile ground for “revisionist seeds.”

this has become one of the central planks of Muslim Arab antisemitism.<sup>55</sup> One finds a growing readiness among Muslims to believe that the Jews consciously *invented* the “Auschwitz lie,” the “hoax” of their own extermination, as part of a diabolical plan to overwhelm Islam and achieve world domination. In this super-Machiavellian scenario, the satanic archetype of the conspiratorial Jew—author and beneficiary of the greatest “myth” of the 20th century—has achieved a gruesome and novel apotheosis.

One of the attractions of Holocaust denial to Arab Judeophobes lies in what they believe to be its radical challenge to the moral foundations of the Israeli State. Palestinian Arab leaders and intellectuals are particularly prominent in this endeavor. Thus, Palestinian Hamas leader Khalid Mash'al, appearing on Al-Jazeera TV on 16 July 2007 wished “to make it clear to the West and the German people” that they were being “blackmailed because of what Nazism did to the Zionists, or to the Jews.” For Mash'al, it was self-evident “that what Israel did to the Palestinian people is many times worse than what Nazism did to the Jews, and there is exaggeration, which has become obsolete, regarding the issue of the Holocaust.” This is evidently what motivated Mahmoud Abbas (better known as Abu Mazen), the chief PLO architect of the Oslo peace accords and head of the Palestinian Authority. In 1984 he authored a work entitled *The Other Side: The Secret Relationship between Nazism and the Zionist Movement* that accused Israel of deliberately inflating the number of Jews killed in the Holocaust. He openly questioned whether gas chambers were really used for extermination. Abu Mazen bluntly suggested that the number of Jewish victims of the Shoah was “even fewer than one million.”<sup>56</sup> But Abu Mazen is a “moderate” compared to the former Moroccan army officer, Ahmed Rami, who in the 1980s began to develop his own fully-fledged Holocaust denial campaign from Stockholm, where he founded Radio Islam. Under the cover of “anti-Zionism” and of defending the Palestinian cause, Rami called for “a new Hitler” who would rally the West and Islam against the cancer of “Jewish power,” and free it forever from the mendacious yoke of “Talmudism” and the “Holocaust industry.”<sup>57</sup>

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55 Eliahu Salpeter, “Anti-Semitism among the Arabs,” *Haaretz*, 9 Feb. 2000.

56 See ADL, *Holocaust Denial in the Middle East. The Latest Anti-Israel Propaganda Theme* (New York 2001), 5–6. Abu Mazen never retracted his Holocaust denial book despite a request to do so from the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles. He told the Israeli newspaper *Maariv* that he wrote the work at a time when the PLO was “at war with Israel.” After Oslo, he claimed, he would not have made such remarks.

57 See Per Ahlmark, “Reflections on Combating Anti-Semitism,” in *The Rising Tide of Anti-Semitism*, edited by Yaffa Zilbershats (Givat Shmuel: Bar Ilan University, 1993), 59–66. Mr Ahlmark, who co-founded the Swedish Committee against Anti-Semitism, has called Rami’s

In Iran, too, Holocaust denial spread since the early 1980s, alongside *Stürmer*-like caricatures of the “Talmudic Jew,” the obsessive promotion of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, and repeated calls to eradicate the Zionist “cancer” from the planet.<sup>58</sup> It was a logical step for militant Khomeini-style radicalism which since 1979 had totally demonized Zionism, seeing it as a uniquely malevolent and insidious 20th-century reincarnation of the “subversive and cunning spirit of Judaism.”<sup>59</sup> Hence, it is no surprise to find the present-day leader of Iran, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei proclaiming to his people:

There is evidence which shows that Zionists had close relations with German Nazis and exaggerated statistics on Jewish killings. There is even evidence on hand that a large number of non-Jewish hooligans and thugs of Eastern Europe were forced to emigrate to Palestine as Jews...to install in the heart of the Islamic world an anti-Islamic State under the guise of supporting the victims of racism....<sup>60</sup>

Iranian President Ahmadinejad has escalated this negationism to a new level of brazenness by repeatedly attacking the Holocaust since 2005 as a “myth” or as “Zionist propaganda.” Many Iranian journalists, taking their cue from him, have repeated that the “Zionist lobby” uses the Holocaust “as a club with which to beat and extort the West.”

In December 2006, Iran even hosted a much-publicized conference of the world’s best-known Holocaust deniers. The Iranian Foreign Minister, Manouchehr Mottaki, opened the proceedings, stating that “If the official version of the Holocaust is thrown in doubt, then the identity and nature of Israel will be thrown in doubt.” All the participants questioned whether the Holocaust had taken place, trivialized it and insisted that the event had been grossly manipulated to serve Israel’s financial and political interests.

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Holocaust denial statements “the most vicious anti-Jewish campaign in Europe since the Third Reich.” Rami has been prosecuted in Swedish courts on three occasions. He was again convicted and fined in October 2000.

**58** See *Imam* (March 1984 and May 1984)—a publication of the Iranian Embassy in London; also n.a., *The Imam against Zionism* (n.p.: Ministry of Islamic Guidance, Islamic Republic of Iran, 1983) for the Ayatollah Khomeini’s malevolent view of Israel. See Emmanuel Sivan, “Islamic Fundamentalism, Antisemitism, and Anti-Zionism,” in *Anti-Zionism and Antisemitism in the Contemporary World*, edited by Robert S. Wistrich (London 1990) 74–84.

**59** Olivier Carré, *L’Utopie Islamique dan l’Orient Arabe* (Paris 1991), 195–201; Robert S. Wistrich, “The Antisemitic Ideology in the Contemporary Islamic World,” in *Rising Tide*, 67–74.

**60** *Jerusalem Post*, 25 Apr. 2001. A year earlier, a conservative Iranian newspaper, the *Tehran Times*, had insisted in an editorial that the Holocaust was “one of the greatest frauds of the 20th century.” This prompted a complaint by the British MP Louise Ellman to the Iranian ambassador in London: *Agence France-Presse*, 14 May 2000.

The Mufti of Jerusalem, Sheikh Ikrima Sabri, had adopted this line at least six years earlier, telling the *New York Times*:

[W]e believe the number of six million is exaggerated. The Jews are using this issue, in many ways, also to blackmail the Germans financially.... The Holocaust is protecting Israel.<sup>61</sup>

Other Palestinians have become explicitly “revisionist” in their perceptions of the Holocaust. Hassan al-Agha, professor at the Islamic University in Gaza City, declared on a PA cultural affairs television program in 1997:

[T]he Jews view it [the Holocaust] as a profitable activity so they inflate the number of victims all the time. In another ten years, it do not know what number they will reach.... As you know, when it comes to economics and investments, the Jews have been very experienced even since the days of *The Merchant of Venice*.<sup>62</sup>

Seif Ali al-Jarwan, writing a year later in the Palestinian newspaper, *Al Hayat al-Jadeeda*, also invoked the shadow of Shylock, representing “the image of the greedy, cunning, evil, and despised Jews” who succeeded in brainwashing American and European public opinion:

They concocted horrible stories of gas chambers which Hitler, they claimed, used to burn them alive. The press overflowed with pictures of Jews being gunned down...or being pushed into gas chambers.... The truth is that such persecution was a malicious fabrication by the Jews.<sup>63</sup>

Another example of this popular genre can be found in an article by the editor of *Tishreen* (Syria’s leading daily). He accused the Zionists of cynically inflating the Holocaust “to astronomic proportions” in order to “deceive international public opinion, win its empathy and blackmail it....” Israel and the Jewish organizations, he wrote, encourage “their distorted version of history” in order to squeeze ever more funds from Germany and other European states in restitution payments. But they also use the Holocaust “as a sword hanging over the necks of all who oppose

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<sup>61</sup> *New York Times*, 26 Mar. 2000. Sabri added: “It’s certainly not our fault if Hitler hated the Jews. Weren’t they pretty much hated everywhere?”

<sup>62</sup> Quoted in ADL, *Holocaust Denial in the Middle East*, 12.

<sup>63</sup> *Al Hayat al-Jadeeda*, “Jewish Control of the World Media” (trans. by MEMRI), 2 July 1998. A crossword puzzle in the same Palestinian newspaper, 18 Feb. 1999 asked readers to guess the name of the “Jewish center for eternalizing the Holocaust and its lies.” The correct answer was “Yad Vashem”—the official Israeli Holocaust memorial and research center in Jerusalem.

Zionism.”<sup>64</sup> This Zionist effort to paralyze human memory and critical discussion was, however, bound to fail:

Israel, that presents itself as the heir of Holocaust victims, has committed and still commits much more terrible crimes than those committed by the Nazis. The Nazis did not expel a whole nation nor bury people and prisoners alive, as the Zionists did.<sup>65</sup>

The European “revisionist” most frequently mentioned as a source for Arab Holocaust deniers has been the French left-wing intellectual (and convert to Islam) Roger Garaudy. Indeed, the trial and conviction of Garaudy in France in 1998 for “négationisme” made him a hero in much of the Middle East.<sup>66</sup> Among his admirers was the former president of Iran, Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, who in a sermon on Tehran Radio, declared himself fully convinced that “Hitler had only killed 20,000 Jews and not six million,” adding that “Garaudy’s crime derives from the doubt he cast on Zionist propaganda.”<sup>67</sup>

Rafsanjani is the same “moderate” cleric who proclaimed on “Jerusalem Day” in Iran that “one atomic bomb would wipe out Israel without a trace,” while the Islamic world would only be damaged rather than destroyed by Israeli nuclear retaliation.<sup>68</sup> In the Iranian case, Holocaust denial is openly linked to extreme anti-Zionism, antisemitism, and terrorism driven by the cult of jihad which seeks the eradication of the “tumor called Israel.” This combination is potentially all the more lethal in the light of Iran’s frantic efforts to acquire nuclear weapons. It is characteristic of this fanatical mind-set that the real Nazi Holocaust inflicted upon the Jews should be so strenuously denied by those that would repeat it.<sup>69</sup>

The Garaudy Affair exposed over ten years ago the scale and vitality of Holocaust denial in the Arab world. Arabic translations of Garaudy’s work became

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<sup>64</sup> Muhammad Kheir al-Wadi, “The Plague of the Third Millennium,” *Tishreen*, 31 Jan. 2000.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> *Al-Ahram*, 14 Mar. 1998, defended Garaudy by arguing inter alia that there was “no trace of the gas chambers” which were supposed to have existed in Germany. In point of fact, there were no gas chambers erected in Germany itself—the death camps were primarily located in Poland.

<sup>67</sup> ADL, *Holocaust Denial in the Middle East*, 8–9.

<sup>68</sup> The remarks were made at Friday prayers held at the University of Tehran on Dec. 15, 2001 and widely reported in the world press. A day earlier on Iranian TV, Rafsanjani stated: “The establishment of the State of Israel is the worst event in history. The Jews living in Israel will have to migrate once more.”

<sup>69</sup> It is no accident that European Holocaust deniers like the Austrian engineer, Wolfgang Fröhlich, and the Swiss Jürgen Graf, are welcomed and resident in Iran. See ADL, *Holocaust Denial in the Middle East*, 7–8.

best-sellers in many Middle Eastern countries, though in France he was convicted of inciting racial hatred.<sup>70</sup> Some Arab professionals eagerly offered their services to help Garaudy. The binding ideological cement behind this outpouring of solidarity was a *Protocols*-style antisemitism which branded the Holocaust as a Zionist invention. Hence the favorable reaction to Garaudy's thesis by so many Arab newspapers and magazines or by prominent clerics like Sheikh Muhammad al-Tantawi, politicians like the late Rafiq Hariri, or Egyptian intellectuals such as Mohammed Hassanin Haikal.<sup>71</sup>

Palestinian intellectuals, clerics, and legislators have also displayed great reluctance to incorporate any aspect of the Shoah into their teaching curricula, evidently fearing that it might strengthen Zionist claims to Palestine.<sup>72</sup> Hatem Abd al-Qadar, a Hamas leader, explained in an internal Palestinian debate that such instruction would represent "a great danger for the formation of a Palestinian consciousness." The Holocaust was a threat to Palestinian political dreams and religious aspirations. It could undermine the promise by Allah that the *whole of Palestine* was a sacred possession of the Arabs. Other Palestinian intellectuals invoke "doubts" about the "veracity" of the Shoah in the West, or call for a more concentrated focus on Zionist "terror," "cruelty," and "massacres" of Palestinians; or they insisted that any reference to Jewish victims of the Holocaust must be minimized, if not excluded.<sup>73</sup>

According to the Palestinian intellectual Abdallah Horani, Israel and the Zionists should not be offered Palestinian assistance to propagate their "lies" and their "false history" of the Shoah. The Holocaust is thereby reduced to an American-Israeli plot to efface Palestinian national memory in favor of the globalizing "culture of peace" and to prepare the ground for the ideological-cultural penetration of Palestine by the West. The head of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad in Gaza,

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70 Roger Garaudy, *Les Mythes Fondateurs de la politique israélienne* (Paris 1995). A former Catholic, then a Communist, Garaudy became a Muslim in 1982 and married a Jerusalem-born Palestinian woman. On the echoes in France, see Pierre-André Taguieff, "L'Abbé Pierre et Roger Garaudy. Négationisme, Antijudaïsme, Antisionisme," *Esprit*, no. 8–9 (1996): 215; Valérie Igounet, *Histoire du Négationisme en France* (Paris 2000), 472–83.

71 Mouna Naim in *Le Monde*, 1 Mar. 1998.

72 MEMRI Report, 20 Feb. 2001.

73 *Al-Risala* (Gaza), 13 Apr. 2000. In *Al-Risala*, 21 Aug. 2003, Abdelaziz al-Rantisi—then the second most important leader of the Hamas—insisted that the Zionists had invented and diffused the "Holocaust lie" to divert attention from their wicked crimes against the Palestinians. I heard him say something similar in Gaza in May 2003, when we interviewed him for a British Television Channel Four documentary, "Blaming the Jews," for which I acted as the chief historical advisor.

Sheikh Nafez Azzam, summed up in cosmic theological language this perverse form of Holocaust denial: “To teach the Shoah in Palestinian schools contradicts the order of the universe.”<sup>74</sup>

Since the 1990s, Holocaust denial has indeed become a much broader and widespread phenomenon throughout the Middle East. After 2000, one can find increasing numbers of high-ranking Iranian, Syrian, Palestinian, Hamas and Hizbollah officials making Holocaust denial statements.<sup>75</sup> In the Egyptian, Jordanian, and Saudi media, where antisemitism is rampant, negationist rhetoric concerning the wartime massacres of European Jews has become a very common theme.

Holocaust denial is a particularly malevolent form of racist incitement—the most up-to-date rationalization for hating Jews, thinly disguised under the mask of revising history. Not for nothing have the deniers been called assassins of memory, fanatics engaged in a new kind of symbolic genocide against the Jewish people. Where the mobs once cried “Death to the Jews,” the deniers now cynically proclaim that “the Jews never died” and “this truth will make you free.” Beyond their antisemitic assault on Jewish memory, there is an even more fundamental negation of the basic premises of enlightenment itself, an implicit leveling of all values, and the nihilistic destruction of historical reality.

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<sup>74</sup> *Al-Istiqlal*, 20 Apr. 2000.

<sup>75</sup> Meir Litvak and Esther Webman, *From Empathy to Denial. Arab Responses to the Holocaust* (London 2009).





Michael Shafir

## Denying the Shoah in Post-Communist Eastern Europe<sup>1</sup>

In post-Communist East Central Europe today, ideologies and politicians compete in a relatively free political market; there is no longer *one* history but *several*. The literati are also relatively free to “offer” their vision of past, present, and future. Attitudes towards the Holocaust do not, of course, determine the region’s outlook. But insofar as facing collective responsibility is part of any “democratic game,” there is an indirect influence on its politics. In post-Communist East Central Europe, there are still suspicions of an intended “collective incrimination.” There is, in fact, nothing specifically “East-Central European” about that. However, what is specific about the region is its former Communist legacy. And this collective legacy partly facilitates, partly explains, and rationalizes Holocaust denial and its “comparative trivialization.”

In a book on contemporary Slovakia, Shari J. Cohen forged the concept of the “state-organized forgetting of history” to describe the former Slovak Communist regime’s Orwellian manipulation of the historical record to serve its political purposes.<sup>2</sup> For reasons that need not preoccupy us in this context, I disagree with Cohen’s generalization, among other reasons because “forgetting” history implies obliteration rather than manipulation. I believe Nancy Whittier Heer’s 1971 study on Communist history-manipulation remains to this day as relevant as it was when its focus-object (the Soviet Union) was still with us.<sup>3</sup> But “state-organized forgetting” is fully applicable when it comes to the East Central European Communist regimes’ “de-Judaization” of the atrocities perpetrated by the Nazis and/or their local emulators or official allies, as amply demonstrated by contributors to a volume edited by Randolph L. Braham after the demise of those regimes.<sup>4</sup> This makes the task of Holocaust negationists easier, and the receptivity to “Holocaust trivialization” arguments higher than it would otherwise be in the Western parts of the continent, where the phenomenon of organized forget-

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1 I would like to acknowledge the support of the J. and O. Winter Fund of the Graduate Center of the City University of New York for research conducted in connection with this project.

2 Cohen, Shari J., *Politics without a Past. The Absence of History in Postcommunist Nationalism* (Durham, N.C. 1999), 85–118.

3 Nancy Whittier Heer, *Politics and History in the Soviet Union* (Cambridge, Mass. 1971).

4 Randolph L. Braham, ed., *Anti-Semitism and the Treatment of the Holocaust in Postcommunist Eastern Europe* (New York 1994).

ting has been by no means absent; but where, for its legacy to be challenged, it took a generational change, rather than a change of regime.<sup>5</sup>

Except for the very first postwar years, Soviet historiography and its imposed model strove to both “nationalize” and to “internationalize” the Holocaust. Nationalization amounted to transforming Jewish victims into local victims, while internationalization derived from those regimes’ ideologically-determined “definition” of Fascism. In an essay written in 1985, French historian Pierre Vidal-Naquet noted that the *History of the Great Patriotic War* by Boris Tepulchowski, while mentioning the gas chambers at Auschwitz, Majdanek, and Treblinka, never indicated that these had been put in place mainly to serve the purpose of the Jews’ physical elimination; instead, Tepulchowski wrote that six million “Polish citizens” had been murdered by the Nazis. As for the extermination of Jews on Soviet territory proper, it was covered in just two lines.<sup>6</sup> Thanks to the poet, Evgenii Yevtushenko, the case of Babi Yar, where Soviet authorities constantly sought to blur the record of the victims’ Jewish identity, acquired world notoriety. When in 1961, Yevtushenko bewailed the fact that “no monument stands over Babi Yar,” little did he know that “no monument” was better than “any monument.” The one finally erected in 1976 on the site of the massacre specified that between 1941 and 1943, the Germans had executed there “over 100,000 citizens of Kiev and prisoners of war.” There was no trace here of specific Jewish suffering.<sup>7</sup>

Similarly, the 1947 Polish parliament’s decision to set up a memorial at Auschwitz described the site as one where “Poles and citizens of other nationalities fought and died a martyr’s death.” Twenty years later, a monument was erected at the site, carrying inscriptions in nineteen languages, including Yiddish, telling visitors that “Four million people suffered and died here at the hands of the Nazi murderers between 1940 and 1945” (a gross exaggeration). Jews were appended to the long list of “other nationalities” that had “suffered” at the hands of the German perpetrators, and, as Michael C. Steinlauf ironically observes, that list was “alphabetically and therefore democratically” ordered, with *Żydzi* coming last. It was only after the fall of Communism that the inscription would

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5 See Henri Rousso, *Le Syndrome de Vichy, de 1944 à nos jours* (Paris 1990), 12; Tony Judt, “The Past Is Another Country: Myth and Memory in Postwar Europe,” in *The Politics of Retribution in Europe: World War II and Its Aftermath*, eds. István Deák, Jan T. Gross, and Tony Judt (Princeton 2000), 293–323.

6 Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *Assassins of Memory: Essays on the Denial of the Holocaust* (New York 1992), 94.

7 William Korey, “Anti-Semitism and the Treatment of the Holocaust in the USSR/CIS,” in *Anti-Semitism and the Treatment of the Holocaust in Postcommunist Eastern Europe*, ed. Randolph L. Braham. (New York 1994), 207–24.

be changed, to read “Let this place remain for eternity as a cry of despair and a warning to humanity. About one and a half million men, women, children and infants, mainly Jews from different countries of Europe, were murdered here. The world was silent.”<sup>8</sup>

Hungary was no different. Under Stalinism, “the Holocaust was virtually sunk into the Orwellian black hole of history.”<sup>9</sup> As István Deák puts it, “World War II was officially remembered as the era when ‘communists and other progressive elements’ had struggled against, or became the victims of, ‘Hitlerite and Horthyite fascism.’ Somehow, there seemed to have been no Jews among these heroes and victims; instead, all were ‘anti-fascist Hungarians.’”<sup>10</sup>

Failure to deal with the Jewish dimension of the Holocaust can also be traced to the general failure of Communist regimes to provide a viable definition of “Fascism”—a term under which all the radical Right European regimes in the interwar period were misleadingly grouped together. Up to the late 1960s and early 1970s, the universally-accepted and imposed definition of Fascism was that provided by Georgi Dimitroff in his 1935 Comintern report, which had Fascist regimes being little else than “the open terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinistic and most imperialist elements of finance capital.”<sup>11</sup> That was “explaining Fascism away,” by carefully avoiding revelation of the overarching support that Italian Fascism, Nazism, and other radical authoritarian forms of government had enjoyed among all social classes.<sup>12</sup> But its advantage, from the Marxist perspective, rested in enabling the ruling parties to present themselves as having been the “vanguard” of popular democratic resistance in a population allegedly largely opposed to those regimes. The revolutionary character of generic Fascism could thus be buried in ideological jargon, for after Lenin, the “revolution” was no less monopolized than was the actual Communist hold on power. Fascism could not, by definition, be anything else than “counter-revolutionary.”

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8 Michael C. Steinlauf, “Poland,” in *The World Reacts to the Holocaust*, ed. D. S. Wyman (Baltimore 1996), 81–155, p. 145.

9 Randolph L. Braham, “Assault on Historical Memory: Hungarian Nationalists and the Holocaust,” in *Hungary and the Holocaust: Confrontation with the Past*. Symposium Proceedings. Washington, D.C. 2001.

10 István Deák, “Anti-Semitism and the Treatment of the Holocaust in Hungary,” in *Anti-Semitism and the Treatment of the Holocaust in Postcommunist Eastern Europe*, ed. R. L. Braham. (New York 1994), 99–124, p. 111.

11 Georgi Dimitroff, *The United Front Against War and Fascism: Report to the Seventh World Congress of the Communist International 1935* (New York 1974), 7.

12 A. J. Gregor, *Interpretations of Fascism* (New Brunswick, N.J. 1997), 128–78.

This categorization left its mark, and not only on Communist historians. Milan S. Ďurica, a Slovak scholar teaching history at a theological faculty, for example, in 1992 defended the record of the Nazi-allied Jozef Tiso regime, emphasizing that labeling it Fascist would be wrong. There never was sufficient autochthonous Slovak capital in the “Parish Republic,” it being largely concentrated in Hungarian-Jewish-German hands, he wrote; and Fascism, according to Ďurica is “the reign of terror by financial capital, the most reactionary imperialistic movement of the chauvinist upper bourgeoisie allied with nationalism.”<sup>13</sup>

As A. James Gregor has argued, a “perfectly plausible case can be made that Stalinism was the ideology of a developmental *national socialism*, the ‘socialism’ of an economically backward nation. As such, it shared more than superficial similarities with the Fascism of Mussolini.”<sup>14</sup> As I pointed out elsewhere, Stalin’s “socialism in one country” was the first ideologically-formulated justification of what would eventually become known as “National Communism.”<sup>15</sup> This, in fact, is also the core argument of a book published by Mikhail Agursky, a Soviet-time dissident who emigrated to Israel in the 1970s.<sup>16</sup> It is in this spirit that Vera Tolz concluded that in Russia “Nationalism took the form of National Bolshevism..., the most extreme manifestation of which was Iosif Stalin’s highly anti-Semitic campaign against cosmopolitanism in the late 1940s and early 1950s.”<sup>17</sup>

Nor was National Communism confined to the former Soviet Union’s borders. “Objectively speaking” (as Stalin would have put it), it became the dominant doctrine adopted *against* Soviet domination. Tito’s “heresy,” as we know from Zbigniew Brzezinski, had National Communism at its core, as did the Hungarian revolution of 1956 (at least in its early stages), and the return to power in that same year of Władisław Gomułka in Poland.<sup>18</sup> Eventually, that latter event would beget the phenomenon of General Mieczysław Moczar’s “Endo-Communism,” combining “the assimilation of ideas with direct linkage to the prewar Endecja” with “proletarian rhetoric”—producing a “peculiar marriage of authoritarian Commu-

<sup>13</sup> Cited in Pavol Mešťan, *Anti-Semitism in Slovak Politics (1989–1999)* (Bratislava 2000), 93–94.

<sup>14</sup> A. James Gregor, *The Faces of Janus: Marxism and Fascism in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven 2000), 42, 128–65.

<sup>15</sup> Michael Shafir, “Reds, Pinks, Blacks and Blues: Radical Politics in Post-Communist East Central Europe,” *Studia politica* 1, no. 2 (2001): 397–446, p. 400–401.

<sup>16</sup> Mikhail Agursky, *The Third Rome: National Bolshevism in the USSR* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1987).

<sup>17</sup> Vera Tolz, “The Radical-Right in Post-Communist Russian Politics,” in *The Revival of Right-Wing Extremism in the Nineties*, ed. P. H. Merkl and L. Weinberg (London 1997), 177–202, p. 179.

<sup>18</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Soviet Bloc: Unity and Conflict* (Cambridge, Mass. 1960).

nism and chauvinist nationalist tendencies,” among which antisemitism figured prominently.<sup>19</sup>

But in reality, the marriage was hardly “peculiar.” Under Nicolae Ceaușescu, Romania would not only undergo a similar process, but would by far overtake Poland, with the world outlook of the interwar Fascist Iron Guard encoded in all but official acknowledgment in party documents, and reflected in party-supervised historiography. With the exception of Czechoslovakia (or rather its Czech part), no country in East Central Europe remained unaffected by “the plague.” Enver Hoxha’s Albania and Ceaușescu’s Romania (joined in the 1970s by Bulgaria’s “xenophobic communism”) stood out in their attempts to substitute nationalist for ideological legitimacy.<sup>20</sup> As one scholar put it, “national communism, though it may seem to be a political oxymoron, became increasingly the norm by the 1970s and certainly by the 1980s as the Marxist-Leninist regimes sought to hold on to power in face of collapsing political legitimacy.”<sup>21</sup>

A large part of the post-Communist East Central European political spectrum is still occupied by parties of “radical continuity” and—to a lesser, but not inconsiderable—extent by parties of “radical return.” The former are the offspring of National Communism liberated from its earlier Communist ideological straight-jacket, while the latter advocate a return to the values embraced by the interwar radical Right.<sup>22</sup> All radical continuity formations are “successor parties” of the former Communist rulers, which does not necessarily imply that *all* successor parties are radical continuity formations. However, what *all* successor parties share is access to what Michael Waller calls “organizational continuity,” including, above all, access to material resources.<sup>23</sup> Neither radical return formations nor the conservative or neo-conservative formations which identify themselves with historically-reborn mainstream parties, benefit from such access. Rejecting, as they do, continuity with Communism, they must replace it with other

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19 Steinlauf, “Poland,” 115.

20 See Michael Shafir, “Xenophobic Communism: The Case of Bulgaria and Romania,” *The World Today* 45, no. 12 (1989): 208–12; Vladimir Tismaneanu, “The Ambiguity of Romanian National Communism,” *Telos* 60 (1984): 65–79; idem, “The Tragicomedy of Romanian Communism,” *East European Politics and Society* 3, no. 2 (1989): 329–76; Mary Ellen Fischer, *Nicolae Ceaușescu: A Study in Political Leadership* (Boulder, Colo. 1989).

21 Aurel Braun, “Hungary From “Goulash Communism” to Pluralistic Democracy,” in *The Extreme Right: Freedom and Security at Risk*, ed. A. Braun and S. Scheinberg, (Boulder, Colo. 1997), 201–19.

22 See Shafir, “Reds, Pinks, Blacks and Blues.”

23 Michael Waller, “Adaptation of the Former Communist Parties of East-Central Europe: A Case of Social-Democratization?” *Party Politics* 1, no. 4 (1995): 473–90, p. 481–82.

resources, among which “historic continuity” figures more prominently than it does in the case of the successor parties. At first sight, this has little to do with Holocaust denial and with its comparative trivialization. On closer scrutiny, however, both radical return and conservative formations, or intellectuals identifying with them, are often found to be part of the Holocaust-denying landscape.

In other words, the legacy of state-organized forgetting and National Communism extends far beyond those who under the former regime identified with its values and continue to do so in the post-Communist setting. The partisans of radical return (from whom most outright negationists stem) are perhaps the fiercest in opposing the legacy of Communism. However, the former regime has made their discourse more persuasive than might otherwise have been the case by having failed to address the issue of the Holocaust, or (as will be seen) by deflecting the blame for its perpetration onto either the Germans or onto a combination between them and the traditional “historic enemy.” This, for example, was the case of Romania, where, under Ceaușescu, references to Jewish extermination were singularly confined to Hungarian-occupied northern Transylvania, with no mention whatever being made of the extermination of Jews in Transnistria under Marshal Ion Antonescu’s regime, and/or solely attributed there to the Germans.<sup>24</sup> Why then, should Iron Guard leader Corneliu Zelea Codreanu and Antonescu, Admiral Miklós Horthy and Arrow Cross leader Ferenc Szálasi, President Tiso or Croat *Ustasha* leader Ante Pavelić not reemerge as model figures of national heroes, whose only fault rests in their having supported or allied themselves with those who were fighting Communism and/or the traditional enemy of their nation?

What is more, with Antonescu, Szálasi, and Tiso having been executed as war criminals (or Codreanu having been assassinated at the orders of King Carol II in 1938), they may fit very well into the natural post-Communist search for replacing manipulated state-organized martyrdom on the altar of proletarian internationalism with martyrdom in the name of national, *anti-Communist* values. Ľudovít Pavlo, chairman of the Slovak League of America and a partisan of Tiso’s rehabilitation, was most genuine in giving vent to this quest for martyr-hero models. In 1996, in an article included in a volume of collected papers published in Bratislava, Pavlo wrote quite bluntly: “I was pleased that Tiso died a martyr’s

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24 Victor Eskenasy, “The Holocaust and Romanian Historiography: Communist and Neo-Communist Revisionism,” in *The Tragedy of Romanian Jewry*, ed. R. L. Braham (New York 1994), 173–236, pp. 191, 196; Radu Ioanid, “Anti-Semitism and the Treatment of the Holocaust in Postcommunist Romania,” in *Anti-Semitism and the Treatment of the Holocaust in Postcommunist Eastern Europe*, ed. Randolph L. Braham (New York 1994), 82–159.

death because we gained a saint and a hero.... I was afraid [after the war] that Tiso would be sentenced to life imprisonment because, with the passage of time, he would probably have fallen into oblivion.” Tiso-defender Gabriel Hoffmann, in a book he edited together with his brother Karel in 1994, concluded, “after the study of hundreds of documents,” that all accusations leveled at Tiso were lies and that he was “not a criminal, but a saint.” The Vatican, Hoffmann wrote, will one day still canonize Tiso.<sup>25</sup>

Tiso, who was a Catholic priest, finds himself in the company of laymen Codreanu and Antonescu. In 1993, when an Iron Guard “inheritor party” calling itself New Christian Romania was set up in Bucharest, participants in its founding congress demanded that Codreanu be canonized; the same demand was made in 1998 by a Cluj-based foundation of radical return leanings.<sup>26</sup> In 2001, a participant in a symposium marking the tenth anniversary of the setting up of Romania’s most conclusive exemplification of a radical continuity party—the Greater Romania Party (PRM)—proposed that Antonescu be canonized by the Romanian Orthodox Church.<sup>27</sup>

“Mainstream” party leaders face a double dilemma when coming to forge what Hungarian sociologist András Kovács termed in Hungary’s case “creating an identity on a symbolic level.” I believe this insight can be generalized beyond Hungarian borders. Democratic parties can either opt for placing themselves somewhere along the Western political spectrum or express a relationship with certain emblematic periods, events or individuals in the country’s own history. Formations whose option is mainly introvert, fight the battle among themselves “for the appropriation of history” in which they attempt to demonstrate historical tradition and continuity. But a second dilemma emerges once the introvert option has been made, namely whether (and to what extent) to distance themselves or not from the less seemly aspects of remote or immediate history. Opting for distancing themselves from figures such as those mentioned above is in many cases tantamount to renouncing historic legitimacy. For what historic legitimacy can one claim if, as a Slovak or a Croat politician, one casts aside any continuity with the only time when an independent Slovak or Croat state has existed? And while claiming “anti-Communist historic legitimacy” is possible in the case of historic parties or neo-conservative formations in Hungary or Romania, it is not easy to

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<sup>25</sup> Cited in Meštan, *Anti-Semitism in Slovak Politics*, 159, 164.

<sup>26</sup> See *România mare*, 29 Jan. 1993.

<sup>27</sup> William Totok, “Sacrificarea lui Antonescu pe altarul diplomației,” Parts 1–4, *Observator cultural* (Bucharest) 74 (24–30 July 2001): 75; (31 July–6 Aug. 2001): 76; (7–13 Aug. 2001): 77; (14–20 Aug. 2001).

do so when Antonescu and Horthy are largely perceived as *the* embodiment of anti-Communist postures.

Even in the case of Poland or the Czech Republic (which, unlike Hitler's allies were themselves victims of aggression and decimation), the Holocaust poses the problem of "competitive martyrdom"—that of one's own nation versus that of the Jews. In the Polish case, moreover, politicians, intellectuals, and indeed, the Catholic Church, must cope with a legacy of non-institutionalized, large-scale popular antisemitism, as well as with that of the partly-institutionalized antisemitism of formations such as the Endecja. Under these circumstances, it is quite tempting to slide into one shade or another of comparative trivialization.

## Holocaust Negation

Outright negation of the Holocaust is rare, but not insignificant. In general, it is supported and inspired by the aged, extreme nationalist exiled community, many members of which are linked with exile associations. These people have access to Western negationist literature and some go as far as to participate themselves in the negationist drive. The Western inspiration is, however, not always acknowledged. Viewed from this perspective, one could possibly speak of "honest" and "dishonest" negationists. Politicians usually belong to the latter category. A case in point is Stanislav Pánis, the former leader of the Slovak National Unity Party and later a deputy representing the Slovak National Party in the Czechoslovak Federal Assembly.<sup>28</sup> In an interview with Norwegian television in 1992, Pánis said it would have been "technically impossible" for the Nazis to exterminate six million Jews in camps—a clear echo of French negationist Robert Faurisson's contentions. Pánis also claimed that Auschwitz was nothing but an "invention" of the Jews to make possible the flow of compensation to Israel. His political career did not suffer as a result of these statements, and in the late 1990s, he even served as a Deputy Culture Minister.<sup>29</sup>

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**28** Fred Hahn, "Anti-Semitism and the Treatment of the Holocaust in Postcommunist Czechoslovakia (The Czech Republic)," in *Anti-Semitism and the Treatment of the Holocaust in Postcommunist Eastern Europe*, ed. Randolph L. Braham (New York 1994), 71; Shari J. Cohen, *Politics without a Past. The Absence of History in Postcommunist Nationalism* (Durham, N.C. 1999), 158; Mešťan, *Anti-Semitism in Slovak Politics*, 73.

**29** See *RFE/RL Newswire*, 20 June 1997.



In Romania, Greater Romania Party (PRM) leader Corneliu Vadim Tudor in March 1994 professed to have “learned that English and American scientists [sic!] are contesting the Holocaust itself, providing documentation and logical arguments proving that the Germans could not gas six million Jews, this being technically and physically an impossibility.” The Holocaust, he added, was nothing but “a Zionist scheme aimed at squeezing out from Germany about 100 billion Deutschmarks and to terrorize for more than forty years all those who do not acquiesce to the Jewish yoke.”<sup>30</sup> In November 2000 Tudor’s party became the second-strongest formation in the Romanian parliament and the PRM leader made it to a runoff with Ion Iliescu for the position of head of state.<sup>31</sup>

Not all Holocaust negationist politicians in East Central Europe, however, went unpunished. In general, the less significant politically their formation appeared to be, the greater the chance that they would eventually face some sort of judicial accounting. The most famous case in point is perhaps that of Poland’s Bolesław Tejkowski, leader of the neo-Fascist Polish National Commonwealth-Polish National Party. In 1995, he was given a two-year suspended sentence for insulting “the Polish authorities, the Jewish people, the Pope and the Episcopate.” In Tejkowski’s eyes not only Poland’s entire post-Communist leadership was made up of Jews and “closet-Jews,” but the Polish Pope (Karol Wojtyła) was himself Jewish. The Holocaust, he claimed, was a Jewish conspiracy that had made it possible for the Jews to hide their offspring in monasteries during World War II, in order for them to be baptized and take over the Church from within. This, he said, was how Wojtyła became a Catholic priest.<sup>32</sup> Outlandish as this may sound, it was nonetheless not singular. In Hungary, two other radical return publications, *Hunnia Füzetek* and *Szent Korona*, “unmasked” Cardinal Páskai as being allegedly Jewish; and precisely the same argument was produced in Romania by

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30 *România mare*, 4 Mar. 1994.

31 Michael Shafir, “The Greater Romania Party and the 2000 Elections in Romania: How Obvious is the Obvious?,” *Romanian Journal of Society and Politics* 1, no. 2 (2001).

32 Anita J Prazmowska, “The New Right in Poland: Nationalism, Anti-Semitism and Parliamentaryism,” in *The Far Right in Western and Eastern Europe*, eds. Luciano Cheles, Ronnie Ferguson, and Michalina Vaughan (London 1995), 198–214, pp. 209–10; Thomas S. Szayna, “The Extreme-Right Political Movements in Post-Communist Central Europe,” in *The Revival of Right-Wing Extremism in the Nineties*, eds. Peter H. Merkl and Leonard Weinberg (London 1997) 111–48, p. 121; David Ost, “The Radical Right in Poland: Rationality of the Irrational,” in *The Radical Right in Central and Eastern Europe Since 1989*, ed. Sabrina P. Ramet (University Park, Pa. 1999), 85–107, p. 96.

Radu Theodoru, who “revealed” that Wojtyła’s name was in fact “Katz.”<sup>33</sup> In other words, the Jews are the authors of the Holocaust—an “argument” by no means limited to the outright negationists, as we shall yet observe.

For obvious reasons, Poland is the least prone of East European nations to outright negationism, Tejkowski’s case notwithstanding. Too many of the extermination camps had been on Polish soil and negation would be to question the largely consensual *Polish* martyrdom itself. And yet negationist articles began appearing in 1994 and 1995 in *Szczerbiec* (The sword), the publication of the extreme Right formation that calls itself National Revival of Poland (NOP). That radical return party was led by Adam Gmurczyk and claims to be the reincarnation of the prewar violently antisemitic youth organization, National-Radical Camp, that was outlawed in 1934. The NOP is a member of the neo-Nazi International Third Position and *Szczerbiec* lists such notorious Holocaust deniers as Derek Holland and Roberto Fiore on its editorial board. It printed several “classics” among outright deniers in the West.<sup>34</sup> The NOP, following the so-called Western “revisionist” tactics, also established a National-Radical Institute, which in 1997 published a volume under the title *The Myth of the Holocaust*, consisting of translations from the most infamous Western Holocaust deniers. One of the regular contributors to *Szczerbiec*, Maciej Przebindowski, in 1997 went so far as to emulate his Western inspirers by claiming that “a group of researchers from the National-Radical Institute” had conducted field work at Auschwitz-Birkenau, concluding that the extermination in gas chambers was an impossibility.<sup>35</sup>

Politicians, however, are not alone in indulging in outright Holocaust negation. The phenomenon is spread far more in publications that may or may not have a direct party affiliation, and in journals or weeklies translating, adopting, and embracing the argument of Western negationists. In 1999, a Polish historian, Dariusz Ratajczak, who worked as a researcher at the recently-founded University of Opole, was put on trial for having published a book that espoused the “Auschwitz lie” theory. *Dangerous Topics*, embracing the so-called Fred Leuchter Report, claimed, among other things, that Zyklon-B gas had been used in the camps solely for “disinfecting” purposes. Other arguments of the improper-

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33 Ivan T. Berend, “Jobbra Át! [Right face]: Right-wing Trends in Post-Communist Hungary,” in *Democracy and Right-Wing Politics in Eastern Europe in the 1990s*, ed. J. Held (Boulder 1993) 105–34, p. 131; George Voicu, *Zeii cei răi: Cultura conspirației în România postcomunistă* (The evil gods: conspiracy culture in post-communist Romania) (Iași 2000), 82, 157.

34 Rafal Pankowski, “From the Lunatic Fringe to Academia: Holocaust Denial in Poland,” in *Holocaust Denial: The David Irving Trial and International Revisionism*, ed. Kate Taylor (London: Searchlight Educational Trust 2000), 79–80.

35 *Ibid.*, 76.

erly-called “revisionists” were also reproduced in the volume. In his defense, Ratajczak claimed that he did not necessarily agree with the arguments of the revisionists, but considered it necessary to make known all points of view on the Holocaust. “My only objective,” he said, “was to present a phenomenon called ‘Holocaust Revisionism,’ without an author’s commentary.” The court found the claim unconvincing, given Ratajczak’s own comments in the volume, but it nonetheless dismissed the case. The small number of copies (230) produced in the book’s first print run, it said, was too “insignificant” to cause any “serious degree of social harm,” and between the first and the second, larger print, Ratajczak had publicly distanced himself from the revisionists.<sup>36</sup> Yet just days after the verdict was pronounced, Ratajczak was the guest star at a political meeting organized by the extreme Right National Party, whose active member he was. Furthermore, his views were embraced and defended by such figures in the “respectable academic world” as Professor Ryszard Bender, who teaches history at the Catholic University of Lublin. Though he had represented the Communist Party in parliament in the 1980s, Bender later switched allegiance to the Right and was for some time a Senator and the chairman of the State Council on Radio and Television.<sup>37</sup> Bender accused the “Jewish lobby” of persecuting Ratajczak and went so far as to deny that Auschwitz had been an extermination camp. He was eventually disciplined by his university and Ratajczak himself was fired from the University of Opole. Almost instantly, he was offered a job at the Higher School of Journalism in Warsaw.<sup>38</sup>

Criminal proceedings were also initiated in Hungary against negationists Albert Szabó and István Györkös. Szabó claimed that the Holocaust is a hoax and that European Jews have all emigrated to America. Györkös, for his part, has had contacts with U.S. Nazi and Austrian neo-Nazi leaders and, in his publications denied the Holocaust had ever been perpetrated. Both are leaders of the radical return Hungarianist Movement, an organization claiming descent from Szálasi’s Hungarian National Socialist Party-Hungarianist Movement—the official name of the Arrow Cross.<sup>39</sup> Szabó, leader of the Hungarian People’s Welfare Alliance (MNSZ), has a great number of relatives in Israel, whom he visited several times—as fellow radical Right competitor István Csurka disclosed.<sup>40</sup> This may explain

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36 RFE/RL Newsline, 17 Nov. 1999; PAP, 7 Dec. 1999.

37 Pankowski, “From the Lunatic Fringe,” 78–79.

38 Ibid., 79–80.

39 Ruth Ellen Gruber, *The Struggle of Memory: The Rehabilitation and Reevaluation of Fascist Heroes in Europe* (New York 1995), 20.

40 László Karsai, “The Radical Right in Hungary, in *The Radical Right in Central and Eastern Europe Since 1989*, ed. Sabrina P. Ramet (University Park, Md. 1999), 133–46, p. 145.

why some politologists felt the need to indulge in psychiatric theorizing in this particular case. Together with Györkös, in March 1996, a tribunal acquitted Szabó of violating a law banning incitement to racial hatred and the use of prohibited Nazi symbols, on grounds of constitutional provisions protecting freedom of speech.<sup>41</sup>

In Hungary, negationist articles were quite frequently printed in the weekly *Szent Korona* and in the monthly *Hunnia Füzetek*. The former ceased publication in 1992, and its editor-in-chief, László Romhányi, was convicted in 1993 for various crimes, as were several members of the weekly's staff. In 1991 *Hunnia Füzetek* carried an article by Australian-exiled Arrow Cross sympathizer Viktor Padányi, written in the best "scientific" tradition of Holocaust denial. The article—including the main theses of a book Padányi had published in Australia—stated that out of the one-and-a-half million Jews acknowledged to have lost their lives in World War II, 1.2 million had been killed by the Soviets and "just" 300,000 by the Nazis. The latter had anyhow acted only in self-defense, because the Jews had "been working" for the "enemy" both inside Germany and outside its borders. The monthly's editor-in-chief, Ferenc Kunszabó and one of its regular contributors, János Fodor, were charged in 1993 with "incitement against a community," but the court ruled that to convict them would be tantamount to restraining the freedom of the press.

In Romania, translations of negationist articles were printed in both radical continuity and radical return publications. What is more astonishing is the fact that intellectual figures generally perceived to identify with democratic, pro-Western postures came out in *defense* of negationist literature dissemination. For example, the PRM weekly *Politica* serialized translations by Leonard Gavriliu from the French periodical *Annales d'histoire révisionniste* in eight consecutive issues between February and March 1995. The radical return publication of the now defunct Movement for Romania, *Mișcare*, in November 1994 published an article by Silviu Rareș reviewing such "milestones of Holocaust contestation" as the works of David Irving, Maurice Bardèche, Paul Rassinier, Pierre Guillaume, Richard Harwood, Udo Walendy, and Ernst Zündel, as well as of Faurisson and Butz. Roger Garaudy's *The Founding Myths of Israeli Politics*, with its well-known negationist tunes, was welcomed not only by the radical return monthly, *Puncte cardinale*, but also by Professor Nicolae Manolescu, at that time a leading National Liberal Party (PNL) figure, as well as by "mainstream" journalist Cristian Tudor Popescu, editor-in-chief of one of Romania's largest circulation dailies, *Adevărul*. For Popescu, criticism of Garaudy's works abroad amounted to nothing less than

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41 OMRI Daily Digest, 5 and 11 Mar. 1996.

questioning “freedom of thought” and the condemnation of *The Founding Myths* was on par with passing sentence on Descartes.<sup>42</sup>

On its outer cover, the Romanian version of Garaudy’s book carried the author’s reactions to the protests with which the volume was met: “It is not my fault if those who accuse me have set up a world-business specializing in selling their grandparents’ bones.” The book had landed its author before a court of justice in France—he was sentenced to a 120,000 Francs fine—and its Swiss distributor came before a similar court in Switzerland. If the book’s Romanian defenders could argue, as Manolescu did, that Garaudy did not entirely negate the Holocaust in *The Founding Myths*, having only objected to “some exaggerations,” the claim could no longer be made for a 1999 translation of his volume—*The Trial of Israeli Zionism: Unmasking the International Zionist Conspiracy*, in which the negationist argument is fully embraced.<sup>43</sup>

No one among Romanian authors embraced more eagerly and more fully the negationist argument than Radu Theodoru. A former air force officer, founding member of the PRM, and for some time one of Tudor’s deputies, Theodoru was expelled from the PRM after he quarreled with Tudor. For a brief period in 1993, he became chairman of the extraparlimentary Party of Social Democratic Unity but eventually dedicated himself fully to the negationist cause, occasionally combining this obsession with attacks on the country’s Hungarian minority—depicted as being “in league” with the Jews.<sup>44</sup>

Theodoru is an “honest negationist.” “I am the partisan of the revisionist school headed by the French scientist [*sic!*] Robert Faurisson,” he wrote in 1995 in the weekly *Europa*. He added that Faurisson “is the victim of disgusting moral and physical pressures, only for having questioned the existence of the gas chambers.” Theodoru then proceeded to produce the list of Western negationists and their main “demonstrations,” starting with the “Leuchter Report,” and then going back to Léon Degrelle, the leader of the Belgian Rexist Fascist movement and his 1979 “open letter” to Pope John Paul II. In that letter, Degrelle—who served as a volunteer in the *Walonia Waffen SS* unit on the Eastern front—claimed that as an eyewitness he could testify that there had been neither gas chambers nor any

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42 Cristian Tudor Popescu, “Cazul Garaudy: Libertatea gândirii taxată drept antisemitism,” *Adevărul*, 12 Dec. 1996; idem, “Condamnarea lui Descartes,” *Adevărul*, 2 Mar. 1998.

43 See George Voicu, *Teme antisemite în discursul public* (Antisemitic themes in public discourse) (Bucharest 2000), 137.

44 Michael Shafir, “Growing Political Extremism in Romania,” *RFE/RL Research Report* 2, no. 14 (1993): 18–25; see Radu Theodoru, *Hungarianismul, astăzi: Paranoia unui focar de instabilitate din centrul Europei* (Hungarianism today: the paranoia of an instable hotbed in Central Europe) (Bucharest 1996); idem, *Urmașii lui Attila* (Attila’s successors) (Bucharest 1999).

mass annihilation of Jews in Hitler's Third Reich and in the territories occupied by Germany. The Jews, he insisted, had been killed by American and British bombings.<sup>45</sup> Degrelle produced two "comparative columns" which demonstrate that the "real genocide was that committed by the British-American bombings, by the two American A-bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, by the mass assassinations in Hamburg and Dresden" and not at Auschwitz, used by "Zionist propaganda to squeeze out of defeated Germany fabulous amounts of money." It was "Zionist propaganda" that had "imposed on [international] public opinion the fabulous number of six million assassinated Jews." According to Theodoru, however, the "revisionist school" "demonstrates" that the number of victims packed into a gas chamber could physically never have reached the number of gassed victims attributed to the Nazis. As is well known, this is one of Faurisson's main claims. The "revisionist school" he wrote, is nothing short of "an A-bomb thrown by conscientious historians on the propagandistic construct put in place by the craftsmen of the *Alliance Israélite Universelle*." The "school" had "demonstrated that at Auschwitz and the other camps no genocide by gassing had occurred." The "revisionists" had succeeded in raising basic questions about the "'tribute' paid by postwar Germany to Israel and world Jewish organizations—from pensions to all sorts of subventions."<sup>46</sup>

The article in *Europa* was said to be the first in a serialized new book by Theodoru, whose title was announced as *Romania, the World and the Jews*. The book itself was published in 1997, but under the title *Romania as Booty*, and it apparently sold well enough for a second, enlarged version, to be brought out by a different publisher in 2000, with the article in *Europa* serving as the volume's introduction.<sup>47</sup>

But *Romania as Booty* by no means exhausted Theodoru's outright negationist offensive. In a volume published in 2000, whose title was obviously of Garaudian inspiration, he further expanded on the argument. In *Zionist Nazism*, Theodoru told his readers the Holocaust has been turned into "the most profitable Jewish business" that ever existed, a business that has "enriched the so-called witnesses, who fabricated a series of aberrant exaggerations and pathological descriptions of life in Nazi camps." The managers of that "business" had "introduced the Holocaust in school curricula, Ph.D.s were being written on the

<sup>45</sup> Deborah Lipstadt, *Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory* (New York 1993), 11.

<sup>46</sup> Radu Theodoru, "Lumea, România și evreii (The World, Romania, and the Jews)," *Europa* (supplement East-Vest) 189 (3–17 May 1995): 1, 11.

<sup>47</sup> Radu Theodoru, *România ca o pradă* (Romania as booty) (Oradea 1997), 9.

subject, writers engaged in fiction on the topic make a nice profit from it,” and “so-called documentary movies such as [Claude Lanzmann’s] *Shoah*. There were nothing but subtle or gross mystifications” alongside the holding of “so-called scientific conferences” and articles in the mass media. This profiteering combination managed to “set in place a complex system of misinformation, of brain-washing, of psychological pressure” and “succeeded in imposing forgery as an emotional reality.” The reaction of “human dignity” to this state of affairs, Theodoru went on to write, “is called *Historical Revisionism*” and its courageous partisans had been turned into “the target of Nazi Zionism, which employs against revisionist historians physical terror, media lynching, judicial terror, assassination attempts, social isolation, economic strikes.” The revisionist output “analyses the whole Nuremberg trial, proving that it has been a trial of the revenge of the victors over the vanquished. I myself characterize it as the trial of German Nazism by Zionist Nazism. To be more precise, the trial staged by Judaic Nazism against Aryan Nazism. Nothing but a scuffle among racists.”<sup>48</sup>

## Deflective Negationism

Such radical negationism generally remains on the fringe, but “deflective negationism” is far more diffuse. Rather than negating the Holocaust, it transfers the guilt for the perpetration of crimes to members of other nations, or minimizes the role of one’s own nation to the level of a mere “aberration.” It is self-defensive, and particularistic rather than universal. It is possible to distinguish between several sub-categories of deflective negation, according to its target. Restricting perpetration of mass murder to the Germans is the easiest and perhaps most natural form of deflective negationism. Next comes the deflection of guilt onto allegedly insignificant aberrations, especially by “collaborators.” Last but by no means least, guilt for the Holocaust is also deflected on the Jews themselves. All three sub-categories involve, at the same time, a conscious or unconscious amount of “Holocaust minimization,” such as we also find in the comparative trivialization of the Shoah.

The Polish story is perhaps the most dramatic, for they were victims and “bystanders” at one and the same time. The former dimension is deeply imbedded in collective memory; the latter is often subject to deflection. As Steinlauf aptly

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<sup>48</sup> Radu Theodoru, *Nazismul sionist* (Zionist Nazism) (Bucharest 2000), 23–24, author’s emphasis.



formulated it, the Communist-induced legacy of ignoring the Jewish dimension of the Holocaust has meant that for decades, its meaning “had become Polish victimization *by* the Holocaust” (author’s emphasis).<sup>49</sup> In addition, victimization in the “imagined” Polish community is perhaps more pronounced than elsewhere, undoubtedly reflecting objective historical facts.<sup>50</sup> When literature professor Jan Błoński in 1987 first called on his countrymen to “stop being defensive, pleading innocence” about the Holocaust and “accept our responsibility,” his call, as expected, met with harsh reactions. For it was not easy to demolish the myth that had transformed the genuine sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Polish tolerance of the Jews into one claiming that “that tradition continued uninterrupted over the centuries.”<sup>51</sup> “We welcomed Jews to our home, but made them live in the basement,” Błoński wrote, adding (in an obvious reference to the Emancipation) that “When they sought to enter the drawing room, we promised we would let them in on the condition that they would stop being Jews, or ‘become civilized,’ as the expression went in nineteenth century Poland, but certainly not only in Poland.” However, “When some Jews expressed willingness to follow this advice, we started talking about a Jewish invasion.” Then came the Holocaust, when “we lost our home and the occupiers began killing Jews on its premises. How many of us decided that this was none of our business? There were also those (I leave criminals out of account) who secretly were glad that Hitler solved the Jewish ‘problem’ for us.” Does this, Błoński asked, amount to “complicity in genocide?” The definitive answer, he believed, was negative. “Why talk about genocide, then? About complicity? My answer is this: taking part and complicity are not the same thing. One may be associated in guilt without actually taking part in the crime.” The Holocaust in Poland, according to Błoński, would have been “made more difficult” on its perpetrators, were it not for the “indifference and moral paralysis [of] the society that witnessed it.”<sup>52</sup>

Błoński’s article was a landmark in the evolution of both Polish-Jewish relations and Polish attitudes toward the Holocaust. To review that evolution is beyond the focus of this study. But as Polish historian Dariusz Stola has noted, by the 1990s, the debate in Poland on the Holocaust had increasingly turned into

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49 Steinlauf, “Poland,” 125.

50 See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London 1991).

51 Abraham Brumberg, “Anti-Semitism and the Treatment of the Holocaust in Postcommunist Poland,” in *Anti-Semitism and the Treatment of the Holocaust in Postcommunist Eastern Europe*, ed. R. L. Brahm (New York 1994) 143–57, p. 144.

52 Jan Błoński, “Poor Poles Look at the Ghetto,” *Yad Vashem Studies*, ed. A. Weiss 19 (1988): 341–55, pp. 352–54.



Polish-Polish debates, contrary to the previous decades, when they had been mostly Polish-Jewish controversies. Many Poles are nowadays ready to face the seemingly irreconcilable equation that “a victim can sometimes be a victimizer” and that Nazi intentions towards the Poles were inhuman, but still different from the plan of the “Final Solution” of the Jewish question.

Deflective negationism is nonetheless a tempting option. Nothing illustrated this better than the reactions to the publication (in 2000 in Poland, in 2001 in the West) of Jan T. Gross’s account of the July 1941 massacre of Jedwabne’s 1,600-strong Jewish community by their Polish neighbors.<sup>53</sup> The massacre had been subjected to confinement in the Communist “black hole of history.” Indeed, Gross’s book does not reveal facts that were unknown in the first decade of Poland’s Communist rule—it only provides additional information on them. Neither does the book in any way generalize Jedwabne into an accusation of overall Polish complicity in the Nazi crimes, though Jedwabne was actually not a singular case. Four days earlier, close to 1,000 Jews were killed by their neighbors in the nearby town of Radziłów. Some of the Jedwabne massacre perpetrators had, in fact, been put on trial and convicted in 1949 and in 1953, with one death sentence pronounced but never carried out.<sup>54</sup> The monument put on site by the Communists in the 1960s acknowledged the Jewish identity of the victims, but claimed that “Gestapo and Hitlerite gendarmes burned alive 1,600 people.”<sup>55</sup> A similar inscription was put in place in Radziłów, whose Jewish victims were said to have perished at the hand of the Fascists.<sup>56</sup> Nothing could be further from the truth. Most of Jedwabne’s victims were forced into a barn that was set on fire by their Polish neighbors. The Germans were certainly present in the vicinity, but ironically, the German military post not far from Jedwabne was the safest place for the Jews to seek refuge in, some owing their lives—for the time being at least—to that military post.<sup>57</sup> There were, according to Gross, less than a dozen German soldiers in Jedwabne when the atrocity was committed, and they did no more than take photographs of it. According to the account of a Jewish eyewitness, the same had happened in Radziłów, where the arrival of German soldiers saved the lives of eighteen Jews.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Jan T. Gross, *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne* (Princeton, N.J. 2001).

<sup>54</sup> Abraham Brumberg, “Murder Most Foul: Polish Responsibility for the Massacre at Jedwabne,” *Times Literary Supplement* 5109 (2 March 2001): 8–9.

<sup>55</sup> Frank Fox, “A Skeleton in Poland’s Closet: The Jedwabne Massacre” *East European Jewish Affairs* 31, no. 1 (2001): 77–94, p. 90.

<sup>56</sup> *RFE/RL Newline*, 22 Mar. 2001.

<sup>57</sup> Gross, *Neighbors*, 74–80; Fox, “A Skeleton,” 81–82.

<sup>58</sup> Gross, *Neighbors*, 68–69.

A few other Jews were saved in both places by local Poles who hid them from the wrath of their neighbors.

The Jedwabne memorial was replaced in 2001 with another marker, in a ceremony boycotted (for reasons yet to be discussed) not only by the town's population—with the exception of its mayor—but also by the Catholic Church. The ceremony was attended by President Aleksander Kwaśniewski, who apologized for the crime “as a citizen, and as president of the Republic of Poland.”<sup>59</sup> But the new memorial still eschews identifying the perpetrators. It is erected “in memory of the Jews of Jedwabne and surrounding areas, men, women, and children, fellow-dwellers of this land, murdered and burned alive at this site on 10 July 1941.”<sup>60</sup> On the eve of the ceremony, a Western agency reported that a sign on the door of a Jedwabne grocery store read: “We do not apologize. It was the Germans who murdered Jews in Jedwabne. Let the slanderers apologize to the Polish nation.” It was signed by the “Committee for the Defense of the Good name of Poland,” an organization close to the ultraconservative League of Polish Families.<sup>61</sup>

Deflective negationism is also prompted by the pursuit of immediate or short-term popularity by politicians. That they may oscillate, even contradict themselves in their own pronouncements on the Holocaust is therefore no surprise. Each pronouncement is aimed at serving the immediate needs of the hour. Former Polish President Lech Wałęsa, for example, in an apparent spontaneous addition to his prepared speech, when addressing the Israeli Knesset in 1991 added “Please forgive us,” triggering the applause of the Israeli parliamentary deputies, but also the wrath of many of his countrymen. In 1995, when Poland observed the fiftieth anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, Wałęsa knew better. Presiding over ceremonies in Kraków's Jagiellonian University on the morning of January 26, and in the afternoon over a gathering of Nobel Peace Prize laureates, Wałęsa made no specific reference to Jews or the Holocaust. The inscription at Auschwitz had, in the meantime, changed—but not so the mentality of an electorate brought up in the belief that the Holocaust was, above all, one of the Polish nation. Indeed, a public opinion poll released in that year showed that 47 percent of Wałęsa's countrymen believed that Auschwitz was, above all, the place of Polish martyrdom and only 8 percent were of the opinion that most of the victims there had been Jews. It was only in late afternoon, when ceremonies took place at Auschwitz itself, and after protracted negotiations with the world Jewish leaders who

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59 Robert S. Wistrich, “The Jedwabne Affair” *Antisemitism Worldwide 2001/2* (Tel Aviv 2002), 60–75.

60 *RFE/RL Newline*, 10 July 2001.

61 AP, 10 July 2001.

were present, that Wałęsa amended a prepared speech, adding “especially the Jewish nation” after having originally deplored the “suffering of many nations.”<sup>62</sup>

Another example in point is provided by Hungarian Premier Viktor Orbán and by his entourage. Orbán emulated the policies of his predecessor, József Antall, who was of the opinion that if Holocaust issues in post-Communist Hungary must be addressed at all, they should concentrate on Hungarian rescuers of Jews rather than on the Jewish suffering and decimation.<sup>63</sup> Antall, of course, had a personal stake in this issue. He was the son of a “Righteous Among the Nations,” and precisely because of that, he could *not* be suspected of antisemitism.<sup>64</sup> But he was undoubtedly aware that the electorate to which he would appeal was generally inclined to idealize Hungary’s pre-Communist past and tended to regard Jews as perpetrators of Hungary’s own martyrdom at the hand of Communists. Moreover, not many Hungarians were willing to regard the Jews as victims of their countrymen’s antisemitic passions. Ministers of his cabinet attended the 1993 ceremony of reinterment of Horthy’s remains and Antall himself later visited the grave. Before doing so, the premier referred to Admiral Horthy as having been a “Hungarian patriot” who “should be placed in the community of the nation and the awareness of the people.”<sup>65</sup>

Not that Horthy should be placed in the same “league” as Antonescu, Tiso, or Pavelić. Yet no less than 550,000 Jews were exterminated in “Greater Hungary.” Most of them perished before the Germans deposed Horthy in October 1944. The harsh anti-Jewish legislation enacted under his rule, the loss of life of between 40,000 and 45,000 so-called “labor servicemen,” the murder of “alien” Jews deported to Kamenets-Podolski in 1941, and the massacres in and around Újvidék in 1942 cannot be laid at the door of the Germans. True, the extermination of the bulk of Hungarian Jewry had long been delayed, and Horthy may have personally played some role in that delay and in briefly halting deportations to Auschwitz in July 1944.<sup>66</sup> But when it occurred—mostly after the German occupation of the country in March 1944, the deadly deportations were executed with astonishing

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62 Michael C. Steinlauf, *Bondage to the Dead: Poland and the Memory of the Holocaust* (Syracuse, N.Y. 1997), 131–32, pp. 139, 141.

63 László Karsai, “The Radical Right in Hungary,” in *The Radical Right in Central and Eastern Europe Since 1989*, ed. Sabrina P. Ramet (University Park, Md. 1999), 133–46, p. 139.

64 István Deák, “Anti-Semitism and the Treatment of the Holocaust in Hungary,” in *Anti-Semitism and the Treatment of the Holocaust in Postcommunist Eastern Europe*, ed. R. L. Braham (New York 1994) 99–124, p. 119.

65 Cited in Braham 1993, 140.

66 Deák “Anti-Semitism and the Treatment of the Holocaust in Hungary”; idem, “Nikolau von Horthy: Ein umstrittener Staatsmann,” *Europäische Rundschau* 22 (1994): 71–87.

efficiency involving the large-scale collaboration of the Hungarian authorities, particularly the gendarmerie.<sup>67</sup> At least nominally, Horthy was still head of state (“Regent”) throughout a good part of that period. Not that Antall (himself a historian) or his successor were unaware of these facts. But the two were *responding* to the electorate’s ignorance or prejudices regarding the Holocaust in pursuit both of political popularity and creating a post-Communist identity.

In 1998, after a visit to the Hungarian pavilion in the Auschwitz exhibit, Orbán, decided to reconstruct the pavilion which had been built by the Communist regime, finding it both inappropriate and neglected. The plans, submitted by a commission headed by István Ihász, a museologist with well-known nationalist credentials, were little else than “a pro-Horthy apologia designed to sanitize the Nazi era in general and the Hungarian involvement in the Final Solution in particular.” The commission envisaged portraying the “virtual symbiosis of Hungarian Jewish life since the emancipation of Jews in 1867, downplaying the many anti-Jewish manifestations as mere aberrations in the otherwise chivalrous history of Hungary. It focused attention on the positive aspects of Jewish life, the flourishing of the Jewish community between 1867 and 1944, the rescue activities of those identified as Righteous, and Horthy’s saving of the Jews of Budapest.” At the same time, the planned exhibition “blamed almost exclusively the Germans for the destruction of the Jews.”<sup>68</sup> The exhibition was canceled after protests from the country’s Federation of Jewish Communities. Reacting to the decision, a spokesman of the federation said the country’s Jewish communities did not wish to see the project halted, but “to see it is done right.”<sup>69</sup>

It was Orbán’s advisor Mária Schmidt, who shortly thereafter again triggered the community’s protests, after stating in a Le Pen-like manner that the Holocaust had been but a “marginal issue” of the history of World War II. Yet Orbán issued a statement largely exonerating Schmidt and expressing his “full confidence” in her.<sup>70</sup> Schmidt had some sort of “vested interest” when she made the statement. She had been a leading member of the commission that attempted to “cleanse” out of the Auschwitz exhibit the Horthy atrocities against the Hungarian Jews.<sup>71</sup>

Deflective negationism is also manifest in Hungary (but not only there) under the form of transforming the Nazi-allied country into a victim of the Germans,

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<sup>67</sup> Braham, “Assault on Historical Memory.”

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> *RFE/RL Newslines*, 9 and 10 Sept. 1999.

<sup>70</sup> *Magyar Hírlap* and Hungarian Radio, in BBC Summary of World Broadcasts-Eastern Europe, 16 Nov. 1999; *RFE/RL Newslines*, 16 Nov. 1999.

<sup>71</sup> Braham, “Assault on Historical Memory.”

or, as Braham put it, “turning Germany’s last ally into its last victim.”<sup>72</sup> All these manifestations emerged from the option of Antall’s Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF) to display historic continuity—one later embraced by Orbán’s Alliance of Young Democrats (FIDESZ) as well.

Deflective negationism is also embraced in Hungary by the radical Hungarian Justice and Life Party (MIÉP), which, for all practical purposes, became an ally of FIDESZ after the 1998 parliamentary elections. Like the conservatives, MIÉP leader Csurka acknowledges and deplores the Holocaust, but even more than them, denies any Hungarian responsibility for it, branding anyone who does so a “traitor” whose only aim is to tarnish the reputation of the Hungarian people and break its self-respect. While Csurka displayed a “concealed, coded” antisemitism and his remarks on the Holocaust were frequently aimed at brandishing the spectre of “Jewish revenge” on an “innocent” Hungary, the conservative discourse of the József Antall and Viktor Orbán governments was not antisemitic “in terms of intentions.” It “honestly” condemned the persecution of Jews and it considered the Holocaust to have been “a tragic event in Hungarian history.” However, since these governments strove to demonstrate the historical continuity of anti-Communist conservatism as the most important characteristic of the Hungarian political system prior to the German occupation, this conservative type of discourse also ended up being deflective. While there is a distinction between “political antisemitism” (the MIÉP type of discourse) and “historical conservatism” (the MDF-FIDESZ discourse), both are liable to fall down in confronting the dark episodes in the national heritage.

Romanian deflective negationism shares with Hungary the drive to transform the country into a victim, rather than a state sharing the antisemitic credo of the Nazis, and participating in the perpetration of massive crimes. Unlike Hungary, however, the drive to do so in Romania dates back to Communist times. In 1986, for instance, the Bucharest weekly *Luceafărul* was telling its readers that “the main feature of the Holocaust in northern Transylvania was anti-Romanian and not antisemitic.”<sup>73</sup> After the fall of the former regime, a carefully selective collection of documents from the State Archives was published under the title *Romania*,

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72 Ibid.

73 Cited in Randolph L. Braham, “The Exculpatory History of Romanian Nationalists: The Exploitation of the Holocaust for Political Ends” in *The Destruction of Romanian and Ukrainian Jews During the Antonescu Era*, ed. R. L. Braham (New York 1997), 45–59, p. 51.

*the Great Victim of World War Two*.<sup>74</sup> The roots of this perception lie in the Communist period.

In the post-Communist period, at least two Romanian historians acknowledged Romanian responsibility for the perpetrated massacres. Dinu Giurescu concluded that 108,000 Romanian Jews were exterminated by the Romanian authorities but his figures do not include the extermination carried out among Ukrainian Jews.<sup>75</sup> Florin Constantiniu estimated the destruction (apparently of both) at “some 200,000.”<sup>76</sup> Andrei Pippidi tended to accept as more accurate the estimate of 120,000 by German historian Christa Zach.<sup>77</sup> Jewish historians of Romanian origin residing in the United States or in Israel have produced figures that are considerably higher. Radu Ioanid estimates that some 250,000 Jews (as well as some 20,000 Roma) perished at the hands of the Romanian authorities, whereas Jean Ancel came up with an estimate of 410,000, of which 170,000 are Ukrainian Jews.<sup>78</sup> In its *Final Report* of 2005, the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania concluded that “between 280,000 and 380,000 Romanian and Ukrainian Jews were murdered or died during the Holocaust in Romania and the territories under its control. An additional 135,000 Romanian Jews living under Hungarian control in Northern Transylvania also perished in the Holocaust.”<sup>79</sup>

As part of its analysis, the *Final Report* critically examined all forms of distortion, negationism, and minimalization of the Holocaust in postwar Romania in addition to clarifying the facts concerning the actual scale of Romanian participation in the mass murders during World War II.<sup>80</sup>

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74 Victor Eskenasy, “Historiographers Against the Antonescu Myth,” in *The Destruction of Romanian and Ukrainian Jews During the Antonescu Era*, ed. R. L. Braham (New York 1997), 271–302, p. 291.

75 Dinu Giurescu, *România în al doilea război mondial* (Romania in the Second World War) (Bucharest 1999), 70, 91.

76 Florin Constantiniu, *O istorie sinceră a poporului român* (A sincere history of the Romanian people) (Bucharest 1997), 394.

77 C. Zach, “Rumänien,” in *Dimension des Völkermords: Die Zahl der jüdischen Opfer des Nationalsozialismus*, ed. W. Benz (Munich 1991); Andrei Pippidi, *Despre statui și morminte: Pentru o istorie simbolică* (On statues and tombs: for a symbolic history) (Iași 2000), 241; idem, “Istoria și dialectica terorismului” (History and the dialectics of terrorism), *Lettre internationale* (Romanian edition) 39 (Autumn 2001): 12–15.

78 Jean Ancel, *Transnistria* (Bucharest 1998), vol. 3.

79 *Final Report 2005, International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania*, eds. Tuvia Friling, Radu Ioanid, and Mihail E. Ionescu (Bucharest 2005), 381–82.

80 See *ibid.*, 333–75.

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A slightly more versatile form of deflective negationism consists in admitting some national participation in crimes, but considering the perpetrators to have been “on the fringe” in the country’s otherwise spotless history of relations with the Jews. In Hungary, the “aberration” is considered to be Arrow-Cross *Nyilas*; in Romania the role is played by the *Legiune*, as the Iron Guard was also called. For Ceaușescu-inspired historiography, the Iron Guard had nothing Romanian about itself, it only “slavishly emulated its Hitlerite tutors” and indulged into “antisemitic diversionism.”<sup>81</sup> The treatment by the Communists, as well as by the post-Communists, of the pogrom carried out in Iași in late June 1941 is an example of deflection to fringe. In this particular case, however, the “fringe” is said to have collaborated as perpetrators with the Germans.

The fact that President Ion Iliescu would embrace the “fringe approach” was, however, somewhat unexpected. Iliescu’s contortionist exercises in dealing with the legacy of the Holocaust are worth contemplating. In a speech at the Coral Temple in Bucharest on January 21, 2001, marking the sixtieth anniversary of the Iron Guard pogrom in Bucharest, the president said the Iron Guardist “aberration” had been a “delirium of intolerance and anti-Semitism.” Yet, he added, that brief “delirium” excepted, there has been no Romanian contribution to “the long European history” of persecution of the Jews, and it was “significant” that there was “no Romanian word for pogrom.” Furthermore, he hastened to add, it was “unjustified to attribute to Romania an artificially inflated number of Jewish victims for the sake of media impact.” Romania’s distorted image, according to Iliescu, was likely to be corrected when “Romanian [i.e., rather than Jewish] historians will tackle the subject.”<sup>82</sup>

Hardly six months had passed, however, when Iliescu’s “unique aberration” of 1941 grew slightly larger. With Romania banging on NATO’s doors, and despite the protests in the United States and Israel triggered by the Antonescu cult in Romania, Iliescu attended a ceremony marking the Iași pogrom where he felt compelled to declare that “no matter what we may think, international public opinion considers Antonescu to have been a war criminal.”<sup>83</sup> Iliescu’s statement in Iași triggered protests not only from the PRM, but also from among members

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81 Braham, “Assault on Historical Memory”; Nicolae Minei, “Prefață” (Introduction), in *Zile însângerate la Iași, 1941* (Bloody days in Iași, 1941), by Aurel Kerețki and Maria Covaci (Bucharest 1978), 5–27, p. 16.

82 *RFE/RL Newslines*, 22 Jan. 2001.

83 *RFE/RL Newslines*, 26 June 2001.

of his own party, such as Senator Adrian Păunescu.<sup>84</sup> Back in 1993, both the PRM and Păunescu (at that time first deputy chairman of the Socialist Labor Party) had harshly criticized Iliescu for having participated in ceremonies marking the Holocaust at the Coral Temple. The PRM protested earlier that year when Iliescu had attended the opening of the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, where, so it claimed, the “Romanian people” was unjustifiably accused of having participated in the Holocaust against Jews.<sup>85</sup> However, at a speech dedicated to Holocaust Remembrance Day in Romania on 12 October 2004, President Iliescu declared himself fully committed to learning the lessons of the Holocaust and disseminating them in school curricula, through the media, and to the younger generation. This would not only render overdue homage to the Jewish community of Romania, but be of fundamental importance in developing the democratic conscience and civic spirit of the Romanian nation.

Such declarations are an important development, but they have not been able to overcome the persistence and revival of Holocaust denial in post-Communist Eastern Europe. This syndrome is often linked to suspicions of “anti-Polonism,” “anti-Romanianism,” “anti-Lithuanianism” or “anti-Hungarianism,” in a word, to a Jewish conspiracy to accuse or make culpable the nation as a whole. Cardinal Glemp had, for example, blamed Jews in the past for using the Holocaust in the cause of “anti-Polonism.” “We want,” Glemp told journalists on the eve of the 2001 Jedwabne commemoration, “to apologize for all the evil that was perpetrated by Polish citizens on citizens of the Judaic faith” in Jedwabne. However, Glemp added, “we want to include in our prayers the other evil, that was perpetrated on Polish citizens of the Catholic faith, and in which Poles of the Judaic faith had a part.”<sup>86</sup>

Apologetics is still rampant, not only in Poland, Hungary, and Romania, but also in countries like Slovakia. Stefan Polaković—a leading ideologist of Slovak “clerico-fascism”—argues that the Hlinka Slovak People’s Party (HSĽS) and Tiso himself cannot be blamed for the party’s eventual emulation of National Socialism. Polaković was active in the United States as a prominent leader of the Slovak Liberation Committee.<sup>87</sup> Like other postwar exiled leaders, he frequently visited Slovakia, participating in conferences and symposia aimed at “cleans-

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<sup>84</sup> RFE/RL Newswire, 1, 4, and 5 June 2001.

<sup>85</sup> Michael Shafir, “Marshal Antonescu’s Post-Communist Rehabilitation: Cui Bono?,” in *The Destruction of Romanian and Ukrainian Jews During the Antonescu Era*, ed. Randolph L. Braham (New York 1997) 349–410, pp. 369–70, 390.

<sup>86</sup> RFE/RL Newswire, 4 May 2001. Emphasis mine.

<sup>87</sup> Meštan 30–35, 131; Cohen, *Politics without a Past*, 209, n. 50.



ing” Tiso’s reputation and that of the state he headed. In an article published in the “respectable” *Literárny týždenník* in early 1993 under the title “What was Populism all about?,” Polakovič argued that the HSĽS’ “populism” was, and continues to be, wrongly associated with Nazism. In fact, he claims, association with Nazi Germany was only a “cosmetic defect” and Tiso’s Catholic state would have entered the annals of respectable statehood, were it not for what he calls in a euphemism “the deterioration of the political situation” after 1939. By that he means the emulation of National Socialism, the introduction of anti-Jewish measures, and the subsequent deportations of Jews to extermination camps, though Polakovič never calls the child by its name. It was, he claims, the fault of Prime Minister Vojtech Tuka and that of Hlinka Guard commander-in-chief Alexander Mach that “tainted the image of modern Slovak statehood.” It was Tuka who embarked upon an emulation of National Socialism and “triggered off the inhumane solution of the Jewish issue.” But in the same breath, Polakovič also argues that Nazism in Slovakia had been merely “formal,” inasmuch as the HSĽS was a single party with a “leader” at its head and the Hlinka Guard members were wearing uniforms.<sup>88</sup> Much of the same argument was brought out during his lectures in Slovakia by Dr. Jozef M. Kirschbaum, a major figure in Slovakia’s wartime government and the secretary-general of Tiso’s Party of National Unity: he insisted that there was no antisemitism in the Slovak state, and the “Jewish question” was solely in the hands of the Germans and Tuka.<sup>89</sup>

Deflecting guilt for the Holocaust onto the Germans alone and deflecting it to the “fringe,” in theory at least, does not have to involve antisemitic postures. Shifting the guilt to the Jews, however, is undoubtedly a reflection of the propensity. One can practically find in its different variations all the well-established forms of antisemitism, ranging from religious to the politically reactive in such manoeuvres. This syndrome includes the widely popular argument that the Jews provoked the Holocaust because of their deep involvement with Communism. Also frequent at “scientific” colloquia, in volumes and in articles in the press produced by the defenders of extreme nationalism and/or its interwar record, is the *deicidal justification* of the Holocaust. In a 719-page volume produced in 1997 by the Friends of President Tiso in Slovakia and Abroad association and similar groups in Slovakia itself, we learn from a chapter “On the Jewish Question” that the Holocaust was the price the Jews had to pay for having crucified Jesus Christ. There is, however, room for hope. According to Jozef Štítničan, in an article called “The Jewish Tragedy,” he writes that the Jews “over-valued themselves, believing

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88 Mešťan, *Anti-Semitism in Slovak Politics*, 67–68.

89 Cohen, *Politics without a Past*, 207; Mešťan, *Anti-Semitism in Slovak Politics*, 147.

they are more than the others.” They thought that with the help of their Messiah, they would be able to rule the world. To this day, Jews still believe they are the chosen people. Even after “annihilation in the gas chambers,” they believe this and have “set up a state for themselves,” to which they have no right. They can, however, be saved if “we win them over to collaborate in Christ’s design.”<sup>90</sup> In a similarly-argued article in the PRM weekly *România mare* in 1993, a Romanian lady was writing that the criminal structure of the Jews is reflected in “the crucifixion of Christ” and their consequently being “a deicidal people.”<sup>91</sup>

Another “explanation” for the Holocaust is taken straight from the “encyclopedia” of conspiracy theories, claiming that “world Jewish power produced Hitler.” Áron Mónus, the publisher of the Hungarian translation of *Mein Kampf*, makes this argument in an epilogue to the volume, as well as in a book he authored under the title *Conspiracy: The Empire of Nietzsche*. The title of the first chapter in the volume is conclusive in itself: “Freemasonry Encouraged the Holocaust.” Chapter two asserts that “Adolf Hitler Was in the Pay of Jewish Freemasons,” and the following chapter is on “Adolf Hitler, the Quack Zionist Agent.” Similar views come out of Slovakia. According to an article on Freemasonry in *Zmena* in 1992, international Jewry and Zionism nurtured Hitler and provoked the war in order to facilitate the setting up of the Jewish state. This was also the argument of historian Arvéd Grébert’s contribution to the 1992 volume, *An Attempt at a Political Profile of Jozef Tiso*. It was Zionism itself that had the greatest interest in provoking antisemitism in order to prepare the ground for claiming the State of Israel. Róbert Letz, a senior lecturer at Bratislava’s Comenius University also blames Zionism, but from a different perspective. Were it not for Zionism, Jews would have assimilated and the Holocaust could have been avoided.<sup>92</sup> Ladislav Pittner, who was Slovak Interior Minister representing the KDH till May 2001, and whose father was a committed Tiso supporter, argued similarly in 1998 that Zionism might have been behind the pogroms in Russia in order to convince Jews to leave for Palestine. Pittner went on to “reveal” that German Admiral Wilhelm Canaris had “very clear documentation indicating that Hitler and Himmler had Jewish ancestors.”<sup>93</sup> In Romania, Theodoru argued that Hitler had been “merely a puppet” in Jewish hands, and writer Ioan Buduca concurred, seeing antisemitism

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90 Mešťan *Anti-Semitism in Slovak Politics*, 182–83.

91 Cited in Voicu *Zeii cei răi*, 128–29.

92 Mešťan, *Anti-Semitism in Slovak Politics*, 85, 119–20, 144.

93 Cited in *ibid.*, 194.

as a Zionist ploy to advance the purpose of Jewish emigration.<sup>94</sup> Others, like Ilie Neacșu, editor-in-chief of the weekly *Europa*, blamed the Holocaust on the “fact” that after World War I, the descendants of Judah had become masters over the German economy, culture, and politics.<sup>95</sup>

Many library shelves would be needed to store the countless number of books and articles in media outlets (many of them identified with pro-Western postures) that “explain” Holocaust-related events in Romania through such reactive rationalizations. From outright negationists like Theodoru to the “selective negationists,” there is agreement that Jewish *disloyalty* is what had triggered Antonescu’s reactive massacre of Jews. The main argument rests on the large-scale support allegedly rendered by Jews to the Soviet occupation forces in Bessarabia and northern Bukovina in 1940, and on the alleged Jewish participation not only in humiliating or torturing the retreating Romanian army, but in the physical liquidation of Romanian military personnel. Viewed from this perspective, the July 1940 Dorohoi and Galați pogroms, the pogrom in Iași, the atrocities committed in Transnistria (whenever they are acknowledged, even in minimalist terms) can all be explained in terms of self-defense and/or spontaneous revenge on the Jews for their deeds in 1940. The latest in a long series of such arguments has come from Paris, where exiled writer Paul Goma, the most prominent and most courageous dissident under Ceaușescu, put it in simplistic and grossly distorted, terms: in the beginning, there was anti-Romanianism.<sup>96</sup>

The reactive explanation was quite clearly backed from the outset in post-Communist Romania by historians who under the previous regime had worked for the Communist Party’s Institute of History, or for Army’s Center for the Research and Study of Military History and Theory headed by the executed president’s brother, Ilie Ceaușescu. It figured prominently in a volume published in 1992 by two Romanian historians from the army’s own Academy for Higher Military Studies.<sup>97</sup> It was also prominently displayed in a volume by historian Gheorghe Buzatu as a sequel to a tome on the Second World War’s “secret history” published in the last

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94 Ioan Buduca, “Care-i buba? (Where’s the sore point?),” *România literară* 15 (22–28 April 1998).

95 Ilie Neacșu, “Rabinul suferă de hemoroizi” (The rabbi suffers from hemorrhoids), *Europa*, 6–13 April 1993.

96 Paul Goma, “Basarabis și problema” (Bessarabia and the problem), *Vatra*, nos. 3–4 (2002): 34–41; nos. 5–6 (2002): 32–46.

97 Ioan Scurtu and Constantin Hlihor, *Anul 1940: Drama românilor dintre Prut și Nistru* (1940: The drama of Romanians between the rivers Prut and Dniester) (Bucharest 1992).

years of Communist rule.<sup>98</sup> By then, the latter author's views on the Holocaust had already acquired notoriety. They were succinctly expressed by the title of a booklet Buzatu published with the Iron Guardist publishing house Majadahonda. Rather than being a perpetrator of the Holocaust, Romania had been its *victim*. It had undergone a Holocaust *at the hand of the Jews*, and the year 1940 marked its beginning.<sup>99</sup> The booklet would eventually become a separate chapter in a volume based on research Buzatu had conducted in Soviet archives.<sup>100</sup> Although this tome purports to deal with *Romanians in the Kremlin's Archives*, most of its "heroes" are Jews who served Soviet power and would later become prominent leaders in post-World War II Romania.

This leads me to a particularly obnoxious form of deflectionist manipulation in which *Jews are themselves the perpetrators of the Holocaust*. In his *Wastelands of Historical Truth* (1988), late Croatian President Franjo Tudjman, who claimed to be a historian among his other callings, set out to exonerate his fellow Croats from responsibility for participation in the Holocaust.<sup>101</sup> The infamous Jasenovac concentration camp, where several tens of thousands of Serbs, Jews, and Roma perished during the Pavelić regime, was for Tudjman a "myth" blown out of all proportion. Its main purpose was to back the theory of "the genocidal nature of every and any Croat nationalism," to "create a black legend of the historical guilt of the entire Croat people, for which they must still make restitution." (Similar efforts at "unmasking" of alleged "culpabilization" of the nation as a whole were, as we have seen, present in Hungary, Slovakia, and Romania). Tudjman nonetheless stood out in his deflectionist postures, which were not very far from outright negationism. This was due to his questioning of the figure of six million, which he deemed to be "based too much on emotionally biased testimonies, as well as on one-sided and exaggerated data resulting from postwar settling of accounts," and to his cynical allegations that Jews had actually been the main perpetrators in Jasenovac. They are said to have "managed to grab all the more important jobs in the prisoner hierarchy," and to have taken advantage of the fact that the *Ustasha* trusted them more than they trusted Serbs. Tudjman concluded that "The Jew remains a Jew, even in the Jasenovac camp.... Selfishness, craftiness, unreliability, stinginess, deceit, are their main characteristics." To "demonstrate" that

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98 Gheorghe Buzatu, *Din istoria secretă a celui de-al doilea război mondial* (From the secret history of World War II) (Bucharest 1995).

99 Gheorghe Buzatu, *Așa a început holocaustul împotriva poporului român* (How the Holocaust against the Romanian people started) (Bucharest 1995).

100 Gheorghe Buzatu, *Românii în arhivele Kremlinului* (The Romanians in the Kremlin's archives) (Bucharest 1996).

101 Franjo Tudjman, *Wastelands of Historical Truth* (1988).

Jews rather than the *Ustasha* Croats were the main *perpetrators*, Tudjman must, however, make figures more plausible for prisoners to be able to accomplish the deed. He thus dismissed not only the 700,000 figure advanced by the Serbs, but also the 60,000 victims claimed by Croat historians. No more than 30–40,000 are said to have perished in the camp, some at the hands of the *Ustasha*, but most at the hands of Jews, who controlled the liquidation apparatus.<sup>102</sup> In a letter to Croatia's Jewish community in February 1994, Tudjman, (who had put the word Holocaust in quotes when implicitly criticizing world Jewry efforts to prevent Kurt Waldheim's election as Austrian president), eventually apologized for these sections in his book.<sup>103</sup> But in subsequent revised versions of *Wastelands*, the basic argument did not much change, though the more offensive sections were somewhat diluted.<sup>104</sup>

Tudjman is not a unique case in the annals of Holocaust denial. He *does*, however, stand out for having made the allegation from the position of being Croatia's most prominent politician. Similar examples come from the psychically deranged lunatic fringe that can by no means be compared with Tudjman. In an article published in his native Hungary, Australian-exiled Viktor Padányi had also claimed that the management of the camps had fallen into Jewish hands. And this, according to Gabriel Hoffmann, was also the case of the Sered forced labor camp in Slovakia where, he claimed in a 1998 article in *Zmena* that he had been interned himself before having converted. In Sered, not only did Jews administer the camp themselves, but the place was run by a certain "Hauptobersturmführer Zimmermann," who in reality was no one else than "the dreaded Simon Wiesenthal." Wiesenthal was supposedly there with a false identity and wearing a German uniform. He ordered the murder of Jews suspected of collaboration with the Nazis and had forced Hoffmann himself to kill prisoners by lethal injection.<sup>105</sup>

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102 Cited in Radmila Milentijevic, "Anti-Semitism and the Treatment of the Holocaust in Postcommunist Yugoslavia," in *Anti-Semitism and the Treatment of the Holocaust in Postcommunist Eastern Europe*, ed. Randolph L. Braham (New York 1994), 225–50, pp. 234–36.

103 See Robert S. Wistrich, *Antisemitism in the New Europe* (Oxford 1994), 15n; Gruber *Struggle of Memory*, 24.

104 See, for example, Franjo Tudjman, *Horrors of War: Historical Reality and Philosophy* (New York 1996).

105 Cited in Meštan, *Anti-Semitism in Slovak Politics*, 188.

## Selective Negationism

Selective negationism stands somewhere between outright and deflectional negationism. It does not deny the Holocaust as having taken place *elsewhere*, but excludes *any* participation of members of one's own nation in its perpetration. The fringe ceases to exist in selective negationism. It shares with deflectional negationism its prominent function of externalizing guilt. And just as outright negationists may occasionally indulge in deflectional denial, deflectional negationists may embrace the discourse of selective negation (and vice versa).

Nowhere in post-Communist East Central Europe is selective negationism so blatant as in Romania. According to its champions, not only was Antonescu innocent of any crimes against the Jews, but the Iron Guard never touched a Jewish hair! The Romanian champions of selective negationism are not (as one might have expected) semi-educated marginals. Two of the most emblematic figures among them are university professors, one being a historian specializing in modern Romanian history, the other teaching Romanian linguistics at the University of Bucharest. The Iași-based history professor, Gheorghe Buzatu, has been a deputy chairman of the PRM, deputy chairman of the Romanian Senate, and chairman of the Marshal Antonescu Foundation, of which Theodoru was executive chairman. Until September 2001 Buzatu was also director of a historical institute in Iași affiliated with the Romanian Academy. He was forced to resign from the latter position after the publication, at his own initiative and under the institute's auspices, of a venomous racist and particularly antisemitic book by a fellow-PRM deputy.<sup>106</sup>

As Buzatu put it in an interview with the Movement for Romania weekly *Mișcarea* in 1995, "there has been no Holocaust in Romania during World War II," with the exception of Hungary-occupied Transylvania.<sup>107</sup> Until a few years ago, Buzatu was, however, willing to admit that the Guard had indulged in crimes, though they were presented as a Romanian national reaction to the rise of Bolshevism and *its* crimes, with which Jews had been prominently associated.<sup>108</sup> As he put it in an article in the PRM weekly *România mare*: "Crime Begets Crime."<sup>109</sup> He has since, however, embraced Ion Coja's selective negationism. For Coja, an

<sup>106</sup> See RFE/RL Newline, 23, 24, and 28 Aug. 2001; and Mediafax, 11 Sept. 2001.

<sup>107</sup> *Mișcarea*, no. 7 (1–15 April 1995).

<sup>108</sup> See Michael Shafir, "Marshal Antonescu's Post-Communist Rehabilitation: Cui Bono?" in *The Destruction of Romanian and Ukrainian Jews During the Antonescu Era*, ed. Randolph L. Braham (New York 1997), 349–410, pp. 383–84.

<sup>109</sup> Gheorghe Buzatu, "Crima naște crimă" (Crime begets crime), *România mare*, 22 Dec. 1995.

emblematic figure in Romanian historical denial, the Iron Guard never committed any of the atrocities attributed to it. Indeed, it was not even antisemitic!<sup>110</sup> The January 1941 pogrom by the Iron Guard in Bucharest, Coja claims, never happened. Its 120 victims, some of whom were hanged on hooks at the slaughterhouse with the inscription “Kosher meat” on them are all an invention. The best proof is that when the Communists took power, nobody was put on trial, although so many Jews were then in the party leadership. Jews may have died during the January uprising against Antonescu, but nobody has ever proved that the crimes were actually committed by the Iron Guard.<sup>111</sup>

The assassination of historian Nicolae Iorga in those days was not committed by the Iron Guard either, but ordered by the KGB, which had infiltrated the movement. Moreover, according to Coja, it was a well-kept secret that the KGB was in the hands of the “occult.” The same “occult” elements would eventually order the assassination of Nicolae Ceaușescu, as indeed it would commission the liquidation of Romanian-born scholar Ioan Petru Culianu in the United States in May 1991, being aware that the scholar had discovered the secrets of the Jewish occult and Communist world domination.<sup>112</sup>

In mid-2001 Buzatu and Coja chaired a symposium in Bucharest whose title—telling in itself—was “Has There Been a Holocaust in Romania?” The symposium was divided into two panels, the first examining the “questionable” occurrence of the Shoah in Romania; the second, the reasons for the existence of a “powerfully institutionalized anti-Romanianism.” As an outcome of the second panel, a Romanian League for the Struggle Against Anti-Romanianism, headed by Coja, was set up. The symposium’s resolution was published, among other places, in the Iron Guardist journal *Permanențe* (no. 7, July 2001) in both Romanian and “Pidjin English.” The document was signed “pro forma” by Coja and emblematically assumed the selective negationist posture. Its authors, it was stated, “want to make clear that we have nothing to do with those people and opinions contesting as a whole the occurrence of the Jewish holocaust [sic!] during World War II.” It said that Jews “have suffered almost everywhere in the Europe [sic!] of those years, but not in Romania,” and it added that “the testimony of trustworthy Jews” demonstrates that “the Romanian people had in those years a behavior honoring the human dignity [sic!].”

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<sup>110</sup> See Voicu, *Teme antisemite în discursul public*, 117–23.

<sup>111</sup> Ion Coja, *Legionarii noștri* (Our Legionnaires) (Bucharest: Editura Kogaion, 1997), 156–69.

<sup>112</sup> Ion Coja, *Marele manipulator și asasinarea lui Culianu, Ceaușescu, Iorga* (The grand manipulator and the assassination of Culianu, Ceaușescu, Iorga) (Bucharest 1999).

In support of their affirmations, the participants brought several “arguments.” They started by presenting excerpts from what they claimed was the 1955 testimony before a Swiss court of the former leader of the Romanian Jewish Community in Romania, Wilhelm Filderman. The document has never been produced and whether it really exists at all is uncertain. The trial involved five Romanian exiles who had attacked the Bucharest diplomatic representation in Bern, briefly took it over and in the course of the attack killed the legation’s driver. The authorities in Romania and abroad launched a large-scale campaign against the attackers and those Romanian exile personalities who testified in the attackers’ defense. However, Filderman’s name was never mentioned during that campaign.

Filderman is said to have told the court that “During the period of Hitler’s domination of Europe, I was in permanent touch with Marshal Antonescu. He did all he could to ease the lives of Jews exposed to Nazi Germans’ persecutions. I must underline that the Romanian population was not antisemitic and that the misfortunes suffered by the Jews were the work of the German Nazis and the Iron Guard. Marshal Antonescu withstood successfully the Nazi pressure that was imposing hard measures against the Jews.” Filderman added that owing to Antonescu’s “energetic intervention,” the deportation of more than 20,000 Jews from Bukovina was stopped and that it was due to Antonescu’s “political strategies” that the assets of the Jewish people were placed under a transitionary administrative regime, making them [seemingly] appear as lost, in order to conserve them and ensure their future restitution at the ripe time.”

On the face of it, this might be considered a shattering testimony. In fact, it was an obviously misleading one, highly unlikely to have been made by a man familiar with all the details of the events of those years. On Antonescu’s orders, 90,344 Bukovinian Jews had been deported to Transnistria.<sup>113</sup> The 20,000 Bukovinian Jews allegedly mentioned by Filderman owed their lives to the intervention of Cernăuți Mayor Traian Popovici rather than to Antonescu.<sup>114</sup> And above all, the Germans were never involved in the physical deportation of Jews from Romania, since this was entirely a Romanian-handled matter. So whom could Antonescu’s “energetic intervention” have possibly targeted? As for the safeguarding of Jewish properties with an eye to better times, it is sufficient to consult the many documents on Filderman’s protests and interventions to realize that, at

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**113** Radu Ioanid, *Evreii sub Regimul Antonescu* (The Jews under the Antonescu regime). (Bucharest 1997), 233.

**114** Matatias Carp, *Cartea neagră* (The black book), vols. 2–3 (Bucharest 1996).



best, this reflected a lost memory.<sup>115</sup> But it is also sufficient to read the memoirs of Radu Lecca, the man in charge of “Aryanizing” Jewish assets (and who claims to have been the “savior of Romanian Jewry” after depleting it) to be edified to what extent such a claim can hold.<sup>116</sup>

At Antonescu’s trial in 1946, Filderman testified that “The Antonescu governance resulted in the death of 150,000 Bukovinian and Bessarabian Jews,” adding that “the actual number of victims might be larger.” Antonescu himself said at the trial that according to “my own calculations, no more than 150,000–170,000 Jews were deported” to Transnistria.<sup>117</sup> But above all, as Lya Benjamin points out, the testimony attributed to Filderman contradicted his entire activity and correspondence with Marshal Antonescu and others during the war and in the immediate postwar period.<sup>118</sup>

In his address to the symposium as well as in his article on Marshal Antonescu, Coja brought another “witness” to the stand of “Romanian innocence”: former Romanian Chief Rabbi Alexandru Șafran.<sup>119</sup> Already in 1999, in his book, *The Grand Manipulator*, Coja had hinted that “a rabbi” who is an “important Jewish leader” has written a dedication on a book offered to the son of executed war criminal Gheorghe Alexianu, exonerating his father from any guilt. Alexianu was governor of Transnistria, and Coja claimed that the elderly Jewish leader had sworn Alexianu, Jr. to silence for as long as he was still alive, because “the poor man fears the reaction of the community, of his own faith brethren.” And the apprehension was justified, he added—“witness that Filderman has also left his declaration exonerating fully and definitively Marshal Antonescu only in his testament.”<sup>120</sup> The “old Jewish leader” was said to have offered Alexianu, Jr. a book with a dedication “in the memory of your illustrious father, who during his entire life and professional activity, but particularly during the dark period of the war, has done so much, wholeheartedly and generously, for the [Jewish] community.

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**115** See Lya Benjamin, “Dr. Filderman și regimul antonescian între realitate și mistificare” (Dr. Filderman and the Antonescu Regime Between reality and Mystification), *Buletinul Centrului, Muzeului și Arhivei istorice a evreilor din România*, no. 7 (2001): 40–46.

**116** Radu Lecca, *Eu i-am salvat pe evreii din România* (I saved the Romanian Jews) (Bucharest: Editura Roza vânturilor, 1994).

**117** United States Holocaust Memorial Museum/Serviciul Român de Informații, 267 (270) and 16, respectively.

**118** Benjamin, “Dr. Filderman.”

**119** Ion Coja, “Simpozion internațional: Holocaust în România” (1–7), *România mare*, 13 July–24 August 2001.

**120** Ion Coja, *Marele manipulator*, 299–300.

He paid a terrible and totally unjustified price at the order of the Communists. May he be delivered from his whole suffering!”<sup>121</sup>

No explanation was offered as to how former Chief Rabbi Șafran had overcome his apprehensions. Intrigued, the author of these lines asked a relative of the aging rabbi living in Geneva to clarify the authenticity of the claim. Instead of a response, Rabbi Șafran, who was almost immobilized by illness, directed me through his nephew to the relevant part of his memoirs. Alexianu, he wrote there, was “famous for his cruelty.”<sup>122</sup>

The question has sometimes been raised as to how one should respond to the “negationists” or so-called historical “revisionists” who constantly claim to challenge our picture of the past. The response was provided long ago by Pierre Vidal-Naquet: “one can and should enter into discussion *concerning* the ‘revisionists’... But one should not enter into debate *with* the ‘revisionists.’ It is no concern to me whether the ‘revisionists’ are neo-Nazi or extreme left wing in their politics: whether they are characterized psychologically as perfidious, perverse, paranoid or quite simply idiotic. I have nothing to reply to them and will not do so. Such is the price to be paid for intellectual coherence.”<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 300; idem, “Testamentul lui Filderman,” *Mareșalul Ion Antonescu* 1: 49–53, p. 52.

<sup>122</sup> Alexandru Șafran, *Un tăciune smuls flăcărilor* (An ember torn from flames) (Bucharest 1996), 86.

<sup>123</sup> Vidal-Naquet, *Assassins of Memory*, xxiv–xxv, author’s emphasis.

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## The Jedwabne Debate: Reshaping Polish National Mythology

In recent decades, the subject of collective memory has become a compelling pre-occupation of academics of various disciplines as well as non-academics. French historian Henry Rousso has pointed to memory as a “value reflecting the spirit of our time.”<sup>1</sup> One aspect of the study of collective memory is that of the “dark past” of nations in their relations with their ethnic and national minorities, the ways in which nations recollect and rework the memory of such a past, and how this memory impacts on each of their collective identities. Various new studies reveal that as with other uncomfortable memories haunting Europe, the Holocaust was repressed and excluded from public debate for a relatively long period of time.<sup>2</sup> The development of public debate on the subject was dependent on a political stability that permitted public reckoning, as well as the acceptance of self-criticism within a particular collective culture.<sup>3</sup> One can argue that in many former Baltic and East European communist states, such as Lithuania, Latvia, Slovakia, and the Ukraine, that such debates have yet to take place.

Between 2000 and 2002, Poland was the foremost national community undergoing such a prominent and profound public discussion, triggered by the publication of *Neighbors* by Jan Tomasz Gross, which describes the collective murder of the Jewish community of Jedwabne in northeastern Poland by its ethnic Polish neighbors on July 10, 1941. Rather than reviewing the historical events, or providing a critique of Gross’s book, I shall focus on the dominant Polish canon of remembering the Holocaust and wartime Polish-Jewish relations in the postwar collective memory and I will look at the extent to which the debate over *Neighbors* led to a critical reevaluation and rejection of that canon.

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1 Henry Rousso, *La hantise du passé: entretien avec Phillipe Petit* (Paris, 1998), 14.

2 See studies on the collective memory of the Holocaust in Germany, such as Geoffrey Hartman, ed., *Bitburg in Moral and Political Perspective* (Bloomington, Ind., 1986); Jeffrey Herf, *Divided Memory. The Nazi Past in the Two Germanys* (Cambridge, Mass., 1997), and Siobhan Kattago, *Ambiguous Memory. The Nazi Past And German National Identity* (Westport, Conn., 2001). On memory of the Holocaust in France, see, for example, Richard J. Golsan, ed., *Memory, the Holocaust and French Justice: The Bousquet and Touvier Affairs* (Dartmouth, 1996); and in Europe, see Judith Miller, *One by One, by One Facing the Holocaust* (New York, 1990).

3 The importance of self-criticism in the process of reckoning is raised by Iwona Irwin-Zarecka, *Frames of Remembrance* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1994).

*Neighbors* represents what French historian Pierre Nora has termed a clear counter-memory to the accepted canon.<sup>4</sup> No other previous work succeeded in triggering the endorsement of counter-memory by a considerable number of religious and political leaders, intellectuals, and a segment of the general public. Furthermore, other issues of Polish history and identity began to be reassessed, such as the attitude of the Polish state toward “others,” its policies of inclusion and exclusion, and patterns of social and cultural reconstruction. Among various right-wing ethno-national political and social groups, *Neighbors* set off a strongly defensive reinforcement of the dominant accepted canon of remembering the Holocaust and wartime Polish-Jewish relations. This canon, discussed in more detail below, is made up of various narratives which are both intellectually and morally disturbing. Thus the debate over Gross’s book can be viewed as a battle over memory and over regaining a more historically truthful image of Polish-Jewish relations of the wartime period, and a more objective self-image of Polish society.

I use the term, the “Polish dark past,” to refer to that aspect of Polish relations with its Jewish minority which reflects negatively on the ethnic Polish majority group as a witness to the Nazi genocide of Jews. Within this aspect I include anti-Jewish perceptions, beliefs and sentiments, and anti-Jewish acts carried out by individuals, or military and civilian groups. The massacre of the Jews of Jedwabne and other similar wartime massacres can be classified as coming from the most extreme spectrum of wrongdoing committed by members of the Polish majority against members of the Jewish minority. Of course, one should bear in mind that available wartime records, both Jewish and Polish show the collective massacres of Jews to be a much less frequent occurrence than the other manifestations of the dark past.

At this point I must stress that I reject the notion that ethnic Poles were accomplices to the Nazi genocide of the Jews. Nevertheless, the dark past has been a key component of the history of Polish-Jewish relations during the Holocaust. This is a past that has refused to go away despite having been repressed and rejected from the social history of Poland for nearly sixty years. I also view this past as an interesting illustration of a general problem—the treatment of unwanted ethnic minorities in multi-ethnic societies during conditions of war and occupation.

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<sup>4</sup> For reflections on history, memory, and counter memory, see Pierre Nora, “General Introduction: Between Memory and History” in *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past* (in English) ed. Laurence D. Kritzman, vol. 1: *Conflicts and Divisions* (New York, 1997). The article first appeared in English translation as “Between Memory and history; Les Lieux de mémoire,” *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989): 13–25.

## Public Memory of the Holocaust in communist Poland

During the postwar communist era, the memory of the Holocaust and of Polish-Jewish relations was subjected to a massive process of reworking and manipulation in the service of various political, ideological, and social needs. As a result, a particular representation of the Holocaust was constructed, and this was the accepted canon of remembering the event in Polish collective memory. It was expressed and cultivated at cultural events and commemorative sites, and in official governmental speeches and historical narratives after 1945.

The process of reworking the memory of the Holocaust had already begun during the Stalinist period (1948–1953), at a time when the event was not perceived as a convenient subject for the newly-imposed Communist regime either in Poland or other East European communist states, such as East Germany. The genocide of Jews hardly fits into the Soviet-made narratives of the “anti-fascist working class front,” nor the Marxist-Leninist interpretation of the Second World War. Other factors, such as the awareness of the postwar Soviet treatment of Jewish matters, and the underlying issue of national unity also played a role in the official evaluation and presentation of the Holocaust in Poland. Thus, the memory of the event, as historian Michael Steinlauf put it, became marginalized and repressed from public memory.<sup>5</sup> A good illustration was the fate of sites of Holocaust commemoration, such as the monument to the Warsaw Ghetto Fighters designed by Nathan Rappaport, erected in the city in 1948.<sup>6</sup> Commemorations staged there were careful to de-emphasize its Jewish character and meaning, and it can be argued that from the very beginning, it functioned, ironically, more as a place of ritual forgetfulness that was to become its chief marker right up to the 1980s.

The conviction that “one should not emphasize Jewish matters” was also reflected in the regime’s position on any discussion of the Polish past. To raise questions about Polish wartime attitudes and actions toward Jews was no longer permitted under the Stalinist regime. The first postwar debate of 1945–1947 in relation to the Jewish minority, carried out by a small group of Polish intellec-

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<sup>5</sup> Michael C. Steinlauf, *Bondage to the Dead. Poland and the Memory of the Holocaust* (New York, 1997), 63–74.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Marcin Zaremba, “Urząd zapomnienia,” *Polityka*, no. 41 (13 October 2001): 72.

tuals of mostly left-wing orientation, was abruptly silenced in 1948.<sup>7</sup> The regime also silenced any discussion on the issue of the emotional and moral distance of Polish society from the Holocaust—“witnessing the Jewish genocide without real witnessing,”—that had been raised in literary and non-literary works by a group of Polish intellectuals during the war and early postwar period.

The most crucial reworking of the memory of the genocide of Polish Jews was conducted later, during the second half of the 1950s and throughout the 1960s, in the era of Władysław Gomułka. During this period a gradual process of the ethno-nationalization of communism took place, and the “Jewish question” resurfaced within the Party itself.<sup>8</sup> Characteristically, the Polish Communist narrative became increasingly acceptable to the general public. In a pioneering study on the memory of the Holocaust in postwar Poland, Michael Steinlauf provides a convincing explanation for this phenomenon. This acceptance was possible, he argued, because “the official way of dealing with the memory of the Holocaust reflected, after all, a popular need.”<sup>9</sup>

As the 1950s progressed, the Holocaust continued to be repressed through the process of “internationalization of its victims.” This was nowhere more visible than in the commemorative rituals at the Auschwitz-Birkenau memorial site, where the term “Jew” was hardly mentioned: the Jewishness of the victims was subsumed under the nationalities of the countries from which they came. Simultaneously, the Holocaust was gradually reworked within a specifically Polish national framework with the genocide of Polish Jews frequently presented as simply a part of the (ethnic) Polish tragedy—expressed as “six million Poles died during the war.” This polonized version nurtured and strengthened the popular belief that the Poles had suffered more than any other nation during the war. In turn, the Holocaust was presented as an event parallel to the (ethnic) Polish tragedy of the war, with the Jewish loss of life numerically symmetrical to ethnic Polish losses. Thus was the distinction between the fate of Poles and Jews blurred and the seeds of future competition over suffering planted.

If mentioned at all, the darker side of Poland’s past was presented as a marginal social problem, limited to a small and morally degenerate group outside the healthy body of Polish society, as in other European nations. Moreover, research

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7 See, for example, Joanna Michlic, “The Holocaust and Its Aftermath as Perceived in Poland: Voices of Polish Intellectuals, 1945–1947,” in *The Return of Jews to Europe, 1945–49*, ed. David Bankier (Jerusalem, 2003).

8 On the development of the patterns of remembering the Holocaust in the communist era, see, for example, Lucy Dawidowicz, *The Holocaust and the Historians* (Cambridge Mass., 1981), 88–124; and Steinlauf, *Bondage*, 62–88.

9 Steinlauf, *Bondage*, 74.

into this part of the past was heavily censored and could be read only in a small number of publications produced by the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw, which were not widely available in any case. The official position was defined by narratives of the solidarity of Polish society with its Jewish fellow citizens, emphasizing the high number of Polish rescue operations and levels of assistance. In disseminating such narratives, the Communist Party was promoting itself as the “people’s party” in order to increase its legitimization within the Polish community.

It is worth mentioning that the Communist regime of the 1950s and 1960s had actually appropriated these narratives from the non-communist opposition of the earlier period. During the war, the Polish Government-in-Exile had created and promoted them in an attempt to maintain the good image of Poland in response to the horrifying news that issued from the German-occupied Polish lands. In the postwar era, the narratives were also frequently disseminated in Polish émigré circles as well as among individuals in the country who were former victims of Stalinist terror. Thus we find very similar positions on Polish-Jewish relations of the Second World War in two otherwise opposing political and ideological camps.

In the late 1960s, the “Partisan” faction within the Communist Party, led by General Mieczysław Moczar, was to provide the most extensive and damaging reworking of the memory of the Holocaust. A radical version of the dominant canon containing strongly anti-Jewish elements emerged, which became an integral part of the official antisemitic campaign that culminated in the so-called anti-Zionist/anti-Jewish purge of 1968.

The Partisans represented the strongest self-defined ethno-nationalist faction within the Party, and shared some ideological convictions that had been found in the prewar Endecja, which regarded the Jew as the major threat to Poland and its people.<sup>10</sup> Thus, the Partisans saw any emphasis on the Jewish Holocaust as a threat to the concept of ethnic Polish wartime martyrdom and suffering. This in turn led to the replacement of the official narrative of “parallel” fates of Poles and Jews with a more radical narrative of “equal” fates. A good illustration of this process is the 1968 censoring of an article on Nazi concentration camps that had appeared two years previously in the eighth volume of the prestigious *Wielka Encyklopedia Powszechna* (Great Universal Encyclopedia). The editors of the original 1966 article had maintained a clear distinction between the extermination camps in which almost all victims were Jews, and concentration and labor camps

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<sup>10</sup> Endecja—National Democratic Party was the widely supported prewar nationalist movement, whose leader, Roman Dmowski, is known as the father of Polish ethnic nationalism. Endecja was characterised by anti-Jewish policies and practices.

where many prisoners were (ethnic) Poles. In the Partisans' amended version the distinction had completely vanished.

The Partisans' narrative of the equal fate of Poles and Jews represents a particular competition over suffering, continuing in the strongly self-defensive position taken in the debate over *Neighbors*. Historian Witold Kula was perhaps the first Polish intellectual to reflect critically on this competition. In 1970, Kula wrote the following in his diary: "In the past the Jews were envied for their money, qualifications, positions and international contacts—today they are envied for the very crematoria in which they were incinerated."<sup>11</sup>

The Partisans constructed another narrative as well—that of the assault on Polish martyrdom by the West and Jews—expressed by the cry of "anti-polonism." Critical reports on the Polish treatment of its Jewish minority did indeed appear in the Western media in the 1960s, some of which presented a distorted and sensationalist image of Poles as "eternal antisemites" and "accomplices" to the Nazi genocide of Jews. Unsurprisingly, these biased accusations provoked highly defensive reactions among Poles both in émigré circles and within the country. The Partisans manipulated these reports in order to portray the entire West as anti-Polish and to suppress inquiries into the dark past. The strategy was pursued and further developed over the following two decades by various other political and social groups and individuals as well.

The Partisans also constructed anti-Jewish narratives whose purpose was to present Poles in a praiseworthy light vis-à-vis Jews, while promoting specific themes such as Polish Jews' lack of gratitude toward Poles who had assisted them; the anti-Polish behavior of Jews during the war; and Jewish passivity in the face of the genocide—including the controversial theme of collaboration with the Nazis. As with the charge of anti-polonism, the anti-Jewish narratives continued to be used and would be further developed as time went on.

Given the fact that the Partisan faction managed to obtain control over large segments of the national mass media, institutions of national heritage, and education in the late 1960s, their version of the Holocaust had considerable influence on public attitudes as well as on the writing of history. Michael Steinlauf asserts that by the late 1960s, the Holocaust had been "expelled" from public memory.<sup>12</sup>

With all its inaccuracies, distortions, and omissions, the dominant canon did serve in Polish collective memory as a source of knowledge about the Jewish genocide and the behavior of Polish society during the war. Any challenge to it was of course suppressed by the Communist regime right up to the 1980s. Furthermore,

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<sup>11</sup> Witold Kula, *Dziennik*, cited in Zaremba, "Urząd," 72.

<sup>12</sup> Steinlauf, *Bondage*, 75–88.

there were few voices in Polish émigré circles that pursued such an attempt to reevaluate the past. It was only in the new socio-political climate of the 1980s that attempts began to crystallize as part of the process of Poland's rediscovery of its Jewish minority—a process initiated by the first Solidarity movement.

## The Impact of Jan Błoński

In the 1980s, a number of voices, ranging from left-wing Solidarity circles to the progressive Catholic intelligentsia, began to openly question the dominant trend of remembering the Holocaust.<sup>13</sup> In the name of political and social necessity, they rejected any notion of equality or symmetry between the suffering of Poles and Jews, and in both official and underground publications raised the issue of the Poles' moral accounting for the Holocaust and the country's painful past. Initially, some of their voices went unnoticed, while others evoked emotional and intensely negative reactions. The dynamics and outcome of the first public debate that followed publication of Jan Błoński's essay, "The Poor Poles Look at the Ghetto" (1987), demonstrated the persistence of the prevailing Polish attitude.

In his groundbreaking article, Błoński raised difficult questions about the "insufficient concern" of Poles about the fate of Jews during the Holocaust, arguing that in part it was the result of widespread anti-Jewish feelings in the prewar period. He suggested that the Poles had difficulty in reexamining their wartime relations with the Jews because they saw *themselves* as the primary victims of the German occupation, and were unable to acknowledge that they, too, were capable of wrongdoing.

When we consider the past, we want to derive moral advantages from it. Even when we condemn, we ourselves would like to be above—or beyond—condemnation. We want to be absolutely beyond any accusation, we want to be completely clean. We want to be also—and only—victims.<sup>14</sup>

Błoński's position was rejected by most of the two hundred individuals who participated in the debate. Similarly, criticism was voiced by members of political and cultural elites from widely differing ideological backgrounds, ranging from official Communist circles to right-wing Solidarity factions. Błoński and the

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<sup>13</sup> On the memory of the Holocaust and Jews in Poland in the 1980s, see Iwona Irwin-Zarecka, *Neutralizing Memory. The Jews in Contemporary Poland* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1989).

<sup>14</sup> Jan Błoński, "The Poor Poles Look At The Ghetto" (in English), *Polin* 1 (1989), 326–28.

editors of *Tygodnik Powszechny* (in which the article was published) were accused of playing into the hands of Poland's enemies and of endorsing anti-Polish propaganda. A number of individuals called for Błoński to be prosecuted under the Polish criminal code for "slandering the Polish nation."

The political transformation of 1989–1990, which led to Poland regaining full sovereignty, did not seem to effect much change in the general attitude. This was evident in the outcome of the first major debate on the Holocaust triggered by Michał Cichy's article "Poles and Jews: Black Pages in the Warsaw Uprising," published in *Gazeta Wyborcza* in 1994.<sup>15</sup> Reactions differed little from those surrounding Błoński's article.

Another good illustration of the persistence of the dominant canon throughout the 1990s was the dissemination of knowledge about the Holocaust in the educational system. An analysis of primary and secondary school history textbooks, conducted by the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw in May 1997, showed that the viewpoint remained the same as in the communist period.<sup>16</sup>

By the late 1990s, however, a small but increasing number of intellectuals, including some historians, began to discuss less than flattering aspects of the Polish past, and called for a critical reexamination of the dominant notions of remembering.<sup>17</sup> This counter-memory has since gained a more noticeable and fixed place in intellectual discourse.

## The Debate over *Neighbors*

The publication in May 2000 of the original Polish version of Jan Tomasz Gross's *Neighbors* marked the beginning of a fierce battle over public memory of the

<sup>15</sup> See, Joanna Michlic, *Poland's Threatening Other. The Image of the Jew from 1880 to the Present* (Lincoln, Neb, 2006), 273–74.

<sup>16</sup> Important articles on the representations of the Holocaust in history textbooks in Polish schools of the 1990s were published in the *Biuletyn Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego*, no. 3/4 (1997). See also Hanna Węgrzynek, *The Treatment of Jewish Themes in Polish Schools* (New York, 1998).

<sup>17</sup> See, for example, Jan Tomasz Gross, *Upiorna dekada* (Kraków, 1998); Maria Janion, *Do Europy tak, ale razem z naszymi umarłymi* (Warsaw, 2000); and Feliks Tych, *Długi cień zagłady* (Warsaw, 1999). See also special issues of *Więź* entitled "Under One Heaven. Poles and Jews" (1998); various articles in *Więź* (July 1999); and a special issue of *Znak* entitled "Shoah—pamięć zagrożona?," (June 2000).



Holocaust and wartime Polish-Jewish relations.<sup>18</sup> Gross addressed the most extreme aspect of the dark past by providing an in-depth description of a specific case, which occurred in the small town of Jedwabne on July 10, 1941. In a set of short socio-historical essays, he raises interrelated issues, such as the problem of postwar Polish historiography of the wartime period, the question of responsibility for murder, and of the Poles' self-image as victims.

The case of the massacre at Jedwabne raises important questions about the thin line that exists between the desire to expel an unwanted minority, and the perpetration of a small-scale genocide possible only under then-prevailing wartime conditions. Further investigation into similar episodes in Poland and other East European countries may help us to better understand the wider implications of the massacre. The public debate was the most intense about any historical issue in postwar and post-communist Poland. According to the well-known Polish historian Marcin Kula, no other historical issue—not even the legacy of communism—has generated a public debate of this scope.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, the discussion continued to reverberate in the United States, the United Kingdom, Israel, and Germany as well.

The passionate national discussion came about as a result of three main factors. First, Gross documented the case of the destruction of a particular Jewish community, not by the Nazis, but by members of the Polish collectivity—that had traditionally been assigned the position of bystander to the genocide of Jews. Second, the narrative of the destruction exposes the reader to intimate details of the personal histories of named individual victims. Gross's mode of narration was that of bearing witness to the Jewish victims of Jedwabne who, for so long were remembered only by the few Jewish survivors of the massacre and by their families. Third (and most importantly for the dynamics of the debate in Poland) Gross challenged the traditional image of Poles as martyrs and heroes by showing them as vicious killers engaged in acts of murder. Thus, *Neighbors* set out a clear counter-memory to the accepted canon.

The debate can be seen as unique in many respects. Previous debates on the Holocaust that took place in the 1980s and 1990s lasted just a few months, whereas the debate over *Neighbors* continued with varying degrees of intensity

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**18** Jan Tomasz Gross, *Sasiedzi. Historia Zaglady Zydowskiego Miasteczka* (Sejny: Pogranicze, 2000). For reflections on Jewish reactions toward the Jedwabne massacre and *Neighbors*, see Laurence Weinbaum, *The Struggle for Memory in Poland. Auschwitz, Jedwabne and Beyond* (Jerusalem, 2001), 35–38.

**19** Marcin Kula, "Refleksje na marginesie dyskusji o Jedwabnem" (unpubl. ms.). My thanks to Prof. Kula for giving me this article. See also idem, "Ludzie Ludziom," *Rzeczpospolita*, 17 Mar. 2001, A5.

for several years. Earlier discussions were conducted within a limited number of newspapers, whereas this one took place in a wide range of national and local papers representing a variety of ideological profiles and social interests, as well as in other media, including television, radio, and the Internet. It included the broadcast on Polish Television Channel 2 of Agnieszka Arnold's documentary, "Neighbors," and has been referenced in commemorative events, including sermons of repentance and mourning for the Jewish victims.

More importantly, the debate on *Neighbors* was the first in which political leaders took an active role, including then-Polish President Aleksander Kwaśniewski.<sup>20</sup> It was also the first in which the voice of counter-memory is not merely that of an individual but was also heard from leading cultural, political, and religious leaders as well as the general public. These developments indicate that the counter-memory of the Holocaust gained increased support within Polish society, along with a loosening of the previous dominant ritual of remembrance.

Predictably, counter-memory allows for Polish self-criticism, whereas the former patterns of remembrance took a defensive stance, with the more extreme versions of it containing anti-Jewish narratives. Even the less extreme versions of the defensive stance often contain an element of "yes, but...."

The self-critical position was mainly presented in well-known national dailies such as *Gazeta Wyborcza* and *Rzeczpospolita*, and in two progressive journals of the Catholic intelligentsia—the weekly *Tygodnik Powszechny* and the monthly *Więź*. The strongly defensive position appeared mainly in *Myśl Polska*, *Nasz Dziennik*, *Niedziela*, *Najwyższy Czas*, *Tygodnik Głos*, and *Życie*.

## The debate over Holocaust memory

The intense and ongoing debate undoubtedly brought the Holocaust to the center of public attention.<sup>21</sup> Among those willing to take a self-critical position, the

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, Aleksander Kwaśniewski, "Polska szlachetność i polska hańba. Z prezydentem Aleksandrem Kwaśniewskim rozmawiają ks. Adam Boniecki i Krzysztof Burnetko," *Tygodnik Powszechny*, no. 1 (15 April 2001), 8–9; idem, "Co to znaczy przepraszam," *Polityka*, no. 28 (14 July 2001): 13.

<sup>21</sup> The debate exposed the absence of unbiased educational tools on the Holocaust, coinciding with discussion of the first and unbiased Polish textbook on the subject, written by two high school teachers, Robert Szuchta and Piotr Trojański, who also devised the first program for teaching the Holocaust in Poland. Accompanying the debate was an educational seminar on the Holocaust for thirty teachers from the province of Podlasie, organized by the

Holocaust regained its historical relevance as an important chapter of 20th-century history, with both universal and unique messages for humanity. There were calls for the gradual integration of the genocide of Polish Jews within the narrative of Polish history, and for the potential inclusion of the history of Poland's Jews into postwar collective memory. Polish sociologist Barbara Engelking and Israeli historian Anita Shapira had earlier pointed to the absence of reference to this important part of Polish history.<sup>22</sup>

Moreover, the discussion of the massacre of the Jedwabne Jews raised the more general issue of the emotional and moral distance of Polish society from the Jewish genocide. For example, the Archbishop of Lublin, the late Józef Życiński, in his article, "The Banalization of Barbarity," called for an expression of mourning and grief for the Jewish victims:

Today, we need to pray for the victims of the massacre, displaying the spiritual solidarity that was missing at the hour when they left the land of their fathers.<sup>23</sup>

One can argue that this long-awaited mourning did finally take place to some degree, as seen by the participation of different political and social groups in commemorative events for the Jewish victims of the Jedwabne massacre. One might assume that this would lead, in the future, to a more open, sympathetic and inclusive image of Polish Jews in Polish collective memory. Regrettably, the local community of Jedwabne itself, encouraged by their parish priest, Rev. Edward Orłowski, refused to take part in the official commemoration that took place there on July 10, 2001, an indication of their inability to reckon with the town's bloody past. Instead, the townspeople reacted by clinging to and recycling the narratives of the old version of remembrance often taking the extreme defensive position.<sup>24</sup>

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Institute of National Remembrance. See Adam Szostkiewicz, "Powiedzcie to synom" and Piotr Pytlakowski, "Historia pewnego podręcznika," both in *Polityka*, no. 16 (2001).

<sup>22</sup> Barbara Engelking, *Zagłada i Pamięć. Doświadczenia Holocaustu i jego konsekwencje opisane na podstawie relacji autobiograficznych* (Warsaw, 1994); Anita Shapira, "Holocaust: Private Memories, Public Memory," *Jewish Social Studies* 4, no. 2 (1998): 40–58.

<sup>23</sup> Józef Życiński, "The Banalisation of Barbarity," *Więź*, special edition: "Thou Shalt Not Kill" (2001): 257.

<sup>24</sup> On responses of the local Jedwabne population toward news of the massacre and toward Gross's book, see Anna Bikont, "My z Jedwabnego," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 23 March 2001, 10–15; "Proszę tu więcej nie przychodzić," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 31 March–1 April, 2001, 10–12; and "Mieli wódkę, bron i nienawiść," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, June 15, 2001, 10–14. See also, Jarosław Lipszyc, "Śąsiedzi i ich wnuki," *Midrasz*, no. 6 (June 2000): 41–44; Stanisław Przechodzki, "Szatan wstąpił do Jedwabnego," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 5 April 2001, 18; and Adam Wilma, "Broda mojego syna," *Gazeta Pomorska*, 4 August 2000.

Even more disturbing was the presence of the strongly self-defensive position along the entire spectrum of right-wing politicians and in what has been termed the “closed” Catholic Church.<sup>25</sup> In this segment of the Polish population, the Holocaust is still seen as constituting a major challenge to communal well-being, as a means of undermining recognition of Polish martyrdom, and as the “ultimate victimization of Poles by Jews.” Members of the self-defensive position have frequently cited the Polish edition of Norman Finkelstein’s aggressively polemical book, *The Holocaust Industry*, as if it were the authoritative work on the subject.<sup>26</sup> The terms “Holocaust business” and “Holocaust *gesheft*” have been incorporated into the narratives that defend the old canon of remembrance and criticize *Neighbors*.<sup>27</sup>

## The collective self-image of Poles

Gross’s presentation of Poles in *Neighbors* seriously undermined the cherished self-image of Poles as being above all heroes and victims. Just such a deconstruction, Gross argued, is a necessary prerequisite for recreating a healthy sense of Polish nationhood, which for such a long period hid the uglier aspects of its past and thus lived a lie. The debate also brought forth angry reactions concerned with defending Poland’s good name and blaming others for setbacks and difficulties. Well aware that this collective defensiveness is not solely a Polish problem, Gross

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25 See, for example, Antoni Macierewicz, “Oskarżam Aleksandra Kwaśniewskiego,” *Tygodnik Głos*, no. 14 (17 April 2001); Klub Konserwatywny w Łodzi, “Stanowisko w związku ze sprawą Jedwabnego” *Tygodnik Głos* (7 July 2001); Rev. Jerzy Bajda “Przepraszać? Kto kogo?” *Nasz Dziennik*, 14 March 2001. Rev. Prof. Waldemar Chrostowski, “Kto utrudnia dialog? Rozmowa Pawła Paliwody,” *Życie*, 10 April 2001.

26 For a critical analysis of Norman Finkelstein’s, *Holocaust Industry*, and his adoption by antisemites, including in Poland, see Robert S. Wistrich, *A Lethal Obsession. Anti-Semitism from Antiquity to the Global Jihad* (New York, 2010). See also Jerzy Sławomir Mac, “Czerwona podszełka. ‘Przedsiębiorstwo Holocaust’ to połączenie nazistowskiej i komunistycznej propagandy,” *Wprost*, 23 Sept. 2001, 78–79.

27 For example, Bishop Stanisław Stefanek of Łomża, Bishop Józef Michalik and Rev. Edward Orłowski of Jedwabne have all used the term “Holocaust business” in their sermons and comments. Right-wing journalist Henryk Pająk also published a book entitled *Jedwabne Geszefty* (Lublin, 2001), 2nd ed.

wrote that “like several other nations, in order to reclaim its own past, Poland will have to tell its past to itself anew.”<sup>28</sup>

In the self-critical camp, non-historian intellectuals, in particular, have voiced support for forming a new self-image of Poles to include the warts alongside the heroic and suffering past. As a leading figure in the progressive Catholic intelligentsia, Jarosław Gowin, put it in his article “Naród—ostatni węzeł” (The last strand of our nation), “We have the responsibility of passing on our heritage to future generations: while passing on the memory of us as heroes is our duty, passing on the memory of Polish crimes against others should constitute a warning for the future.”<sup>29</sup>

In her article “Zbiorowa wyobraźnia, wspólna wina” (Collective imagination, common guilt), the psychologist Krystyna Skarżyska has described the psychological roots of the inability to reckon with the stained past and the ensuing negative consequences, and like Gross, called for a deconstruction of the dominant collective self-image:

It is understandable that we experience psychological discomfort when our own community is blamed for serious sins. An inclusion of cruelty towards others into national collective memory is entirely in discord with one's own self-image. Its acceptance is almost impossible for people who are convinced that they have invariably been the victims and the victims only.... What is urgently required is a debate on our collective memory and social identity and an attempt at deconstructing our past self-image.”<sup>30</sup>

Individual voices from the “Open Catholic Church” and members of political parties such as the Union of Freedom (Unia Wolności) have also embraced this call.<sup>31</sup> In the case of the formerly communist Social Democratic Alliance (SLD),

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**28** Quoted from Jan Tomasz Gross, *Neighbors. The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne Poland*, English ed. (Princeton, N.J., 2001), 169.

**29** Jarosław Gowin, “Naród—ostatni węzeł,” *Rzeczpospolita*, 18 January 2001.

**30** Krystyna Skarżyska, “Zbiorowa wyobraźnia, wspólna wina,” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 25–26 November 2000.

**31** Representative of the Open Catholic Church are: Rev. Michał Czajkowski, “Czysta Nierządnicza. Dlaczego należy przeproszać za Jedwabne,” *Tygodnik Powszechny*, no. 21 (27 May 2001): 1, 5; Rev. Adam Boniecki, “Bronię księdza Michała,” *Tygodnik Powszechny*, no. 21 (27 May 2001), 4; Rev. Wojciech Lemański, “Chrystus w zgłiszczach stodoły,” *Więź* (June 2001): 78–85; Rev. Stanisław Musiał, “Jedwabne to nowe imię Holokaustu,” *Rzeczpospolita*, 10 July 2001; Bishop Henryk Muszyński, “Biedny chrześcijanin patrzy na Jedwabne,” *Tygodnik Powszechny, Kontrapunkt*, no. 1/2 (25 March 2001), 13. Bishop Tadeusz Pieronek, “Prawda Jedwabnego,” *Wprost*, 13 May 2001, 8. Among members of Unia Wolności who participated in the debate were Jacek Kuroń and Henryk Wujec. Kuroń and Wujec, together with Rev. Michał Czajkowski and Jan Nowak-Jeziorański, issued an appeal for active participation in prayers of

its General Council in March 2001 issued a letter to its members and supporters under the meaningful title: “We are not inheritors only of glory” (*Dziedziczymy nie tylko chwałę*). Furthermore, Poland’s president, Aleksander Kwaśniewski, also embraced the call, as seen in various pronouncements, including a speech delivered on July 10, 2001 at the official state ceremony for the Jewish victims of the Jedwabne massacre, in which he said:

Thanks to the great national debate on the crime of 10 July 1941, much has changed in our lives in this year 2001, the first year of the new millennium. We have come to realise our responsibilities for our attitudes towards the black pages of our history. We have understood that those who counsel the nation to reject this past serve the nation ill. Such a posture leads to moral destruction.... We express our pain and shame and give expressions to our determination in seeking to learn the truth. We express our courage to overcome the bad past and our unbending will for understanding and harmony.<sup>32</sup>

Another aspect of the Polish self-image that has been challenged has been the widely-held notion of the Poles’ historic toleration and hospitality toward its ethnic and national groups.<sup>33</sup> The major deconstruction, however, has occurred in studies of Polish-Jewish wartime relations. The prevailing narrative of Polish solidarity with its Jewish citizens has been shown to be untruthful.<sup>34</sup> The new narrative that incorporates the blacker pages of Polish history in World War II is one of the most important achievements of the debate.

Judging by opinions expressed in letters and Internet discussions that have been published in *Gazeta Wyborcza*, *Polityka*, *Tygodnik Powszechny* and *Wprost*, the counter-memory of Polish-Jewish relations has found acceptance among the general population, particularly among young people.<sup>35</sup> Polls conducted both before and after the official July 10, 2001 commemoration indicated that many

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repentance in Jedwabne on July 10. The appeal was published in *Tygodnik Powszechny*, no. 16 (22 Apr. 2001): 5.

<sup>32</sup> This is a fragment from the official speech by Aleksander Kwaśniewski on July 10, 2001 at the commemoration in Jedwabne; published in *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 10 July 2001.

<sup>33</sup> See, for example, Janusz A. Majcherek, “Ciemne karty polskiej historii,” *Tygodnik Powszechny*, *Kontrapunkt*, no. 1/2 (25 Mar. 2001): 16.

<sup>34</sup> See, for example, Joanna Tokarska-Bakir, “Obsesja niewinności,” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 13–14 January 2001, 22–23; idem, “Nasz człowiek w Pieczarach. Jedwabne: pamięć nieodzyskana,” *Tygodnik Powszechny* no. 13 (31 Mar. 2002), 1, 4.

<sup>35</sup> According to opinion polls conducted by Pentor, among Poles between 15 and 25 years of age, 23.3 percent of respondents stated that they felt “satisfaction that the truth about the massacre of the Jedwabne Jews was revealed and that the victims were honorably commemorated.” On the whole, 68 per cent of respondents felt that the revelation of the participation of Poles in the murder was an important event; *Wprost*, 22 July 2001, 26.

segments of society are still uncertain about accepting the dark past as an intrinsic element of the collective self-image. Furthermore, the polls indicated significant confusion over the issue of who the perpetrators of the Jedwabne massacre actually were.<sup>36</sup> This confusion resulted largely from the representation of the massacre by the nationalist camp, which claimed the act had been committed by Germans. Data from the forensic investigation of the massacre by the Institute of National Remembrance, chaired by Prof. Leon Kieres, was manipulated in order to press this view. For example, the first reports about the discovery of German bullets at the main site, where a partial exhumation of human remains was carried out at the end of May and beginning of June 2001, was heralded as definitive evidence of German culpability. Later analysis showed that the bullets had come from completely different historical periods.<sup>37</sup> Simultaneously, anti-Jewish narratives—particularly those alleging Jewish collective support for the Soviet regime between September 1939 and 1941 and in the postwar period—have been used as a strategy to minimize and justify the massacre. A fusion between the thesis of German involvement in the Jedwabne crime and the narrative of “Judeo-communism” has led to a disturbing revisionist interpretation of the Jewish genocide. Jedwabne’s parish priest, Rev. Edward Orłowski and Senator Jadwiga Stokarska of Łomża Province maintained that the Germans killed the Jews because of their Communist affiliation and because the Jews had been fighting against the Germans on behalf of the Soviet Union.<sup>38</sup>

In the self-defensive camp, *Neighbors* was dismissed as “a lie and an attempt to slander the good name of Poland,” and yet another Jewish (or Jewish-American) conspiracy against Poland as well as confirmation that the Jew always wants to harm the Pole.<sup>39</sup> Even those nationalists who are capable of acknowledging

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**36** According to an opinion poll conducted by CBOS in August 2001, 28 percent of respondents stated that only Germans/Nazis were responsible for the massacre of the Jedwabne Jews; 12 percent stated that a few Poles together with the Germans participated in the massacre; 4 percent stated that the Poles were forced by the Germans to commit the massacre; 8 percent stated that only Poles were responsible for the massacre; and 30 percent were unable to say who was responsible. *Report of CBOS* (Warsaw, 2001). I would like to thank Prof. Andrzej Paczkowski for giving me a copy of the report.

**37** See “New Evidence of A Polish Massacre,” BBC NEWS, 19 December 2001.

**38** Jadwiga Stokarska, “Kampania oszczerstw,” *Nasz Dziennik*, 19 March 2001, and Edward Orłowski “Niech zwycięży prawda. Conversation of Rev. Paweł Bejger with Rev. Orłowski,” *Tygodnik Młodzieży Katolickiej “Droga,”* 13 March 2001.

**39** See, for example, Leon Kąkolowski, “Opowieści niesamowite. Part 1 and 2” *Nasza Polska*, 21 November 2000 and 19 December 2000; Jerzy Robert Nowak, “Kto fałszuje historię,” *Nasz Dziennik*, 13 May 2000; Piotr Gontarczyk, “Gross kontra fakty,” *Życie*, 28 February 2001; and Jan Engelgard, “Antynarodowa histeria,” *Myśl Polska*, 30 March 2001.



the role of Poles in the crime, still find it hard to accept the image of Poles as villains, and tend to focus on the more positive narratives of Polish solidarity with its Jewish citizens.

What prevents them from accepting a more honest and balanced image? One explanation is the strong commitment to preserving Poland's national honor and reputation.<sup>40</sup> Adherents of the strongly self-defensive position display a similar commitment to Poland's honor, but add anti-Jewish prejudice as well. It is not always easy to differentiate between the mildly and strongly defensive positions.<sup>41</sup>

Why does the self-image of Poles as heroes and victims hold such power in the collective memory? The image has enjoyed a long-established history in Polish collective self-awareness ever since the first half of the 19th century. Rooted in the romantic national myth of Poles fighting for their own and others' freedom, it played an important political and social role throughout the long era in which Poland was partitioned and Poles struggled for independence. During the Second World War, this image became a powerful mirror for Polish society and that war—as in no other period in modern history—reinforced the dual sense of being heroes and victims. It nourished a justifiable pride in Polish resistance, both in the armed struggle against the Nazis, and the preservation of underground social and political institutions. The Poles did, after all, suffer high human losses—an estimated 5–7 per cent of the ethnic Polish population died as a result of the war.

One can also argue that the war itself was perceived as the embodiment of Polish collective martyrdom and heroism. Hence, any meaningful investigation of Polish attitudes and behavior toward its Jewish minority in that period cannot be easily tolerated. The heroic self-perception exerted a powerful hold during the postwar communist period, especially at its end, when it was transformed into the image of Solidarity fighting the Communists.<sup>42</sup> With this background in mind, we can better understand the present difficulty in accepting the massacre of Jews in Jedwabne as an integral part of the Polish collective self-image.

Several conclusions can be drawn from this analysis. The debate on *Neighbors* has been interpreted in opposing ways that can basically be described as “optimistic”

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**40** On the positive correlation of national honor and reputation and the lack of collective self-criticism, see, Irwin-Zarecka, *Frames*, 8–82.

**41** In his short typology of different positions within the debate, the distinguished Polish historian Andrzej Paczkowski was the first to indicate that in some cases the borders between the positions are not clearly defined; see Andrzej Paczkowski, “Debata wokół ‘Sąsiadów’: próba wstępnej typologii,” *Rzeczpospolita*, no. 71 (24 March 2001).

**42** On the perception of the Second World War in public memory in the 1980s and 1990s, see Tomasz Szarota, “Wojna na dobre samopoczucie,” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 6 September 1996.



and “pessimistic.” Optimists have given particular attention to the development of the self-critical aspect, and have come to view it as a cathartic discussion that must change the Polish way of remembering the Holocaust, Polish-Jewish relations, and the Polish self-image of the wartime period.<sup>43</sup> In their opinion, the debate put an end to the taboo subject of Polish-Jewish relations. Pessimists, on the other hand, noted the strength of the self-defensive position which attacked Gross’s book “as anti-Polish lies aiming at the extortion of billions of dollars from hapless Poles.” They concluded that the dynamics of the debate confirmed the firm grip of the past over the present and the consequent inability on the part of Polish society to undergo a process of modernization of its mentality. This view assumed that the case of Jedwabne would soon be forgotten by the public and “anti-Semitism will become part of the daily norm of life.”<sup>44</sup>

These two interpretations, however, do not give a realistic picture of the changes occurring within Polish society, but were, rather, expressions both reasonable expectations and hopes, as well as understandable disappointment.

The debate was both a reflection and part of the process of the democratization of Polish political and social life, which could not have taken place immediately after the country regained full sovereignty with the overthrow of Communism.<sup>45</sup> It also mirrored the reemergence of two competing models of Poland. One is that of a pluralistic civil society inclusive of the memory of the “others” that make up Polish society, which was able to acknowledge wrongdoing done by Poles. The second is an ethnocentric model that excludes the “other” and nurtures the narrative of the unique suffering of ethnic Poles. In the past, the pluralistic model had been underdeveloped and underrepresented in political culture, but it is now gaining greater legitimacy. The ethnic model dominated postwar Poland for many decades and is still popular among right-wing political elites and in the Closed Catholic Church.

Adherents of the pluralistic civil concept of Poland refer to the Jew as the “Polish Jew,” “our co-citizen,” and “co-host of this land”—an important change in the public discourse.<sup>46</sup> By contrast, among adherents of the ethnocentric model,

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<sup>43</sup> See, for example, Krzysztof Darewicz, “Debata o Jedwabnem zmieni Polaków,” *Rzeczpospolita*, 2–3 May 2001, 3; and the comments of Marian Turski cited by Tony Wesolowski in “Jedwabne, Poland,” *Christian Science Monitor*, 18 April 2001.

<sup>44</sup> See the editorial opinions in the discussion published in the high quality cultural-social journal *ResPublica Nowa*: Marcin Król, Paweł Śpiewak, and Marek Zaleski, *ResPublica Nowa*, no. 7 (July 2001).

<sup>45</sup> Ewa K. Czaczkowska, “Byłem sam, będą nas setki,” *Rzeczpospolita*, no. 159 (10 July 2001).

<sup>46</sup> See *Polityka* no. 26 (30 June 2001): 88, for the remarks of Leon Kieres about Polishness and Jewishness.

the Jew is still referred to as “the Jew”—a term, which in this context has the negative connotation of standing in opposition to the Pole. One cannot understand the dynamics and meaning of the debate without taking into account these two contesting concepts. Both can be viewed as different mediums of transmission of the memory of the Holocaust and of the Polish collective self-image, or, as representing two contesting memories.<sup>47</sup>

At present these two memories can be viewed as still running in parallel. Yet the fact that the counter-memory has been endorsed by some of the leading representatives of the political and cultural elites and by the Open Church raises the likelihood that it will continue to play an increasingly greater role in shaping public memory.

In his remarks on public memory of the Holocaust in Poland between 1989 and 1995, Michael Steinlauf posited the unpredictability of what Poles might do with the memory of the Holocaust, and of how this memory might shape Polish history and consciousness.<sup>48</sup> Still, he expressed the hope that this memory “would be used in the service of renewal rather than repression.” The dynamics of the debate over *Neighbors* suggests that a renewal has definitely taken place, but one also accompanied by repression. Only time will show if this repression will become a marginal phenomenon.

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<sup>47</sup> I borrow the term “medium of transmission of memory” from the leading sociologist of memory, Maurice Halbwachs, who contends that memory is an activity deeply affected by its medium of transmission; Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory* (New York, 1980).

<sup>48</sup> Steinlauf, *Bondage*, 144.

Simon Epstein

## Roger Garaudy, Abbé Pierre, and the French Negationists

The Roger Garaudy affair, was the most famous of the cases of negationism in France in the 1990s. It boosted Garaudy to the rank of chief propagator of denial of the Shoah, following in the footsteps of Paul Rassinier, who made himself known in the 1950s, and Robert Faurisson, whose hour of glory came in the 1980s. In addition, the Garaudy affair marks the point of intersection between negationism and a particularly virulent anti-Zionism. For both of these reasons—its place in the history of negationism in France and its “anti-Zionist” specificity—this affair deserves to be examined in detail, in all its phases of development. Central to such an analysis is the somewhat unusual biography of the chief protagonist.

Born in 1913 to a working-class family, Roger Garaudy was first tempted by Protestantism before becoming a Marxist in 1933. A teacher of philosophy at the secondary school in Albi, in the Tarn, he became an active militant in the ranks of the French Communist Party (PCF). He was arrested in September 1940 and transferred to the detention camps of the Vichy regime in Southern Algeria. Elected to the French Parliament after the war, he progressed through the Communist hierarchy and became one of the intellectuals most representative of, and loyal to the PCF. Director of the Center of Marxist Studies and Research (CERM) from 1959 to 1969, he addressed himself to promoting dialogue between Marxists and Christians. He sought to prove that Communism was compatible with humanism, in compliance with the “politics of openness” advocated by Maurice Thorez, the Communist leader.

Garaudy’s connection to the Jews began during World War II. While interned in the Algerian camps, he met Bernard Lecache, then President of the International League Against Antisemitism (LICA), and became his friend. In 1948, in the name of the French intellectuals, Garaudy laid a bouquet of flowers on the tomb of Jewish revolutionary Gaston Crémieux, in the Jewish cemetery of Marseilles.<sup>1</sup> In a speech in Paris, in 1951, he condemned “those who burned innocents in the ovens of the crematoria.”<sup>2</sup>

His rejection of antisemitism was intensely expressed twenty years later, especially from 1968 to 1970, when Garaudy broke ranks with the French Communist party and got himself thrown out by its executive organs. His disagree-

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1 “Marseilles rend hommage à la mémoire de Gaston Crémieux,” *Droit et liberté*, 1 July 1948.

2 “Puissante manifestation antiraciste à la Mutualité,” *Droit et liberté*, 30 Mar. 30–5 Apr. 1951.

ment with Communist leadership mostly had to do with Party strategy in France after May 1968, and his concern over Soviet repression in Czechoslovakia. In the series of anti-Establishment speeches and writings in which he exposed his point of view, he repeatedly raised the question of antisemitism in Eastern Europe. In April 1968, before the Central Committee of his Party, he also denounced the honors awarded in the Soviet Union to the anti-Jewish pamphleteer Kitchko. He took up the same theme in a letter to the Political Bureau in September of the same year. He spoke out on the question of antisemitism in Poland, which burst out in the spring of 1968 in response to the Six Day War and as a result of the student agitation which shook the Polish universities. His remarks were based on an appeal signed principally by Aragon and Jean-Paul Sartre, which proclaimed that “under the pretext of anti-Zionism, a new antisemitism has been developing for the last several months in Poland, with the support of at least some of its leading circles.” He also evoked the question of the rights of Soviet Jewry.<sup>3</sup>

The Communist Party journal, *l'Humanité*, accused him of “revisionism” in the sense of deviation from Marxist orthodoxy and the official Soviet line. Garaudy expressed himself for the last time before his comrades at the 19th Congress of the French Communist Party, on February 6, 1970. Facing a silent and hostile audience, he mentioned yet again, among the last criticisms which he was to make of the Communist system—the “anti-Zionist” antisemitism in Eastern Europe.<sup>4</sup> His speech was rebroadcast on television, which gave his parting words a particularly dramatic resonance. He was expelled shortly thereafter, putting an end to what the French press of the time labeled the “Garaudy affair”<sup>5</sup> and which—as we now know—was only the first of several “Garaudy affairs.”

Let us dwell for a moment on these two important elements of his biography. Garaudy, during the 1950s, had mentioned the “ovens of the crematoria” in his speeches. And Garaudy, between 1968 and 1970, rose up against antisemitism disguised as anti-Zionism. Indeed, less than two months after his famous speech of February 1970, he even took a trip to Israel, at the invitation of the Tel Aviv Museum. He met with several leftist personalities. He declared that he had detected, in the Jewish State, “a wish for peace, a desire for a political solution.” His ideological non-conformism and his positions against antisemitism gained

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3 Roger Garaudy, *Toute la vérité* (Paris, 1970). The references to antisemitism in Poland or the USSR appear on pp. 10, 53, 63, 125–35.

4 *Ibid.*, 65.

5 Michèle Cotta, “Affaire Garaudy,” *L'Express*, 25 May 1970; see also the inquiry by Jean-François Kahn in the same issue.

him the approval of his Israeli interlocutors.<sup>6</sup> Garaudy, during his visit, played an unknown but very important role in the internal politics of the state of Israel: he tried to organize a meeting between Nahum Goldman, the head of the World Jewish Congress and the World Zionist Organization, and Gamal Abdul Nasser, the Egyptian president. Golda Meir, then prime minister of Israel, strongly opposed the idea and refused to allow Goldman to meet Nasser. As a consequence, the proposal came to naught. Historians are well aware of this proposal and the debate it generated, but no one is aware that the original suggestion came from Roger Garaudy.<sup>7</sup>

Garaudy's search for spirituality gradually led him to a "progressive" social Catholicism; later, disappointed by Christianity, he converted to Islam in the early 1980s, taking the first name of "Raja." His switch to Islam was accompanied by a tumble into absolute anti-Zionism, precipitated by the Lebanon War and the siege of Beirut by the Israel Defense Forces in the summer of 1982. In 1983, he published *L'Affaire Israël* (The Israel affair), which constitutes one of the most violent attacks against the Jewish State ever disseminated in France. His grievances were aimed not only at the policies of Israel's government—which he accused of murderous imperialism—but at Israeli society and the fearsome "racism" raging through it. Seeking the origin of the structural flaws of the State of Israel, Garaudy lambasted the Zionist movement for both its ideological principles and its political strategies. As for the constituent defects of Zionism, he claimed their sources lay in the "biblical myths" on which Jewish tradition was founded.<sup>8</sup> Garaudy was to develop that question of the organic bonds which lead from the biblical Jewish past to the present-day "criminal" policy of Israel in another work, *La Palestine* [Palestine], published three years later.<sup>9</sup>

The first Gulf War (January–February 1991) bolstered his anti-Zionist radicalization, pushing Garaudy into an antisemitism which he barely tried to conceal. He had already begun to approach the New Right by the end of the 1980s; in March 1991, he participated in a colloquium held by GRECE [Research and Study Group for European Civilization, a think-tank of far Right intellectuals].<sup>10</sup> He also

6 Maurice Politi, "A bâtons rompus avec Roger Garaudy," *L'Information d'Israël*, 3 Apr. 1970.

7 Roger Garaudy, *Mon tour du siècle en solitaire. Mémoires* (Paris, 1989), 326–27; Nahum Goldman, *Autobiographie* (Paris, 1971), 362–63; *Maariv*, 6 Apr. 1970, 7 Apr. 1970, 8 Apr. 1970, 9 Apr. 1970.

8 Roger Garaudy, *L'Affaire Israël* (Paris, 1983).

9 Roger Garaudy, *La Palestine, Terre des messages divins* (Paris, 1986).

10 On Garaudy's ties with the New Right: Yves Camus and René Monzat, *Les Droites nationales et radicales en France* (Lyon, 1992), 75, 262, 269.

contributed to a magazine called *Nationalisme et République*, one of the main forums of the French antisemitic ultra-right.

At that point, Garaudy was ready for his *Mythes fondateurs de la politique israélienne* (Founding myths of Israeli politics), which he published for the first time (as a special, privately printed issue of a magazine) at the end of 1995. Its publisher was Pierre Guillaume, whose bookshop and publishing house, La Vieille Taupe (The old mole), was one of the most solid and stable bastions of negationism in France. The ideology supported by Guillaume and his ultra-left colleagues, in the 1960s and 1970s, was based on the assumption that the crimes of the Nazis could not have been worse (and were undoubtedly of less importance) than the crimes committed by the liberal democracies or the Soviet Union during World War II or at any other moment in history. This axiom led far Leftists in France to the writings of Paul Rassinier, the pioneer of postwar negationism. They published their own texts and provided fervent and unfailing support to Robert Faurisson and to other negationist authors.<sup>11</sup> By publishing his book with La Vieille Taupe, Garaudy left the domain of exacerbated anti-Zionism and of barely camouflaged antisemitism, making an official entry into the negationist nebula.

He left La Vieille Taupe after publishing the updated edition of his text in March 1996—a slightly sweetened version, which he distributed as self-published “samizdat.”<sup>12</sup> The prestigious label of “samizdat” is, of course, a symbol of opposition to totalitarian thought which persecutes all those who dare contest the established truth with regard to Zionism or genocide. The intent was both to complicate the task of suppression by the courts and to promote public interest in the book and further its distribution.

The book begins with a protestation of innocence. Like many supporters of the Jews who switch over into antisemitism, Garaudy evoked the pro-Jewish phases of his course of life. He mentioned his friendship for Bernard Lecache when they were both interned in camps in Southern Algeria. He recalled the courses they had presented together for their companions in captivity, which discussed “the greatness, the universality, and the liberating power” of the Hebrew prophets.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> On the negationism of La Vieille Taupe, Pierre Guillaume, and his ultra-left friends: Valérie Igounet, *Histoire du négationisme en France* (Paris, 2000), 188–98, 248–93, 457–88. This study provides a wealth of information and analyses on multiple aspects of French negationism. It is, however, more limited with regard to the Garaudy affair.

<sup>12</sup> Roger Garaudy, *Les mythes fondateurs de la politique israélienne* (Roger Garaudy, Samizdat, 1996).

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

His reasoning is not easy to follow, because the text is tangled and very poorly articulated. Garaudy knows how to write; he knows how to compose a book; he has published a very large number of works on a variety of subjects. But his *Founding Myths* is badly edited and poorly organized. Nonetheless, in the disorderly profusion of facts and quotations which pile up from one page to the next, it is possible to distinguish three major sets of arguments, each of which constitutes part of his book: an absolute *anti-Zionism*, heading very quickly toward antisemitism; an undeniable *negationism*; and a furious *anti-Israelism*, which is also nourished by the most classic anti-Jewish stereotypes.

His pathological anti-Zionism is founded on a ferocious (to say the least) criticism of biblical Judaism. Garaudy became a Catholic, and then a Muslim, but his book shows him as a materialistic atheist, weaving the Bible into some of his essential topics. Monotheism, he explains, does not belong to the Jews alone, but can be found in multiple forms in the Middle East and other parts of the world. Accordingly, the Jews cannot avail themselves of their status as the Chosen People, nor claim any divine promise in their favor.<sup>14</sup> His reflections are based on scientific rationalism, which he applies to the constituent dogmas of the Jewish faith, but which he would be very cautious about applying with the same rigor to the dogmas of Islam, or even those of Christianity.

On the other hand, many of his assertions rest on a literal reading (rather than a critical analysis) of the biblical text. Garaudy no longer contests the validity of the account; he no longer invokes historical context; he no longer questions the dates; he no longer compares Jews with other peoples or other periods. What he does, at this point, is to revile the massacres which the Hebrews committed during their wandering in the desert and when they came into Canaan. After citing references to biblical battles from the holy text, Garaudy launches into the incessant crimes of which he currently accuses the Israelis.<sup>15</sup> In doing so, he establishes a double bond of causality and continuity between the carnage of yesteryear and that of today. The suggestion is that the Jews are a cruel and bloody people *by nature*: they were that way a long time ago, against the poor Canaanites, and they are so, once again, in the twentieth century, against the unfortunate Palestinians. The latter, who are the legitimate descendants of the Canaanites, thus have to suffer (for the second time in three millennia!) the dreadful conquest of their country by the abominable Jews—total strangers in Palestine who have no business being there.

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 43–47.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 55–57.

In the course of these “historico-theological” pages, Garaudy crosses the line which separates his anti-Zionism, unbridled as it may be, from antisemitism. It is true that, in all his questions, he does no more than take up or amplify themes already developed in his previous books, *The Israel Affair* and *Palestine*. Garaudy, in *Founding Myths* is not engaged in innovation but in plagiarizing himself.

Negationism itself, which did not appear in the earlier books was, however, the subject of the central part of his book. In a first chapter of this second part, entitled “The Myth of Zionist Anti-Fascism,” Garaudy drew his inspiration from the literature of the extreme Left, which claims there was “collaboration” between the Zionist leaders and the Nazis; the quotations he uses are those habitually called into service by this type of writing. Suddenly, in the flood of quotations which seek to demonstrate that the Zionists collaborated with Fascists and Nazis, Chaim Weizmann (President of the World Zionist Organization) appears, declaring war on Germany in 1939!<sup>16</sup> This so-called “declaration of war” has already been abundantly studied. We know it plays a leading role in negationist reasoning, because it enables an explanation of why the Nazis, out of legitimate self-defense, were forced to mistrust the Jews and hold them hostage. Garaudy, in this passage, mixed up two systems of reference. Like the extreme anti-Zionist (but not negationist) Left, he attempts to prove that the Zionists did nothing against Fascism. At the same time, he raises the argument that Weizmann had declared war on the Nazis and that the latter, faced with such a threat, absolutely had to defend themselves. The incompatibility of these two themes is evident. It leads Garaudy to accuse the Zionists of having been partners in the “extermination” of the Jews of Europe, and then to explain that this mass murder never took place and is no more than a myth disseminated by those same Zionists.

In the other chapters in the section concerning World War II, Garaudy used all the arguments and citations to be found in negationist literature. He criticized the Nuremberg trials for their victors’ justice, their asymmetry (German crimes are judged, but not those of the Allies), their irregularities (the confessions were obtained by torture). Most of all, he reproached the Allies for having invented the “myth” of the six million exterminated Jews with a view to charging defeated Germany with an absolute crime exceeding anything known by humankind up to that time.

Garaudy endorsed the classic negationist scenario, according to which the Nazi intention was to deport the Jews to the East for forced labor, but not to exterminate them. He denied that the testimonies of survivors were of any value and, of course, manipulated the statistics on the victims. He summarized the basic

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 66–67.



negationist theses concerning the nonexistence of the gas chambers. Attacking the “myth of the six million,” Garaudy evoked all the victims of the war, placing particular emphasis on the bombardment of Dresden and the destruction of Hiroshima. He also dwelt on the victims of European colonialism throughout contemporary history. Having added up all those dead, he expresses his indignation at the Jews’ attempt to seek a privileged status for their particular suffering by fraudulently inflating the number of their deceased and inventing extermination systems which never existed outside their imagination. The term “genocide” seemed excessive to him as a description of what the Jews went through during World War II. At the same time, he thought it perfectly appropriate to present as genocide what the Jews did to the Canaanite populations in Biblical times.<sup>17</sup>

The third part of his book, like the first, resembles his former writings on the “Jewish question” and on Zionism. He reviled the State of Israel from all possible angles, in its domestic politics and relations with the Arab world in general and the Palestinians in particular. He attacked the “world Zionist lobby,” paying special attention to two of its poles—American and French Jewry. Garaudy shows how the American Jews “control” the media and the political life of their country, enabling them to promote policies which run counter to American interests, while at the same time managing to transfer considerable funds to the State of Israel. Garaudy then takes on the “Zionists” in France. They, too, are masters of the media and of politics. They use their power to terrorize those who, like Garaudy himself, have dared to challenge their might or to denounce the myths on which they build their power and through whose strength they intend to keep it. Let us add that his apocalyptic description of “Zionist” domination of the United States and France is accompanied by two pages which, written in an indignant hand, refute the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.<sup>18</sup> Garaudy thus succeeds in this tour de force which consists of adhering to the direct logic of the *Protocols*, while at the same time denying their authenticity.

The first publication of this text by La Vieille Taupe did not immediately make waves. Aside from a very brief article in the *Monde des livres* in January 1996, the book went virtually unnoticed.<sup>19</sup> Meanwhile, however, legal proceedings were launched against Garaudy, under the “Gayssot” Law of July 1990 which prohibits the questioning of crimes against humanity and thus enables a legal response to negationism. This judicial action, combined with the spectacular rallying of

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 151–67.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 249–50.

<sup>19</sup> “Roger Garaudy négationniste,” *Le Monde*, 26 Jan. 1996.

Abbé Pierre, was to launch one of the most resounding affairs in the history of negationism in France.

Like Garaudy, Abbé Pierre (Henry Grouès) is a former “friend” of the Jewish people. He was a member of the Résistance during World War II and has repeatedly recalled how he helped persecuted Jews to slip across the Swiss border. He several times expressed his rejection of antisemitism and racism. Speaking in 1949 at a meeting of support for the State of Israel, he observed that “for him, the Resistance began the day when, at the cathedral of Grenoble, the police came in to track down people whose only offense was to have been born in the Jewish faith.” He described his first clandestine crossing of the border, in an effort to save Jews. He concluded that “anyone who asks me to come and speak for liberty, for the survival of a people, may be sure that I will answer the call.”<sup>20</sup> As a Member of Parliament for the MRP (Popular Republican Movement, a reformist Christian Democratic party) in Meurthe and Moselle, he spoke out on questions of antisemitism.<sup>21</sup> His support for Zionism and for the young State of Israel was unflinching. Thus, in December 1948 he participated in a meeting organized by the French League for a Free Palestine, an organization linked with the nationalist-right Irgun Zvai Leumi (Etzel).<sup>22</sup> He was one of the Catholic Members of Parliament who supported Israel on the question of the holy places in Jerusalem.<sup>23</sup>

Abbé Pierre had first become famous around 1954 for his public campaigns in the war on poverty. The general prosperity of the 1960s and early 1970s took the urgency out of his campaigns which seemed anachronistic and out of step with the growing affluence during the years of economic growth. The shock of the two consecutive oil crises (1974 and 1979), as well as the reappearance of unemployment and poverty which characterized the 1980s, rehabilitated the virtues of philanthropic militancy, especially on behalf of the homeless. His “companions of Emmaus” were to enjoy new-found fame in a French society once again threatened by misery and destitution. His warm personality—that of a simple and devoted man—was to transform him into an adored symbol of human fraternity and solidarity in a capitalist society pitiless toward the weak, the unfortunate, and the outcasts within it. Let us add that Abbé Pierre always expressed opposition to the extreme Right and the National Front of Jean-Marie Le Pen.

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20 “Dans un puissant meeting, Paris exprime sa solidarité avec Israël en lutte pour son indépendance,” *Droit et Liberté*, 1 Feb. 1949.

21 See also his letter on the subject of a local matter of antisemitism in *Droit et Liberté*, 30 June 1950.

22 David Lazar, *L'Opinion française et la naissance de l'Etat d'Israël 1945–1949* (Paris, 1972), 135–36.

23 *Ibid.*, 190–91.

Abbé Pierre was thus at the height of his popularity when he came to the aid of Garaudy, whom he had known and esteemed for 50 years. He spoke out in favor of freedom of expression, as Noam Chomsky had done in the Faurisson affair. He also took a stand on a much more fundamental level, citing the “biblical” massacres. In a letter dated 15 April 1996, he expressed confidence in his friend Garaudy and saluted his “astonishing, brilliant and scrupulous erudition.” He stated his hope for a great debate with “real historians” on the questions raised. He then went on to express some strange considerations on the Jews, mentioning the Book of Joshua and the “Shoah” which the Jews had supposedly wrought in Antiquity against other peoples of the region. Abbé Pierre attacked the wrongs of Jewish particularism, while admitting that the policy of the Church with regard to Judaism had some share in the syndrome.<sup>24</sup> Abbé Pierre’s letter of support, brought to the attention of the public in a press conference skillfully orchestrated by Garaudy’s lawyer, Jacques Vergès, gave rise to a far-ranging polemic.<sup>25</sup>

Abbé Pierre, a member of the Honors Committee of the International League Against Racism and Antisemitism (LICRA), came to the headquarters of that organization on April 24 to explain himself. In a tense atmosphere, he admitted that he had not read the incriminated text, pleading fatigue and his advanced age; nonetheless, he declared that his confidence in Garaudy was unchanged. More than anything else, he expressed his hope that a debate would be held on certain points of history—a statement which indirectly echoed the negationists. They had always demanded an open confrontation between two “schools of history”—that which claimed that the gas chambers existed and that which doubted it. Thus, while proclaiming his affection for the Jews, Abbé Pierre nevertheless supported debate on the “issues” raised by Garaudy.<sup>26</sup>

In an interview several days later, he persisted in his refusal to dissociate from Garaudy and made equivocal comments on what he called the “question

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24 Text reproduced in Roger Garaudy, *Droit de réponse. «Le lynchage médiatique de l'Abbé Pierre et Roger Garaudy»* (Roger Garaudy, Samizdat, 1996), 29–32.

25 Nicolas Weill, “L'Abbé Pierre soutient les aberrations négationnistes de Roger Garaudy,” *Le Monde*, 20 Apr. 1996; also Nicolas Weill, “L'Abbé Pierre confirme son soutien aux thèses négationnistes de Roger Garaudy,” *Le Monde*, 21–22 April 1996. The Swiss essayist Jean Ziegler and Fr. Michel Lelong also lent their support to Garaudy, but quickly withdrew it. Jean Ziegler’s retraction, *Le Monde*, 23 Apr. 1996; Fr. Lelong’s retraction in a letter to *Le Monde*, 5–6 May 1996.

26 Nicolas Weill, “Le recul de l'Abbé Pierre sur son soutien à M. Garaudy est jugé ambigu par la LICRA,” *Le Monde*, 26 Apr. 1996. Nicolas Weill was later to publish a very interesting account of the evening of April 24 at LICRA: *Une Histoire personnelle de l'antisémitisme* (Paris, 2003), 95–101.

of the gas chambers.” He corrected himself at once, however; the next day, in a communiqué, he stated that he “[did] not by any means intend to leave in doubt, for any reason whatsoever, the atrocious reality of the Shoah and the millions of Jews exterminated because they were Jews.” He mentioned that he had saved Jewish lives during the war and that he “firmly condemn[ed] all those who, for various reasons, wish, in any manner whatsoever, to deny, falsify or trivialize the Shoah, which will always remain a blot of indelible shame in the history of our continent.” Still, he spoiled his profession of faith by indicating that he maintained his confidence in Garaudy, who, he said, was committed to “admitting any error which would be proven to him.” That last sentence, harmless though it may have looked, had the effect of wiping out the force of the rest of the communiqué that could have saved him, because it transferred the burden of proof to Garaudy’s adversaries. His retraction was accordingly considered insufficient and unacceptable by the leaders of LICRA. On May 1, he was expelled from the Honors Committee of the anti-racist association.<sup>27</sup>

This multiplicity of contradictory and confused statements bears witness to the intensity of the internal drama which Abbé Pierre, under pressure from several different directions, was experiencing. It is also symptomatic of the tortuous path from philosemitism to antisemitism. In historical perspective, Abbé Pierre was actually no more than the latest avatar in a long line of militants belonging to LICRA (or LICA, as it was formerly known) who crossed the line and turned toward antisemitism. As for Garaudy, a friend of the founder of LICA, congratulated by the Jews for his denunciation of antisemitism in 1968–1970, he came from the same camp, as it were, and followed a similar path.

The Jewish community responded forcefully. Henri Hajdenberg, President of the Representative Council of Jewish Institutions in France (CRIF), firmly voiced the official protest of the Jewish community in France, while making contact with the Catholic hierarchy. The writer Marek Halter was concerned about a “poor man’s negationism, this sort of jealousy which results in all the damned of the earth, of all times, having a problem with the Jews, who monopolize empathy.” Serge Klarsfeld, for his part, wondered about Abbé Pierre’s claim to have saved Jews during the war: “The declarations which he has just made authorize us to demand clarifications on the exact role which he could have played during the war with regard to saving Jews. We can wonder whether he did save Jews.” In much the same vein, Antoine Spire spoke out about an inquiry which he had

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27 Michel Castaing, “L’Abbé Pierre retire son soutien aux thèses de Roger Garaudy,” *Le Monde*, 2 May 1996; “L’Abbé Pierre a été exclu du comité d’honneur de la LICRA,” *Le Monde*, 3 May 1996; “L’Abbé Pierre ne fait plus partie de la LICRA,” *Le Droit de vivre* (Jan.–May 1996): 12–13.

made some ten years before, showing that Abbé Pierre had invented a role as a Résistance member much more prominent than that which he had played in reality.<sup>28</sup>

*Le Canard enchaîné* (one of the first papers to denounce the publication of Garaudy's book) proceeded in its own way—that is, with humor. It imagined a negationist logic, applied in 2050, on the question of knowing whether Abbé Pierre really existed. True, there were photographs, but nothing is easier to falsify than a photograph. As to the number of homeless, it should naturally be regarded with caution: certain figures spoke of 400,000, others of 200,000. Such a gap obviously constituted proof that no homeless persons ever existed. Using ridicule to combat the phenomenon, the article exposed the intrinsically absurd nature of negationist reasoning by applying it to subjects other than the Shoah, and especially those dear to the negationists themselves or their friends. The same issue of the satirical journal launched a violent attack on “Roger-la-Honte” (Roger-the-shame), taking wicked pleasure in recalling that Garaudy, a Communist intellectual of the early 1950s, was one of those who had denied with fervor the existence of the Soviet camps.<sup>29</sup>

Bernard Kouchner, in an open letter addressed to Abbé Pierre, noted that Garaudy, throughout his life, had always supported the worst oppressors: Stalin in the Soviet Union, Qaddafi in Libya, Saddam Hussein in Iraq, and that “his lifeline, like a downward slope, inclines toward the worst.” Kouchner was a close friend of Abbé Pierre, and the two had even published a book together in 1994. He now invoked that friendship in order to demand that Abbé Pierre get a grip on himself and part company with Garaudy.<sup>30</sup>

Pierre Vidal-Naquet, a left-wing Jewish historian of renown, also spoke out. His writings had dealt a blow which, if not fatal, was at least quite severe, to the popularity of Robert Faurisson's theses in the early 1980s. This important work, *Les assassins de la mémoire* (The assassins of memory, 1987), had the effect of dismantling the internal mechanism of the revisionist “method.” Vidal-Naquet showed no mercy for Garaudy, who “was always a specialist in never-mind-what,” having converted “first to Protestantism, then to Communism, then to Catholicism, then to Islam. This is not exactly an example of intellectual stability.” Vidal-Naquet cited a few examples of the grave errors which abounded in

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<sup>28</sup> On the Jewish community reactions, see *Tribune juive*, 9 May 1996, 16–19.

<sup>29</sup> Frédéric Pagès, “L'Abbé Pierre a-t-il vraiment existé?” and Patrice Lestrohan, “Roger-la-Honte,” *Le Canard enchaîné*, 30 Apr. 1996.

<sup>30</sup> Bernard Kouchner, “Mon père, je t'écris ces mots parce que j'ai un devoir d'affection,” *Le Monde*, 30 Apr. 1996.

*Founding Myths*, calling it “an oppressive book, made up of frightening historical misunderstandings.” He evoked the ultra-leftist intellectuals who, following Paul Rassinier, fed French negationism with their writings. He severely criticized Abbé Pierre, for the support which he lent to Garaudy and no less for his aberrant reference to the biblical Joshua’s “Shoah.” Going on to cite the demagoguery of Le Pen and the extreme Right, he expressed his fears that the “position taken by Abbé Pierre will open the floodgates of antisemitic pressure.”<sup>31</sup>

This brings me to Florent Brayard’s impressive first book, which was a study on Paul Rassinier, one of the dominant figures among the first generation of French and other negationists.<sup>32</sup> The appearance of his book in 1996 coincided with the uproar of the Garaudy-Abbé Pierre affair. As a specialist on the history of Holocaust denial, Brayard explained that “revisionist production, since its origin, has swung back and forth between paucity and the most dishonest falsification.” He said that Garaudy had done no more than to line up quotations borrowed from the works of his predecessors in negationism, like a parrot who “also forgets to indicate whose phrases it repeats.” Garaudy’s compilation

well illustrates the stick-in-the-mud nature of revisionist discourse: Rassinier, who created it, was also the first to repeat himself relentlessly, followed by Faurisson repeating Rassinier repeating himself. The zealots of that ideology, in turn, repeated and are still repeating what Rassinier and Faurisson said.

Brayard went on to contrast the scientific ineptitude of the revisionists’ discourse with the public relations effectiveness of their strategy. The “revisionists” were actually seeking to provoke public scandals, preferably accompanied by judicial repression, which would enable them to plead their cause in the name of freedom of expression and conscience. Such “affairs” gave rise to irrational doubts which could only be to their benefit: this was the “revisionist trap” denounced by Brayard.<sup>33</sup>

The “set-up” theory regarding the shaping of public opinion was also exposed by historian Philippe Videlier. After having drawn a parallel from the antisemitism of Drumont’s day and the Dreyfus affair to present-day negationism, he revealed the tactics adopted by the staff of La Vieille Taupe in order to publicize Garaudy’s work and ensure maximum distribution. He also demonstrated the

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<sup>31</sup> François Bonnet and Nicolas Weill, “Pierre Vidal-Naquet analyse les relais dont disposent les négationnistes,” *Le Monde*, 4 May 1996.

<sup>32</sup> Florent Brayard, *Comment l’idée vient à M. Rassinier. Naissance du révisionnisme* (Paris, 1996).

<sup>33</sup> Florent Brayard, “Le piège révisionniste,” *Le Monde*, 31 May 1996.

links which since the early 1990s had tied Garaudy to the extreme Right.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, other inquiries had succeeded in identifying, in the immediate entourage of Abbé Pierre, ultra-leftist militants who had incited him to take a public stand in Garaudy's favor. These were former members of the Italian Red Brigades, who, having tired of their terrorist activities of the 1970s, had faded back into France. Having infiltrated Abbé Pierre's vast network of institutions, they now occupied important administrative and managerial functions. Their influence on Abbé Pierre, according to Eric Conan, was considerable.<sup>35</sup>

Self-replicating as always in times of crisis, the debate on the strategy to use in dealing with the negationists became even more fierce, focusing on the issue of legal restraints on the proliferation of denial. A hostile position towards the Gayssot Law was expressed by historian Madeleine Rebérioux, Honorary President of the Ligue des droits de l'homme [League for Human Rights]. She considered that the general anti-racist law passed in 1972 was powerful enough to repress antisemitism, whereas a specific action under the Gayssot Law would have the effect of transforming the negationists into martyrs and sowing "rampant doubt" in people's minds.<sup>36</sup> Simone Weil agreed that the law "lets the negationists appear as martyrs, victims of an official truth. Thanks to it, the negationists will be able to drive the debate on freedom of expression off course."<sup>37</sup> Although some critics of the law came from a liberal background, most originated in the extreme Right, which—for easily comprehensible reasons—had never stopped fighting the law since the day of its enactment. Communist parliamentarian Jean-Claude Gayssot and former Communist Senator Charles Lederman, who had drafted the law, responded by insisting that the 1990 law was an extension of the anti-racist law passed in July 1972. It was intended, like any legislation of that type, to protect "society against the intolerance and inhumanity which constitute the systematic construction of racism, antisemitism and xenophobia."<sup>38</sup>

Support for Abbé Pierre and Garaudy was by no means negligible. It came, for example, from the ranks of the National Front, whose leader, Jean-Marie Le Pen, had already announced his "revisionist" view on the "details" of the history of World War II. The National Front press based its campaign on freedom of speech and the universal right to expose ideas to the general public. This support was not

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34 Philippe Videlier, "Nouvelle affaire négationniste. Zones d'ombre et coup monté," *Le Monde diplomatique* (June 1996).

35 Eric Conan and Sylviane Stein, "Ce qui a fait chuter l'abbé Pierre," *L'Express*, 2 May 1996.

36 Madeleine Rebérioux, "Contre la loi Gayssot," *Le Monde*, 21 May 1996.

37 Interview with Simone Weil in *L'Événement du Jeudi*, 27 June–3 July 1996.

38 Jean-Claude Gayssot and Charles Lederman, "Une loi contre l'antisémitisme militant," *Le Monde*, 26 June 1996.

unanimous among the splinter groups which held a neo-Nazi ideology further to the right than Jean-Marie Le Pen. Some of them reproached Abbé Pierre for the “hatred” which he had supposedly shown many years ago for the Alsatians enlisted in the Waffen SS. Others accused him of having retreated before the anti-negationist wave in the media.<sup>39</sup>

The Church, for its part, was at a loss. It certainly took a firm stand early in May 1996 in a statement issued by the office of the Episcopal Committee for Relations with Judaism. The Committee rejected “the very grave confusion and the scandal which result from the support thus expressed” by Abbé Pierre for Garaudy. “The fact that the extermination took place is uncontested; it truly was genocide, because men, women, children and old people were condemned to death. The gas chambers existed and the Nazis used a coded language to conceal their heinous crime,” the statement continued, concluding that “for all these reasons, we regret and deplore Abbé Pierre’s undertaking to support Mr. Garaudy.”<sup>40</sup> The use of the word “deplore,” rather than a stronger and more appropriate word such as “condemn” or “denounce,” reveals the uneasiness felt by the Episcopal Committee at the thought of totally breaking away from Abbé Pierre.<sup>41</sup> Another sign of discomfort lay in the fact that Cardinal Lustiger, the archbishop of Paris, waited until mid-June 1996 before launching a public accusation against Abbé Pierre. This gave the latter a rather long reprieve, which was probably intended to grant him an opportunity to correct himself. Still, we must note that, tardy as it may seem, Cardinal Lustiger’s reaction was categorical and unambiguous.<sup>42</sup>

Garaudy, throughout this period, did not remain inactive. In June 1996, he published a brief work entitled *Droit de réponse* (Right of response), which denounced the “media lynching” of which he claimed that he and Abbé Pierre had been the victims.<sup>43</sup> His work repeats, in summary form and in a style meant to be clear and easy to read, the principal themes set forth in *Founding Myths*. It men-

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39 On this subject, the information set forth by Jean-Yves Camus in *Tribune juive*, 9 May 1996.

40 “L’Eglise doit s’interroger sur ses responsabilités,” *Le Monde*, 2 May 1996; also Henri Tincq, “La hiérarchie catholique ne veut pas être entraînée dans la polémique suscitée par l’abbé Pierre,” *Le Monde*, 30 April 1996.

41 One illustration of this discomfort: Jacques Gaillot, “Lettre à l’abbé Pierre,” *Le Monde*, 26 Apr. 1996.

42 Henri Tincq, “Mgr. Lustiger adresse un blâme public à l’abbé Pierre et dégage la responsabilité de l’Eglise. L’archevêque de Paris dénonce une attaque contre Israël et les juifs” *Le Monde*, 21 June 1996.

43 Roger Garaudy, *Droit de réponse*. “Le lynchage médiatique de l’Abbé Pierre et Roger Garaudy” (Roger Garaudy: Samizdat, 1996).



tions the “collaboration of the Zionist leaders with Hitler” and “Israeli terrorism” and laments the fact that these questions, although abundantly addressed in his book, had not become the object of any public debate. On the other hand, a veritable “witch hunt,” set in motion by a powerful “Jewish lobby,” had ceaselessly harassed him for “negationism,” and it was this defamatory accusation which he insisted on opposing. His text recalled that he had been interned during the war with Bernard Lecache, President of LICA, and that he had received the Medal of Deportation. It then, however, returned to two crucial questions: the number of victims, and the existence of the gas chambers. While angrily protesting the accusations of negationism against him, Garaudy’s behavior was *precisely* that of the negationists: excitedly denying that he was an antisemite, while expressing doubts about the mass murder and the existence of the gas chambers; massively reducing the number of assassinated Jews; and attributing the losses to the tribulations of deportation, typhus epidemics in the camps, Allied bombardments, or the unfortunate circumstances of war.

Garaudy’s work blasted the Zionists, accusing them of trying to downplay or ignore the non-Jewish victims of Nazism. According to him, the book of Joshua, was a major inspiration for Israeli policy. Typically, he becomes infuriated at a journalist who dared to compare his book to the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*: had he not himself written, in a work published ten years before, a refutation of “that ignoble forgery”? With his diatribe against the *Protocols* still ringing in our ears, he hastens, one page later, to denounce “an extremely powerful lobby in the United States” and “an extremely powerful lobby in France” for subjugating the policies of both countries to the interests of the world Jewish community. Thus he denies antisemitism even while nourishing it.

Garaudy would also invoke the great names in the struggle against antisemitism in order to turn them against the Jews. Thus, he makes two references to Dreyfus.<sup>44</sup> The first is in the context of denouncing the international tribunal of Nuremberg, which supposedly trampled the elementary rules of justice no less severely than the judges who once condemned Alfred Dreyfus. On another occasion, Garaudy castigated the “actual incitements to murder” launched against the revisionists by their adversaries, “just as they had found no other way to gag Dreyfus than by throwing him in prison.” Garaudy’s pamphlet includes two

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<sup>44</sup> This reference to Dreyfus seems to be a constant in Roger Garaudy’s work. In this way, his book of 1970, which recalls his increasing clashes with the Communist Party, opens with a quotation from the judges in the Dreyfus Affair, repeating that “the question will not be asked....”

pieces of supporting testimony, one by a Protestant minister and the other by a former deportee.

Abbé Pierre, meanwhile, had left France. Badly shaken by the inflammatory polemic, he judged it preferable to withdraw to the Benedictine monastery in Praglia, near Padua, Italy.<sup>45</sup> In the initial period of his stay in Italy, he unfailingly persisted in his support of Garaudy, who even came to visit him at the monastery. He publicly condemned an “international Zionist lobby” which was allegedly exerting its influence on the Catholic Church in France.<sup>46</sup> In mid-June 1996, he was still fulminating against Zionism, explaining how the infamous world lobby was acting for the establishment of “the Empire proclaimed to Abraham,” which was to extend from the Nile to the Euphrates.<sup>47</sup> “And what if Abbé Pierre was right?,” asked enigmatic yellow and black posters put up in Paris in the second half of June 1996.<sup>48</sup>

Was this be “a victory for the revisionists,” as was pessimistically announced in late June 1996 by *L'Événement du Jeudi*? The weekly publication interviewed Pierre Vidal-Naquet, Bernard-Henri Lévy, and Pierre-André Taguieff, who expressed their distress at the support for the revisionists in public opinion. According to one survey, 24% of the French were critical of Abbé Pierre, but 9% approved of him, and 64%—no small number—continued to like him.<sup>49</sup>

But then in July 1996, at a moment where the revisionists seemed to have achieved an impressive success, Abbé Pierre, for one last time, astonished both the protagonists of the affair and outside observers. After several weeks in Italy, he decided to make honorable amends and devote himself to an unequivocal retraction, unlike his confused earlier efforts. Noting that his words had been

exploited by currents which are playing dangerous games with the risks of antisemitism and neo-fascism or neo-Nazism, which I have fought against and will always fight against, I have decided to take back my words, accepting only the opinions issued by the Church experts, and, asking the forgiveness of anyone whom I might have injured, I leave the honesty of everyone's intentions to be judged only by God.

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45 “Ses compagnons veulent croire à un exil provisoire de l'abbé Pierre,” *Le Monde*, 31 May 1996.

46 Michel Castaing, “L'abbé Pierre s'en prend à un ‘lobby sioniste international,’” *Le Monde*, 2–3 June 1996.

47 “L'abbé Pierre met en cause le ‘mouvement sioniste,’” *Le Monde*, 19 June 1996.

48 Erich Inciyan, “Un mystérieux affichage de soutien à l'abbé Pierre,” *Le Monde*, 26 June 1996.

49 See the dossier published by *L'Événement du Jeudi*, 27 June–3 July 1996.

In a letter to Garaudy, supplementing his declaration to the press, he insisted that his name no longer be linked, “in any way,” to his friend’s book.<sup>50</sup> Abbé Pierre had abandoned the field and made a definitive retreat.

## The viewpoint of Robert Faurisson

In the flood of words and writings inspired by the Garaudy–Abbé Pierre affair, the most revealing reactions were those of Robert Faurisson, a leading figure of French negationism. He followed the developments of the affair very closely, with an understandable interest. He devoted several press releases to it when it first broke out; he even published a detailed analysis of the entire crisis, entitled “Bilan de l’affaire Garaudy-abbé Pierre, janvier–octobre 1996” (Balance sheet of the Garaudy–Abbé Pierre affair, January–October 1996).<sup>51</sup> These texts illustrate common distinguishing factors between two categories of negationists, exposing some of the tensions in the movement.

Faurisson had been upset from the very beginning. Garaudy, in the first version of his text, had mentioned his name only once, “and not only that, but [mentioned him] only as a professor who had been a victim of anti-revisionist repression, but does not let us know exactly why: not one book, not even one article by that professor is mentioned.” The section of *Founding Myths* which refers to World War II, while certainly “inspired by revisionism,” was far from pleasing him. “Those 75 pages were written in haste; they are composed of disjointed pieces; the account is rather disconnected; omissions abound, and there are even errors,” he wrote, with no compassion for the author or empathy for the book.<sup>52</sup> Faurisson also noted that his name had completely disappeared from the second edition of *Founding Myths*—the “samizdat” edition. This concealment, complained Faurisson, was even more significant because “the original text had been revised in such a way as to attenuate its revisionist nature.”<sup>53</sup> Faurisson was painfully aware of having been *plagiarized*, because the contestation of the gas chambers presented by Garaudy had been “entirely taken from my own writings,

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50 “L’abbé Pierre retire ses propos sur le livre de Roger Garaudy,” *Le Monde*, 24 July 1996.

51 Faurisson’s documents on the affair are reproduced in Robert Faurisson, *Écrits révisionnistes (1974–1998)*, vol. 4: *De 1993 à 1998*, privately printed edition.

52 *Ibid.*, 1804–1805.

53 *Ibid.*, 1806.

including citations!”<sup>54</sup> This was the reason behind his refusal to provide Pierre Guillaume with an “important document” (its content unrevealed) that Garaudy needed for his polemic: “I am answering him by stating that his client has no other option but to ask me for the document himself.... I am expressing to him my astonishment at having been treated that way and at not even having received a copy of *Founding Myths*. I am informing him that, as he knows, the revisionist part of that book is no more than a compilation of my own writings.”<sup>55</sup>

When he learned that Abbé Pierre was lending his support to Garaudy, Faurisson responded with a communiqué which reflected an obvious lack of enthusiasm for those who, “for the last few months, have been flying to the aid of the revisionist victory.” He went on to deplore the fact “that it was necessary to wait for 1996 to see those people realizing what should have been blindingly clear to the entire world since 1979: the imaginary genocide of the Jews, principally perpetrated by means of the supposed Nazi gas chambers, is no more than a historic lie.” He mistrusted the newcomers, saying that he was waiting for them “to claim that they had not said what they said, that they had not written what they wrote: I am waiting for those people to give themselves over to the more popular sentiments of anti-Nazism (what courage!).” He concluded by recalling the principles of revisionist orthodoxy: “I find that those people’s statements are continually beside the point. We must call a spade a spade: this genocide and these chambers are a deception.” Naturally, he ended his communiqué on an anti-Jewish note: “I will add that, if I were Jewish, I would be ashamed to think that, for more than half a century, so many Jews have propagated or allowed the propagation of such a deception, with the support of the leading media throughout the entire world.”<sup>56</sup>

Faurisson was accordingly not surprised to see Garaudy and his lawyer issuing declarations which rejected Nazism and negationism. He had no indulgence for Abbé Pierre’s “multiple acts of contrition” or “protestations of good faith.” Faurisson was especially annoyed that Abbé Pierre felt it necessary to publicly distance himself from his own pioneering work.<sup>57</sup> For all these reasons, he felt both “happy and bitter.” “I am happy because I see trendy people subscribing to what I have worn myself out repeating for almost quarter of a century,” he initially explained. “But I also feel bitterness because, for 22 years, those people and their friends either insulted me or let me fight alone or nearly alone,” and espe-

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 1760.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 1809.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 1759–60.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 1808–1809.

cially because “those eleventh-hour actors, Garaudy and Abbé Pierre, are also giving themselves over to the more popular sentiments of anti-Nazism.”<sup>58</sup>

On the margins of the Garaudy affair, Faurisson allowed himself to make some general comments on the French revisionists. In an epic proclamation, he wondered “how, at the end of the day, a handful of men and women, succeeded in breaking a leaden silence imposed upon the entire world by the richest, most powerful and most severely feared group of the entire West? This group is the Jews.”<sup>59</sup> He then sent a warning to Garaudy and Abbé Pierre, reminding them that “the Jews never forgive the least transgression of their taboo. Excuses, retractions, explanations, flatteries will constitute no reparations for the offense committed against them. They will be merciless. They will strike even harder against anyone who, even for an instant, has bowed before them.”<sup>60</sup>

He was accordingly not astonished to see his prediction come true, when Abbé Pierre published his definitive retraction in July 1996, and when Garaudy declared that he had distanced himself from negationism while admittedly continuing to propagate it. “It is regrettable that Roger Garaudy and Abbé Pierre did not show more courage. The moment the media tempest in France began to rise against them, they began to beat a retreat.... We will hold no grudge against them. We must keep the violence of these times in mind; the strongest stand in fear of them [the Jews]; how much more so should men of their age [fear them].”<sup>61</sup>

Faurisson’s epilogue on the entire affair adopts a tone which is at once condescending, morose and fatalistic: “Two octogenarians, who thought they knew life and humankind, suddenly discovered, with childlike surprise, that, in reality, their past existence was a rather facile one. Both of them, within a few short days, were forced to pass an exceptional test: the one to which Jewish organizations habitually subject persons who have the misfortune of arousing their wrath.” Faurisson then held forth on the Jews who, out of “ancestral reflex,” involve in their struggle all the media under their control. Faurisson expanded on Jewish hatred, calling it “inextinguishable” and “one of the most formidable of all.” It was quite a normal thing, he said, for Garaudy and Abbé Pierre, each in his own way and under such pressure, to have “cracked” under the test.<sup>62</sup>

Faurisson has often proclaimed his belief in the final victory of revisionism, but he knows the struggle will be long. His outburst against “Jewish hatred” con-

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 1764–65.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 1763.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 1764.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 1804.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 1820–21.

firmed, however, that the great majority of French society in the mid-1990s was not prepared to follow Garaudy or Abbé Pierre down the negationist path.

Garaudy did not, in fact, “crack” or abandon his theses. His 1998 trial was to arouse a new wave of polemics. He was charged with “complicity in contesting crimes against humanity” and “incitement to racial discrimination, hatred and violence.” Garaudy did admit to the Correctional Chamber of Paris that he was hostile toward Zionism, but not toward Judaism. He even stated that he favored “the unity of the three Semite religions.” He also explained why the quotes from Rassinier and Faurisson in the first edition of his book (December 1995), had disappeared from the second (March 1996): “I did not want to shift the focus of this book. It was translated in 23 different countries. I did not think I should encumber it with names unknown outside France.”<sup>63</sup> The debate centered on the definition of the “Final Solution” and the question of the gas chambers. “I saw death pass before my eyes when I was interned in the Sahara, but I never had the idea of building a business on my grandfather’s bones,” Garaudy insisted, while pouring scorn on the anti-racist organizations.<sup>64</sup> The latter, he said, were stressing the negationist, and not just the “anti-Zionist,” nature of his writings.<sup>65</sup> His counsel, Jacques Vergès, criticized the Gayssot Law, which “claimed to freeze History, whereas History is in a state of perpetual revision.” Vergès denounced the primacy accorded to the genocide of the Jews, relative to all of the other genocides, and compared his client’s trial to a witch-hunt.<sup>66</sup>

In the verdict handed down on 27 February 1998, the court rejected the charge of incitement to racial violence or hatred, which constituted half a victory for Garaudy. On the other hand, with regard to negationism, the court ruled that “Roger Garaudy gave himself over to a virulent and systematic contestation of the very existence of the crimes against humanity committed against the Jewish community, borrowing liberally, in order to do so, from what the abundant revisionist literature had already published on the subject.” Garaudy was sentenced to pay relatively heavy fines.<sup>67</sup>

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63 Acacio Pereira, “M. Garaudy comparaît pour ‘complicité de contestation de crimes contre l’humanité,’” *Le Monde*, 10 Jan. 1998.

64 Idem, “Roger Garaudy ‘doute’ toujours de l’existence des chambres à gaz,” *Le Monde*, 11–12 Jan. 1998.

65 Idem, “Une amende de 150,000 francs est requise contre Roger Garaudy,” *Le Monde*, 17 Jan. 1998.

66 Idem, “Les défenseurs de Roger Garaudy s’attaquent à la loi Gayssot,” *Le Monde*, 18–19 Jan. 1998.

67 Idem, “Le philosophe Roger Garaudy est condamné pour contestation de crimes contre l’humanité,” *Le Monde*, 1–2 Mar. 1998.

The coverage of the trial by *Le Monde* gave rise to an interesting semantic debate which centered on the way in which Garaudy should be defined. The title of a first article, which referred to him as an “anti-Zionist philosopher,” provoked a riposte by several renowned intellectuals.

The use of the euphemism “anti-Zionist” in your title is a distortion of meaning, just as the title of “philosopher” seems improper for Mr. Garaudy’s work. You have made a choice which calls journalistic ethics into question, a choice with particularly grave political effects. Intellectual honesty is first and foremost a question of vocabulary.<sup>68</sup>

The polemic was strengthened when it became clear that *Le Monde* was persisting in its attitude when it announced the sentenced passed against the “philosopher Garaudy.”<sup>69</sup> Robert Redeker, a philosopher himself and member of the editorial board of *Temps modernes*, spoke out in turn. He denied that negationism was a philosophy, because it was, in fact, “intellectual banditry.” Accordingly, Garaudy should have been called a “negationist ideologue” and not a “philosopher.”<sup>70</sup> Garaudy replied by protesting against his “excommunication from philosophy” and inserted himself, on his own authority, into the category of Galileo, Einstein, and Descartes.<sup>71</sup>

In his efforts to justify his *Founding Myths* and to establish that he was neither a negationist nor an antisemite, he filed an appeal. The second trial was opened on 14 October 1998, before the Court of Appeals in Paris. Alain Finkielkraut, the sole witness called by the anti-racist organizations, demonstrated the negationism shown by Garaudy, who “republishes the arguments in whose name the Jews were killed.... There is nothing more offensive than to evict the survivors from their misfortune and the dead from their death.” Garaudy claimed to have received a letter of support from renowned violinist Sir Yehudi Menuhin in July 1998 and basically repeated the essentials of his earlier arguments.<sup>72</sup> He did so in vain: the Court of Appeals did not merely confirm the verdict handed down in February. It increased the sentence, giving Garaudy six months’ suspended imprison-

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**68** See the letter “Détournement de sens” signed by Elisabeth de Fontenay, Alain Finkielkraut, Henri Raczymov, Jacques Tarnero, and Michel Zaoui in the “Letters from Readers” section of *Le Monde*, 1–2 Feb. 1998. See also Thomas Ferenczi, “Des titres malencontreux,” *ibid.* The headline referred to was “Le philosophe antisioniste Roger Garaudy reçoit le soutien de journaux arabes,” *Le Monde*, 13 Jan. 1998.

**69** See note 67.

**70** Robert Redeker, “Roger Garaudy est-il un philosophe?,” *Le Monde*, 13 Mar. 1998.

**71** “Une lettre de Roger Garaudy,” *Le Monde*, 7 Apr. 1998.

**72** Nicolas Weill, “Jugé en appel, Roger Garaudy persiste à défendre, à la virgule près, les thèses de son livre contesté” *Le Monde*, 16 Oct. 1998.

ment on top of his fines. His publisher, Pierre Guillaume, was also found guilty and sentenced.<sup>73</sup> Garaudy, indefatigable, went on to pursue his fight against the courts, but his sentence was confirmed by the Cour de Cassation (Superior Court of Appeals) in September 2000. He then turned to his last recourse—the European courts—but again without success.

Rejected by French public opinion and condemned by French justice, Garaudy was nonetheless fêted and enthusiastically flattered in the Arab world, where his “anti-Zionist” and negationist writings were particularly appreciated. As early as 1996, he toured Syria and Jordan and other Arab countries to present his book. Visiting Egypt in October 1996, he was appointed an honorary member of the Federation of Writers. His arrival, of course, was exploited by the intellectual and political forces which were campaigning against the normalization of relations between Egypt and Israel.<sup>74</sup> His 1998 trial was marked by a new flurry of supportive testimony in the Arab world. The Association of Palestinian Writers expressed its “solidarity with the thinker and man of letters Roger Garaudy for his courageous struggle in favor of creative freedom.”<sup>75</sup> The Islamic movement in Israel viewed his trial as part of a vast conspiracy by world Jewry against Islam.<sup>76</sup> Triumphant received at the International Book Fair in Cairo on 15 February 1998, he stated, in the same breath, that he was not an antisemite and that “95% of the Western media” were “controlled by the Zionists.”<sup>77</sup> Many Arab journals expressed their support of him. “The months of January and February [1998] were particularly auspicious for the former theoretician of the French Communist Party, who had converted to Islam. From Cairo to Teheran, from Damascus, Amman, and Beirut, to the autonomous Palestinian territories, Abu Dhabi and Tripoli, the mobilization in his favor was surprising,” reported Mouna Naim. Iranian leaders expressed fury at the attitude of the Westerners, who reproached them for persecuting Salman Rushdie for his *Satanic Verses*, yet put Garaudy on trial. Only a few rare voices in the Arab world distanced themselves from the massive support lent to the *Founding Myths*.<sup>78</sup>

The impact of Garaudy’s declarations and trial was deep, and constituted part of the tendency toward demonization of the State of Israel and the Jewish

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73 “La condamnation de Roger Garaudy est alourdie en appel,” *Le Monde*, 18 Dec. 1998.

74 On his tour of Egypt in October 1996, see “Local Hero,” *Jerusalem Report*, 14 Nov. 1996.

75 Acacio Pereira, “Le philosophe antisioniste Roger Garaudy reçoit le soutien de journaux arabes,” *Le Monde*, 13 Jan. 1998.

76 *Haaretz*, 20 Jan. 1998.

77 “Roger Garaudy reçu en héros en Egypte,” *Le Monde*, 16 Feb. 1998.

78 Mouna Naim, “Critiqué, jugé, sanctionné pour ses thèses en France, l’ancien théoricien de PC est décoré et louangé dans les pays arabes,” *Le Monde*, 1–2 Mar. 1998.



people over the past fifteen years—a tendency which has only gained in strength since October 2000. Garaudy has continued to enjoy a vast popularity, above and beyond intellectual and political circles in the Arab world, contributing to the propagation of anti-Jewish hatred throughout the Middle East.<sup>79</sup>

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**79** On the impact of Garaudy's writings among Muslims, see Goetz Nordbruch, "The Socio-Historical Background of Holocaust Denial in Arab Countries. Reactions to Roger Garaudy's *The Founding Myths of Israeli Politics*," (Jerusalem: Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, ACTA No. 17, 2001).



Alain Goldschläger

## The Trials of Ernst Zündel<sup>1</sup>

The United Nations' Conference on Racism, held in Durban in September 2001, was a sad reminder of the virulent antisemitism more readily associated with Europe in the 1930s. Speeches of free flowing hate, pictures borrowed from Nazi propaganda, and public insults were common. There was, of course, a modern touch: T-shirts with antisemitic slogans allowed people to wear their hatred on their chests. In the midst of bitter discussions, especially among the non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the subject of the Holocaust became central. Several attempts were made to trivialize, if not to deny the Holocaust. There were also proposals to use the word "Holocaust" as a generic term applicable to many other events—specifically, the equation of six hundred Palestinian deaths during first year of the second Intifada with the murder of six million Jews by the Nazis. This decontextualization of the Holocaust is not new; it is, rather, the latest effort in a trend that began in the early 1950s, immediately after the initial shock wore off from the discovery of the death camps and the massacres perpetrated by the Nazis. In the recent past, the word "Holocaust" has been used by different groups to describe the mass deaths that have resulted from nuclear weapons or from the Cambodian and Rwandan genocides. If these uses of the word blur the ideology behind the Nazi atrocities, they at least preserve the horrific magnitude. However, the present efforts to equate Israel's actions to the Holocaust grossly distort and trivialize history.

The Holocaust is a unique event that has marked not only Jewish consciousness, but also world history; it is *the* symbol for cruelty toward Jews. To equate other acts of genocide to it and to reduce it to the scope of a "normal" massacre is to denigrate its particularities and atrocities. If we wish to properly memorialize human suffering, then each act of genocide must be placed in its historical, social, and human context. Amalgamating all massacres into one category only denies the particular lessons in each of these events and, in the end, prevents humanity from learning the lessons of history.

Assaults against the memory of the Holocaust are no longer taboo. The reduction of the Holocaust to just another "detail" of history (to quote Jean-Marie Le Pen, leader of the *Front National* and a former presidential candidate in France)

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<sup>1</sup> The author would like to thank Prof. Robert Wistrich for his editing work which greatly enhanced the text; Alan Shefman, former director of the League of Human Rights of B'nai B'rith; and Adina Goldberg for helping me with many legal points.

or—as was the case with the Syrian delegation to Durban—its total denial, must be seen on the world’s political stage as an attempt to delegitimize the State of Israel. The open denial of the Holocaust by neo-Nazis, white supremacists, and Arab governments reveals their perception that attacking this symbol critically injures the Jewish people and thwarts Israel’s national interests. These groups believe that Holocaust denial can effectively change the course of the future, perhaps even rejuvenate Nazi ideology, undermine the moral values of the West, and reduce Western support for Israel and Jewish causes. Therefore, Holocaust denial must be seen as hate propaganda against Jewish people wherever they live and against the State of Israel.<sup>2</sup>

In Canada, these issues gained public attention through two well-publicized trials of the neo-Nazi “revisionist” Ernst Zündel. These lawsuits were among the first major public confrontations with the historical, ethical, and social questions embodied in Canada’s new Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The delicate balance between the freedom of speech (including the expression of overt lies), the respect and dignity of a minority, and the preservation of public peace was at the center of these proceedings.

The trials raised a number of acute questions concerning Holocaust denial. For example, does it constitute an active form of hate propaganda against an identifiable group? While the answer may appear clear today, this was not automatically the case at the time of the trials; no European legislation had been established to treat and define Holocaust denial as a criminal offense per se. Furthermore, Holocaust denial had not yet become a prime weapon for neo-Nazi groups in Europe and North America, though it was increasingly present in their literature. Similarly, no Arab or Muslim government in the mid-1980s had employed denial as a weapon against the State of Israel, even though they printed and distributed the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* as “proof” of a worldwide Jewish conspiracy.

The Zündel trials also challenged the effectiveness of the legal system in fighting hate propaganda and the limitations on legitimate, but antagonistic, speech. Indeed, this issue goes to the heart of many important democratic values. Namely, it questions the balance between public peace, and the right of groups and individuals to freely express potentially hurtful ideas. In practical terms, when does the freedom of one infringe on the freedom and safety of another? This discussion was especially interesting because in Canada there is a tendency

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2 Deborah Lipstadt wrote in 1993: “I knew that I was dealing with extremist antisemites who have increasingly managed, under the guise of scholarship, to camouflage their hateful ideology.... It is intimately connected to a political agenda.” See Deborah Lipstadt, *Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory* (New York, 1993), 3.

to keep an equal distance both from the absolute concept of free speech (often advocated by American scholars and the American justice system) and the more controlled application of the idea prevalent in Western Europe.

A third question that became crucial to the deniers and their opponents was the manipulation of the justice system and the media for propaganda purposes. Ernst Zündel, like Robert Faurisson before him, found the press very eager to open their pages and broadcasts to what were seemingly scandalous trials, high on emotions and theatrics.<sup>3</sup> By trying to remain unbiased and balanced, much of the media appeared to confer equal legitimacy to the opposing views. Moreover, the thundering declarations of Zündel and other deniers made eye-catching headlines; the press could not resist the temptation to print them. The mere consideration of the deniers' cases by the entire legal system, including the Supreme Court of Canada, also seemed to legitimize these extreme positions.

The scholarly questions that historians, linguists, political scientists, and philosophers debate regarding the transfer of historical knowledge found no place in the courtroom. Clearly, scientific methodology and accuracy were not on the agenda of Holocaust deniers, even if they claim that their goal is to "restore" history. As we shall see, the aim of this alleged scientific discussion is not a better understanding of historical facts but the promotion of a political and social agenda. Hence the need for a more levelheaded debate that should take place among politicians, journalists, and philosophers. Of course, this discussion must also consider the social impact that these trials had on the Jewish community and Canadian society. The study by Gabriel Weimann and Conrad Winn of the Canadian media during the Zündel trials provided the beginning of an answer, but more attention should be devoted to this phenomenon.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> A suspended Professor of French Literature at the University of Lyon, Faurisson published *Memoire en defense contre ceux qui m'accusent de falsifier l'Histoire* (Paris, 1980); *Reponse à Pierre Vidal-Naquet* (Paris, 1982); and, *Is the Diary of Anne Frank Genuine?* (Torrance, Calif., 1985). His article in *Le Monde* (1979) marked the emergence of Holocaust revisionism from a small circle of devotees into the public conscience and made Faurisson emblematic for the movement.

<sup>4</sup> Gabriel Weimann and Conrad Winn, *Hate on Trial: The Zündel Affair, the Media, and Public Opinion* (Oakville, 1987).

## The Background

Our story begins in November 1983, when Mrs. Sabina Citron, at the time the president of the Canadian Holocaust Remembrance Association, privately filed charges in Toronto against the publisher Ernst Zündel, pursuant to Section 177 of the *Criminal Code* (later reclassified as Section 181):

Everyone who willfully publishes a statement, tale or news that he knows is false and that causes or is likely to cause injury or mischief to a public interest is guilty of an indictable offence and liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years.

Ernst Zündel had published two pamphlets entitled *Did Six Million Really Die?* and *The West, War and Islam*. The Association asserted that the texts not only contained falsehoods about the extermination of European Jews but denied the factuality of the Holocaust, thus creating “injury or mischief to a public interest.”<sup>5</sup> In this case, the injured parties were the Canadian Jewish community in general and more specifically, Holocaust survivors and their families. Citing the public interest, the Attorney General of Ontario, Roy McMurty, decided to take over and prosecute the case.

Section 171 of the Criminal Code (under which Zündel was charged) had barely been considered by the courts before this case. Thus, there was no existing jurisprudence regarding its intent, scope, application or reach.

The defendant, Ernst Zündel, was born on 24 April 1939 on a farm in Calmbach, in the Black Forest region of Germany. In his autobiography, Zündel wrote that he emerged from this inconspicuous background with memories of personal suffering during Germany’s defeat—including “hunger, cold and sickness” under the French military occupation. His parents were apolitical. In 1953, he enrolled in a trade school and obtained a diploma as a photo retoucher three years later. He came to Canada in 1958 as a landed immigrant to avoid peacetime conscription in West Germany, but did not surrender his German citizenship.<sup>6</sup> He arrived in Montreal where he met Adrian Arcand, the former leader of the National-Socialist Christian Party, who had been imprisoned during World War II for his fascist activ-

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<sup>5</sup> We used and recommend the detailed account of the trials by Leonidas Edwin Hill, *The Trial of Ernst Zündel: Revisionism and the Law in Canada* (Los Angeles, 1989), 165–219.

<sup>6</sup> Because Canada allows dual citizenship, Zündel could have kept his German citizenship. In 1993, thirty years after eligibility, he applied for Canadian citizenship. The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration opposed this, labeling Zündel a “threat to the security of Canada.” This began a series of legal proceedings that ended only in December 2000 when the Supreme Court of Canada refused to hear Zündel’s appeal.

ities, and who took the young Zündel under his wing.<sup>7</sup> The extensive library that Arcand bequeathed to Zündel contained much antisemitica. Zündel entered the publishing business, moved west, became “the best photo retoucher in Toronto,” and was employed by mainstream companies. He also started to write and publish his own texts and those compatible with his neo-Nazi and white supremacist ideology. Zündel’s Samisdat Publishing Company disseminated literature that called Hitler a great man and leader, claiming that no gassing of any group ever took place in German camps, and that the “Holocaust” was actually a moneymaking hoax. Zündel printed antisemitic pamphlets distributed in Canada, the United States, and in the former West Germany. He also sold Nazi memorabilia. Zündel believed in an international Jewish conspiracy against Germany and the Allies on behalf of the State of Israel. In 1982, the Federal Republic of Germany refused to renew his passport.

Douglas Christie (Zündel’s lawyer) was a native of Winnipeg, living in Victoria, British Columbia. Christie was known for an abrasive style as well as his positions against federal government policies such as bilingualism, the metric system, and the replacement of the Union Jack with the Maple Leaf flag. He founded the Western Canada Concept, a separatist political party. He surprised many at the trial with his preparation and knowledge of details. His legal arguments, however, were often questionable, seemingly aimed more at making a public and political stand than at arguing the merits of the case.

Prosecutor Peter Griffiths had to prepare for the trial while dealing with his normal workload. Support from the academic community and Jewish organizations partially compensated for Griffiths’ relative lack of time and resources for preparation. The rulings of the judge show that Griffiths was successful on most issues. His competence and effectiveness were not that much appreciated by the press during the trial but have become more evident with time. As for Judge Hugh Locke, he could refer to very few precedents because the law had not been applied before. He declined to take “judicial notice” of the historicity of the Holocaust at the beginning of the trial, thereby leaving the basic facts open to argument. Because the question had already been raised in the early stages of the trials,

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<sup>7</sup> Adrian Arcand (1899–1967) founded the Parti National Social-Chrétien (National Social Christian Party), a party that promoted fascist ideology in Quebec. In 1938, he became the leader of the Canadian coalition of fascist parties under the banner of the National Unity Party. Arcand was arrested in May 1940 for plotting to overthrow the state and was interned for the duration of the war. After release, he returned to the same path and ardently promoted antisemitism. Zündel considered Arcand to be his “political mentor.” See Lita-Rose Betcherman, *The Swastika and the Maple Leaf* (Toronto, 1975).

he was obliged to hear the evidence on this issue from both sides. All of Judge Locke's other rulings favored Griffiths' position.

## The First Trial

The first trial started on 7 January 1985. The prosecution presented its case from 11 January to 2 February, followed by the defense. The guilty verdict was rendered on 28 February and Zündel was sentenced on 25 March. At the opening of the trial, Christie asked for a ruling on the compatibility of Section 177 with the new Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Through this preliminary discussion and argumentation, Christie indicated that the entire trial would be a testing ground for many legal and ethical questions; he was looking for the exemplary value of the exercise in a larger context.

Christie, quoting article 19 of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, interpreted Section 177 (181) as an unreasonable restriction on the freedom of speech, which he saw as an absolute right. He argued that the law made the courtroom the only place where historical truth could be decided. However, Griffiths asserted that there are reasonable limitations to freedom of speech and that it could indeed "cause some damage to the public interest." Judge Locke ruled in favor of Griffiths' position, but the question was re-opened during the appeals.

The second ruling sought by the defense dealt with the right to question prospective jurors about their attitudes toward Jews and Judaism, Freemasons, Germans, the war, the Holocaust, concentration camps, and gas chambers. Christie asked Judge Locke to exclude Jews and Freemasons from the jury and to permit the questioning of prospective jurors about their links with such people. Christie added that the publicity surrounding the trial made it impossible to find jurors who had not already formed an opinion on Zündel's guilt.

Griffiths thought that acceptance of the defense's position would disenfranchise citizens. The prosecutor was even more troubled about how Jewishness could be determined. Using Hitler's criteria would be an insult. In addition, what standards would categorize one as a Freemason? Griffiths also emphasized the unquestionable existence of the Holocaust and the concentration camps, though he did not request at that time a ruling on "judicial notice" of the Holocaust. Christie then argued that no judicial notice should be taken regarding the facts discussed in Zündel's pamphlets.

In his ruling, Judge Locke concluded that the questions proposed by Christie were offensive. The judge also indicated that prior knowledge does not automatically make a person unfit for jury duty. He expressed his trust that a selected juror



would perform according to his or her oath. Specifically stating that he did not want to emulate American court practices in this regard, Locke explained that the selection process was not established to find the kind of juror one wishes, but to select an honest and open-minded person. He also found it unacceptable to “disenfranchis[e] a substantial segment of our society...from the right and duty to sit as a juror in a court of criminal jurisdiction in a democratic country.” The position taken by the defense and the implication of discrimination did not enhance the serenity of the court procedures. A jury of ten men and two women was then selected, according to the standard procedure.

The prosecution opened its case with a general description of the war as well as the concentration and death camps through its expert witness, Raul Hilberg.<sup>8</sup> With impressive erudition and comprehensive knowledge, Hilberg testified to the obvious mistakes, falsities, and the numerous absurdities expressed in Zündel’s texts and positions. He was followed by a number of Holocaust survivors who were asked to describe the conditions and the daily life in the camps; among them was Professor Rudolf Vrba.<sup>9</sup> Some witnesses were also called specifically to counter Zündel’s assertions about a Jewish-Freemason conspiracy whose activities included the control and manipulation of Canada’s current banking system. Griffiths sought not only to overturn these claims, but to prove that Zündel knew that they were false.

During cross-examination, Christie tried to cast doubt on the testimony of the prosecution’s witnesses. He underlined the unreliable nature of the survivors’ memories and the dangers of accepting their testimonies at face value. Hilberg responded to Christie with detailed explanations in order to demonstrate that Zündel’s assertions were “concoction, contradiction and untruth mixed with half-truth.” Christie replied that all the historical and testimonial books presented as evidence by Hilberg and the survivors were mere opinion and, as such, inconclusive in all aspects.

Christie tried several techniques to discredit the testimony from Holocaust survivors about the concentration camps. First, he aggressively labeled the witnesses as co-conspirators who knowingly falsified their testimony to further the

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<sup>8</sup> Raul Hilberg (at the time, Professor of History at the University of Vermont) was among the world’s foremost authorities on the Holocaust. He had authored several books, including *The Destruction of European Jewry* (New York, 1961), and *Perpetrators, Victims, Bystanders: The Jewish Catastrophe 1933–1945* (New York, 1992).

<sup>9</sup> Professor Rudolf Vrba (then Associate Professor of Pharmacology at the University of British Columbia) was a survivor of Auschwitz (June 1942–April 1944). He wrote, with Alan Besic, *The Conspiracy of the Twentieth Century* (Bellingham, Wash., 1989), an extended version of *I Cannot Forgive* (London, 1963).

goals of a Judeo-Masonic conspiracy. He suggested that their stories had simply been learned by rote and were uttered for Machiavellian reasons. Hence, any discrepancy or minor error discredited the entire testimony, and exposed the manipulation. Consequently, argued Christie, their testimony revealed the scope of a conspiracy capable of producing so many, and seemingly coordinated recollections. He claimed that the witnesses purposely adapted their stories to meet the needs of secret manipulators who sought to refashion the truth and engaged in a war against the non-Jewish world. Christie added, with characteristic irony, that these witnesses were more victims of the conspiracy than of the Nazis; they were dupes of a conspiracy that had not hesitated to sacrifice them for its own purposes. Christie insisted that the witnesses should rebel, join the ranks of the revisionists, and fight against their coreligionists. According to this argument, the voracity of the conspiracy justifies the Holocaust deniers: if the conspiracy goes to these extremes, it is because the stakes are of vital importance.

At its most cynical, the defense advanced the following notion: if not all Jews died, then none was destined to die. The very existence of survivors clearly indicates, according to Zündel, that there was no systematic purpose to Nazi action; if deaths occurred, they were accidental or natural, or the result of unrelenting Allied bombing of supply trains. Christie employed counterfactual interpretations to distort events that are already part of the historical record. For example, he tried to reinterpret the selection process upon arrival at Auschwitz—widely understood as a barbaric act in which the lives of the victims were decided at the whim of the executioners. The defense argued, however, that instead of counting the number of people eliminated because of poor health or uselessness as laborers, one should accept that German officers saved many for work, and thus, contributed to the Jews' survival. Since all of this was done according to rules of necessity, no one should imply a malicious intent to these soldiers and even less to the policy of resettlement for work.

Christie liberally applied the notion of mass hysteria to try to explain the supposedly unrealistic number of deaths and the convergence of testimonies given by Holocaust survivors. Several witnesses for the defense referred to "hysteria" in the immediate postwar period, particularly during the Nuremberg trials. Christie insisted that, in time of war and revenge, exaggerated rumors and stories circulate widely; he even made a few points with the jury by using the notion of hysteria to explain some discrepancies or inconsistencies in testimonies from survivors, much to their dismay.

Throughout the cross-examination of the prosecution witnesses, Christie revealed a greater knowledge of the literature of the Holocaust than expected. Although it had been agreed in preliminary discussions between the lawyers that the trial should not turn into a "battle of the libraries," Christie introduced more

than one hundred books, even after the judge limited the selection to books published in English. In the process, he revealed that Zündel had read widely and, thus, could not (as pointed out by Griffiths) claim ignorance of many reported facts. Although Christie quoted his sources correctly in some cases, he misused or misplaced them in many more instances. Griffiths, in fact, could not refute the vast number of quotations.<sup>10</sup> In addition, Christie argued that all scholarly references were mere opinions. He claimed, therefore, that the large amount of evidence was only the repetition of one opinion and not additional, corroborative evidence. For him, all new explanations or documentation were simply the products of scholarly imagination, disconnected from reality.

Christie asserted in his opening statement that Zündel did not believe that six million died in the “so-called” gas chambers. No less, Zündel intended to *prove* the Holocaust had not happened. Had Christie argued that Zündel could not know the real history of the Holocaust and truly believed his two pamphlets represented the facts, the defense would have been extremely strong. Considering the safeguards included in the law, Zündel would have most likely escaped conviction with this argument. Zündel’s good faith would have been a sufficient defense against prosecution. Indeed, the flaw in the Canadian law becomes apparent here: to achieve a conviction, the prosecution has to prove the intent and the desire to hurt; it has to enter the mind of the accused and prove that the goal was specific injury. It must prove that the defendant not only knew that his words were lies but that he intended to use those lies as a weapon.

Zündel and Christie adamantly argued that the war did not lead to the extermination of Jews and that Judeo-Freemason conspirators had manufactured all of the stories of organized murders and genocide. Zündel and Christie thereby attempted to repudiate all evidence of the systematic destruction of European Jewry. Indeed, Christie did not ask the jury to decide between two sets of contradictory evidence but to reject anything and everything presented by survivors, scholars, and experts of any kind. They were invited to accept without nuance Zündel’s theory, together with charges of conspiracy, concealment of truth, the manipulation of data, and the falsification of written, visual, and physical documents.

Witnesses for the defense were an assortment of outcasts and (mainly) amateur historians with an obvious agenda. Three were university professors (although not historians) who had lost their academic positions: Robert Fau-

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<sup>10</sup> See the brilliant account by Nadine Fresco, “Les redresseurs de morts. Chambres de gaz: la bonne nouvelle. Comment on revise l’histoire,” *Les Temps Modernes*, no. 407 (1980): 2150–2211, on the type and frequency of intellectual and factual manipulations used by deniers.

risson; Gary Botting, a professor of English at Red Deer (Alberta); and Charles Weber from the University of Tulsa. There was the Canadian Holocaust denier James Keegstra; Ditlieb Felderer, a Swede who offended jurors with a satirical and macabre deposition on Auschwitz; Udo Walendy and Thies Christopherson—two elderly Germans with poor English skills who had been prosecuted for Holocaust denial in Germany. There was also the Reverend Ronald Marr, a Baptist minister who favored free speech; and the pathetic Frank Walus, a locomotive fitter misidentified and prosecuted in the United States as a Gestapo agent. During cross-examination, Griffiths did not hesitate to highlight their dubious academic credentials or criminal records. He exposed both their ignorance of historical events and how they manipulated facts to create false conclusions.

The most important testimony came from Ernst Zündel himself at the end of the trial. During his lengthy presence on the stand, Zündel displayed contempt for all points of view but his own and showed signs of the hatred for which he stood accused. In his eyes, enmity against the German people, rather than the Jews, was the root of all evil. He tried to persuade the jury of Hitler's numerous and admirable talents and spoke of the French Canadian antisemite, Adrian Arcand, with the highest esteem. At this point, Griffiths introduced, with great effect, some of Zündel's recent writings (such as *The Hitler We Love and Why*). The prosecutor insisted that these publications promoted antisemitism, admiration for Hitler, and violence in the Federal Republic of Germany. Griffiths asserted that Zündel's purpose was *political* in nature and not the benign dissemination of scholarly historical research. Thus, Zündel's use of false information was a conscious and voluntary act of hate propaganda. Throughout it all, Zündel, more than anyone else, torpedoed his own defense by nakedly exposing his feelings and intents.

During the trial, one of the most important discussions concerned the number of victims. The controversy had started with the first "revisionist," Paul Rassinier. The French Socialist camp survivor had calculated in the early 1960s that Auschwitz had at most 50,000 victims of all backgrounds and no more than 360,000 perished in all the camps combined. Faurisson, who testified at Zündel's trial, wrote: "My estimation is the following: the number of Jews exterminated by the Nazis is happily equal to zero."<sup>11</sup> All deniers argue about these numbers; their estimates are both varied and entirely fanciful. The common denominator, however, is *reduction* of the quantity of victims. Since we will never know the precise number, it is quite easy to argue, as the deniers do, that there is room for

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11 Robert Faurisson, interview in *Storia Illustrata* (Aug. 1979): 197.

variation. While this is true, that variance does not sanction the elimination of historical reality or trivializing the scope of the tragedy.

This kind of discourse by Holocaust deniers has one obvious goal and also a more subtle one. The transparent goal is to minimize the scope of the horror by deflating the level of murder to a “normal” civilian victim count for a war. This places the number of murdered Jews near (and often less than) that suffered by other populations during the war, especially the Germans. As regrettable as it may be, say the deniers, loss of life is a normal consequence of war and therefore cannot be construed as a demonic attack against a single part of the population. Because there is a definite link between the number of dead and the idea of a systematic extermination of a specific group, to deny the number is to deny the existence of such a policy.

But there is a more pernicious side to the deniers’ arguments. By focusing on numbers in demographic charts and using pseudo-demography, the scope of the killing and the suffering is marginalized. The debate is reduced to data, not human beings: 1,000,000 or 100,000 deaths become a statistical equation. The dispute over numbers fosters a process of blurring and, as such, contributes to the notion that history is an abstract construct, that we cannot know the reality of the past but only “the story of history.” Christie thereby argued that figures and calculations are subjective and not a basis for historical certainty. History is only what the present is able to conceive and, therefore, allows for competing interpretations of equal validity. Deniers insist that their version of history can be placed at the same level of plausibility as any other, especially the official one.

Deniers also accept at face value the terminology used by the Nazis to hide their actions and reject the possibility that the Third Reich ever devised a language of concealment. Deniers do show, however, fertile imaginations and excessively critical minds when deciphering a text or image from an Allied source. For example, they accept the Nazi description of the *Einsatzgruppen* as special defense troops whose mission was only to fight and retaliate against resistance. Consequently, all executions performed by these troops on the Eastern Front were justified and complied with the normal rules of war. Because the *Einsatzgruppen* were formed and trained to kill Jews, they were responsible for the murder of over one million Jews in Russia—and the removal of their actions from the historical debate is indeed crucial for deniers.<sup>12</sup> Their very existence, their operational

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<sup>12</sup> Ronald Headland, calculated a total of 1,152,731 victims by the end of 1942; see *Messages of Murder: A Study of the Reports of the Einsatzgruppen of the Security Police and the Security Service 1941–1943* (Rutherford, N.J., 1992). Raul Hilberg reached a similar number; see *Documents of Destruction* (Chicago, 1971), 3:1219.

orders, and written military reports are an indictment of the entire Nazi regime and an obvious indicator for the policy of systematic extermination so vigorously called into question.

Given the importance of the *Einsatzgruppen* for Holocaust deniers, they do not hesitate to rewrite the reports: they replace the word “Jew” with “partisan” to fit the category of anti-guerrilla warfare. They claim that the murderous Nazi actions were not part of a unique plan of extermination. Only misguided people seeking to denigrate the German army could imagine differently. The number of dead that can be attributed to German actions are therefore manipulated to match descriptions of a defensive action. Jews seized by the *Einsatzgruppen* are said to have been executed as members of the underground or as saboteurs, not as Jews, and their death is a consequence of resistance. Consequently, claim the deniers, the entire subject of the *Einsatzgruppen* is irrelevant to the discussion and should not be raised.

Denial of the existence of death camps is, of course, especially vital. Hence the nature of the camps is reduced to providing work for Jews and others. If there were deaths, they must be attributed to a variety of conditions—to anything but a systematic attempt to kill. For deniers like Zündel, the camps which actually existed were maintained properly, providing as clean and comfortable conditions as the war would allow.

But it is the gas chambers which are the overriding symbol of the Nazi Holocaust. It is thus of prime importance for deniers to erase their very existence or to redefine their use. Indeed, the text that marks the birth of the revisionist movement, *Le Mensonge d’Ulysse* (1950) by Paul Rassinier, elaborately questioned the existence of gas chambers. Contemporary deniers explain the physical presence of such chambers in the camps as additions made later to justify the story of mass killing or as depots that used Zyklon-B to disinfect and delouse clothes and possessions. They dispute even the killing capacity of the gas for human beings. Here again, convoluted discussions of the killing potential of each gas chamber provoked long diatribes by deniers, downgrading the total number of victims, further disconnecting the facts from their interpretations.

Adopting a pseudo-scientific approach, deniers suggest that if Zyklon-B was indeed used to kill, the walls of the chambers would be impregnated by the gas.<sup>13</sup> They usually present a series of so-called experts who scientifically “prove” the lack of residual gas in the structures. No recognized scientist, working in his or her own field, has, however, supported these conclusions of Holocaust deniers.

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<sup>13</sup> See Robert Van Pelt, *The Case for Auschwitz: Evidence from the Irving Trial* (Bloomington, Ind., 2002).

On the contrary, this line of argument was thoroughly discredited by Jean-Claude Pressac who provided an important account of the gas chambers, their purpose, design, financing, construction, and use. After securing access to the SS archives confiscated by the Russians, he combined these with Polish, German, and Israeli sources. Pressac employed all the available technical, industrial, and practical data to confirm the existence of the gas chambers and their terrible effectiveness.<sup>14</sup>

Zündel argued that the number of dead could not have been cremated by the ovens at Auschwitz because they were not large enough, and the task would require a large amount of coal, the presence of which is not recorded. According to him, the present fragility of the buildings testifies to the impossibility of using them so intensely for the described function. Zündel added that the small number of cremated corpses were actually victims of typhus that had to be destroyed to prevent the spread of the disease.

He dismissed testimony about cries, screams, and the smell of burning human bodies as effects of the imagination or propaganda, reported only after the war to mould the myth of innumerable deaths. Yet again, mass hysteria was being blamed for the macabre descriptions found in survivors' accounts.

Zündel's text, *The West, War and Islam*, was less central to the trial, but it was still important since it revealed his worldview and placed the entire trial in a more contemporary context. Zündel argued for a link between Hitler and Yasser Arafat and predicted a new Holocaust. The Jews, the Freemasons and the Communists were alleged to be organizing a *war of extermination* against the Islamic world. Since Zündel was joining the Arab campaign, his action had to be seen as a "courageous attempt" to battle Zionist propaganda in North America and Europe. During his testimony, Zündel indicated that Freemasonry was in fact anti-Christian, controlled by Jews and Satanists, and had promoted bloody revolutions in America, France, and Russia. Its power over the banking system was absolute and it continually expanded by control over the members of many philanthropic organizations like the Rotary Club, the Lions, etc. When questioned by Christie at the trial, Freemasons insisted that their activities were limited to charitable and philanthropic causes. A senior vice-president of the Royal Bank of Canada also appeared and vehemently denied that his bank or the International Monetary Fund gave unsecured loans for ideological reasons to countries with bad credit credentials.

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<sup>14</sup> Jean Claude Pressac, *Les Crematoires d'Auschwitz: La machinerie du meurtre de masse* (Paris, 1993). Pressac is a pharmacist, who initially went to Auschwitz to prove that the gassing did not occur, but he reversed his stand.

The jury could not determine whether this second text qualified as hate propaganda and in the final judgment, this charge was dismissed. Nevertheless, the proceedings dealing with this item, as well as Zündel's personal deposition, were laced with antisemitic undertones and may have had an effect when the jury considered the question of hatred towards Jews.

Long seen as a symbol of the anxiety and suffering of Holocaust victims, the *Diary of Anne Frank* was a particularly common target of "revisionists." Zündel was no exception, and repeatedly claimed that the diary was a hoax. Robert Faurisson, who testified for the defense, elaborated on the subject whereas Zündel took the traditional denier's position that Anne Frank's father had concocted the *Diary* after the war.

The jury eventually entered a guilty verdict regarding Zündel's pamphlet *Did Six Million Die?* On 25 March 1985, Judge Locke sentenced Ernst Zündel to fifteen months imprisonment with the stipulation not to write or publish, directly or indirectly, on the Holocaust and related subjects for three years. On the day of sentencing, Zündel arrived at court carrying a large cross bearing a sign with the inscription "Freedom of Speech." Judge Locke spoke plainly and called Zündel a well-heeled racist, who promoted the Big Lie and pushed for a revival of Aryan Nazi grandeur that would prevent "civilized behavior in our Canadian multicultural society." He insisted that the verdict had consequences for the entire Canadian community and not only for the nation's Jews.<sup>15</sup> Since Zündel had remained a German citizen in spite of his long stay in Canada as a landed-immigrant, different voices (like the Canadian Jewish Congress) asked for the commencement of expulsion procedures—an automatic step for anyone convicted and sentenced to six months or more in prison.

## The Appeal and Second Trial

An appeal was filed with the Ontario Court of Appeals and was heard from 22–26 September 1986. Christie introduced more than five dozen grounds for appeal. The upper court found most of these without merit and specifically accepted the ruling that section 177 (now 181) did not violate a person's freedom of expression as guaranteed by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Five grounds for appeal were recognized. The only serious one involved Locke's instruction to the jury

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<sup>15</sup> Judge Locke added: "[Zündel] published not for the purpose of honest public debate, but rather with the fixed intention of destabilizing the Canadian community. Mr. Zündel has slandered the memory of innocent murdered human beings."



about Zündel's knowledge of the false contents in his pamphlet. On 23 January 1987, the court ruled in favor of the appeal. The Canadian Government immediately decided to prosecute again.

The second trial took place in Toronto from mid-January until early May 1988, with a one-week interruption in February and another in March. Ernst Zündel again asked Douglas Christie to assume his defense. John Pearson was the government's chief counsel in place of Griffiths. His tactic was to emphasize Zündel's links with Nazi ideology and modern neo-Nazi groups; this would establish the intent to publish the false contents of the pamphlet. Justice Ronald Thomas, a district court judge, chaired the proceedings. At the start of the trial, he made two important rulings. First, he forbade media coverage. This effectively eliminated the type of grandstanding that Zündel had enjoyed at the first trial. Except for intermittent and vague reports in the daily *Toronto Star* and the weekly *Canadian Jewish News*, the trial did not make the headlines and, indeed, was barely noticed by the general public. This strongly contrasted with the first trial, which occupied the press almost on a daily basis and was at the center of public attention. Crude or inflammatory reports from first trial had provoked numerous reactions. During the second trial, the Jewish community was particularly pleased by the lack of offensive articles in the nationally distributed newspapers.

Thomas's second important ruling involved "judicial notice." Although the Ontario Supreme Court stated that Judge Locke had used his discretion properly by refusing to take "judicial notice" of the facts of the Holocaust in the first trial, Judge Thomas now took "judicial notice" of the same issue. He instructed the jury to accept as historical certainty the mass murder of Jews by the Nazis, though he left open the questions of scale, method, and official policy. This decision dramatically changed the nature and scope of the trial, making the testimony of survivors unnecessary. Many of Christie's theatrics as well as the public wounding of Jewish survivors and their families were thus avoided.

Pearson began by reading, *in extenso* for the record, the book *The Hitler We Love and Why* that Zündel wrote under the pseudonym Christof Friedrich, as well as one of his earlier writings, *UFOs: Nazi Secret Weapons?* He also read the testimony of Raul Hilberg from the first trial; unwilling to undergo another session of Christie's rude questioning, Hilberg did not appear this time. The prosecution then called Professor Christopher Browning as an expert witness.<sup>16</sup> The professor

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<sup>16</sup> Christopher Browning was then Professor of History at Pacific Lutheran University at Tacoma. His writing includes *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York, 1992), and *Fateful Months: Essays on the Emergence of the Final Solution* (New York, 1985).

dissected the errors and falsehoods of Zündel's pamphlet during three of his five days in court. Christie's aggressive attacks on the scholarly credibility of Browning—including the fact that some of his research had been funded by Jewish groups and published by the Wiesenthal Center—were repelled by Browning's erudition and bearing. Douglas Christie called twenty-three witnesses. Many, like Robert Faurisson, Ditlieb Felderer, and Botting, had testified in the first trial. Some of them were not called as experts; instead, Christie invited their "opinion evidence."<sup>17</sup> Because the appeals court had agreed that visual reconstruction of the camps should have been accepted in the first trial, Felderer was allowed to present slides of Auschwitz that included a supposed swimming pool, a dance hall, and a music auditorium. Under cross-examination, Walendy admitted that he had sent comments and remarks to Zündel about *Did Six Million Really Die?*, thus enhancing the suspicion that Zündel was fully aware of some errors and falsehoods in the pamphlet and that he had knowingly published a questionable text.

The defense's strategy seemed to be less coordinated than in the first trial. For example, Weber wavered on the issue of the *Diary of Anne Frank*, while Robert Faurisson maintained a strong stand on the question; the latter claimed that it was, at least in part, a hoax. Faurisson also attacked Hilberg's scholarship. He tried, as did Botting, to reinforce the subtle nuances used in the previous trial about the presentation of opinions as facts. These kind of distinctions escaped most of the other witnesses, who insisted that Zündel's writings were a true rendition of history and that the Holocaust was a fraud.

Two new witnesses appeared before the court. Fred A. Leuchter, an American engineer of doubtful credentials, presented his report. After visiting a few concentration camps, he alleged that, from an engineering point of view, the buildings could not adequately perform the task described and asserted that there were no residual traces of gas in the walls.<sup>18</sup> After Leuchter came the star witness: David Irving, the English historian who had written extensively about Hitler and was a leading Holocaust denier. In the 1970s and early 1980s, Irving's books had initially proposed an image of Hitler as a moderate and fair leader who aimed only at restoring Germany's power, while his assistants perpetrated

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<sup>17</sup> Udo Walendy wrote *Truth for Germany: The Guilt Question of the Second World War* (Torrance, Calif., 1981). He also translated into English and edited *Auschwitz im IG-Farben-Prozess: Holocaust-Dokumente?* (Vlotho/Weser, 1981).

<sup>18</sup> The transcript of the trial includes Leuchter's full report. Several shorter or updated versions were published in London and reprinted in the *Journal of Historical Review*. They were also available on the now-forbidden Zündel website.

criminal acts without his knowledge. While accepted by Faurisson and others as an asset to their movement, Irving did yet not share their vision regarding the genocide. Notwithstanding criticism from established historians (Martin Gilbert, Hugh Trevor-Roper, Gerald Fleming and Martin Broszat), he remained a part of the academic debate. Because of his status, he became the star of right-wing and neo-Nazi groups. But in the late 1980s, Irving crossed the line to Holocaust denial after reading and publishing Fred Leuchter's reports in his *Focal Point Publications*. On cross-examination, Irving accepted that his views about Hitler had indeed changed and that he was closer to Zündel's opinion than some of his writings indicated.

Pearson proved himself an efficient cross-examiner. He forced witnesses to admit their errors as well as their ignorance of historical facts and of technical matters. He also successfully linked witnesses to Zündel's antisemitism, anti-Zionism, to the White Power movement in North America, and neo-Nazism in Europe. The prosecutor exposed Zündel as an ardent Nazi, fully aware that he was publishing racist propaganda and an active promoter of Nazi ideology, regardless of historical truth. Pearson insisted that the discussion was not about securing a more authentic knowledge of history; rather, it concerned the dissemination of a political agenda regardless of its harm to society.

As for Christie, he did not attempt, as in the first trial, to argue principally for freedom of speech. Rather, his case centered on Zündel's belief that the Holocaust did not occur, that the camps were a postwar invention and that the number of Jewish dead was grossly exaggerated. Evidently for strategic reasons, he argued that these were "honest beliefs" and emphasized that the law protects opinions regardless of their accuracy.

After listening to the closing arguments, Judge Thomas instructed the jury at length, emphasizing that the question was not whether Zündel's beliefs revived Nazism but if he published books that he knew contained falsehoods. The jury convicted Zündel and he was sentenced to nine months in prison. Judge Thomas concluded: "It is not the Holocaust that was a fraud; Ernst Zündel is a fraud." An appeal was immediately filed.

The Court of Appeals for Ontario heard the case beginning in September 1989 and rejected the appeal in February 1990. Its decision confirmed the proper conduct of Zündel's second trial, including the use of judicial notice. Christie then introduced an appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada, which two years later on 27 August 1992 decided (in a vote of four against three) that the appeal of Ernst Zündel had merit. It found that section 181 of the Canadian criminal code was unconstitutional because it "infringes on the guarantee of freedom of expression" and that "the content of the communication is irrelevant." The majority emphasized that, at the time of its creation, this law was designed to prevent

“deliberate slanderous statements” but that to combat “propaganda or racism is to go beyond its history.” The court expressed concern about the wording of the law. It felt that the scope covered by the words “statements, tales or news” was ambiguous when it referred to historical and social speech. It also felt that the terminology “injury or mischief to a public interest” was vague and thus potentially applicable to too large a social or political group. Between the lines, the judgment seemed to question the need for protection from lies and falsehoods as long as physical force is not used.

In a lengthy and strongly worded statement, the dissenting opinion opposed every aspect of the judgment. It asserted that section 181 was precise enough for reaching its target—punishment of intentional lies and falsehoods used to harm specific groups. It also argued that the term “public interest” was sufficiently defined and thus the limitation imposed by the section was reasonable. Taking a wider perspective, the dissenters determined that the law had an important role in achieving social harmony: “A democratic society capable of giving effect to the Charter’s guarantees is one which strives towards creating a community committed to equality, liberty, and human dignity.” It held that “racism is a current and present evil in this country” and thus, section 181 played “a useful and important role in encouraging racial and social tolerance.” The dissenting opinion concluded that “where racial and social intolerance is fomented through the deliberate manipulation of people of good faith by unscrupulous fabrication, a limitation on the expression of such speech is rationally connected to its eradication.” As a consequence of the Court’s judgment, section 181 of the criminal code was declared as having “no force or effect.” In spite of some strong statements by the different courts concerning the repugnance of Zündel’s message and attitude, he was not actually convicted of the charges brought against him. While Zündel’s successful appeal ended the charges rendered against him under section 181, it was not the end of his legal problems.

## Epilogue

In March 1991, Zündel sponsored a neo-Nazi conference in Munich. German police broke it up, arrested Zündel and charged him with defaming “the memory of the dead” and “inciting racial hatred.” Because of the German laws aimed at Holocaust deniers, Zündel and his friends have been convicted on a regular basis. A few months later, Zündel was again convicted of inciting racial hatred for distributing a video “The Auschwitz Lie.” He was fined 12,600 Deutsche marks (approximately US \$6,000) and expelled from Germany. In 1993, Zündel formally requested Canadian citizenship. After a report by the Canadian Security Intel-

ligence Service (CSIS) found that Zündel was a “security risk,” the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration of Canada refused the request.

Then, in 1995, Sabina Citron—the initiator of the previous trials against Zündel—filed a private complaint at the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal against Zündel for defamatory libel and conspiracy to promote anti-Jewish hatred. The Toronto Mayor’s Committee on Community and Race Relations joined her, estimating that it had reasonable grounds to believe that Ernst Zündel was posting hate messages on his website, the “Zündelsite.” These messages were in direct violation of section 13(1) of the Canadian Human Rights Act (CHRA). This section forbids discrimination against persons or groups on the grounds of race, religion, national or ethnic origin, or sexual orientation by telephonic dissemination of messages that are likely to expose a person or persons to hatred or contempt. The tribunal condemned Zündel for contravening the Canadian Human Rights Act and ordered him to stop using the Internet for promoting hate. It pointed out that the Internet cannot be a place where hate is uncontrolled and unpunished.<sup>19</sup>

The Zündel trials transpired in the new legal environment created by the promulgation of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982), which set out to balance the rights of individuals with those of society. The Charter also sought equilibrium between the rights of minority and majority groups—a particularly crucial issue in Canada, where the official policy of multiculturalism is seen as the center of national identity. Thus, the legal decision on hate literature embodied in these trials was an important test for the courts, for Canadian society, and the self-image that Canadians want to maintain. In the international arena, Canada has always seen itself as a prime protector and promoter of civil and political rights for individuals. Therefore, editorialists and jurists like Alan Borovoy (general counsel of the Canadian Civil Liberties Association) voiced concern during the trials that Canada might restrain civil liberties within its borders and thus create a discrepancy between its domestic actions and its international stand.

The basic concern has been that while it may be reasonable to desire a ban against extreme opinions and hatred, any such laws would equally impair the legitimate expression of dissenting views. Furthermore, once the principle of intervention and control is established, it will be applied to subsequent cases, some far removed from any expression of racial or religious hatred. Basic human rights will be jeopardized: the voices of strikers, demonstrators, anarchists and, of course, all forms of artistic or aesthetic endeavors will be bent to the “will of the majority.” Heated questions like gay rights, abortion, or violence against women

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<sup>19</sup> The full text of the judgement can be found on [http://www.chrt\\_tcdp.gc.ca/decisions/docs/citron\\_e.htm](http://www.chrt_tcdp.gc.ca/decisions/docs/citron_e.htm).

are seen as areas where laws against hate literature could easily be abused to silence one side or the other.

One disturbing aspect of this position is the assertion that words alone cannot provoke harm. While linguists reach new conclusions about the impact of language on reality, western legislators seem able to recognize and act only against *physical evidence* of wrongdoing or in terms of narrow definitions of personal defamation. Verbal violence against a corporate group, like hate literature against a minority, seems to be outside their designation of harmful enterprise.

This prompted noted law professor Irwin Cotler to observe that the Charter of Rights and Freedoms has emerged as a paradoxical weapon: designed to protect minorities from hate-mongers, it ends up being used by the latter in court to protect their message of hate from being suppressed.<sup>20</sup> If legislation on hate literature becomes, in practice, more a shield for racism than a sword against hate, its opponents and proponents will have reversed their roles. Furthermore, Professor Cotler placed the discussion in the larger frame of human rights and their protection. Indeed, hate propaganda is more than just a legal question but an assault on human dignity and basic human rights as well as social peace.

## The Press

At Zündel's first trial the press handled its reportage in a problematic fashion. The headlines were particularly provocative, presented in a journalistic style designed to grab readers' attention. For more than a month, these headlines simply repeated the most outrageous statements in order to attract attention, without offering an opposing view. The sensationalist trend was quite disturbing because it occurred almost daily for at least two months.<sup>21</sup>

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**20** Irwin Cotler, *Nuremberg Forty Years Later: The Struggle against Injustice in Our Time* (Montreal, 1995), 223. Cotler is a professor of law at McGill University, and since 1999, a member of Canada's parliament, serving for a time as Minister of Justice.

**21** A survey of the *Globe and Mail*, the nationally distributed newspaper of the financial and political establishment, reveals the following headlines: "Lawyer For Zündel Tries to Stop Jews from Being Jurors" (9 Jan. 1985); "Can't Reveal Freemasonry Data, Policeman Testifies at Zündel Trial" (15 Jan.); "Holocaust Scholar Quoted 'Madman', Publishing Trial Told" (17 Jan.). Other newspaper headlines followed the same pattern: "Nazi Camp Survivor Wrong on Death, Trial Told" (*Toronto Star*, 12 Jan.); "Freemasons not 'Satanic,' Officer Tells Holocaust Trial" (*Toronto Star*, 15 Jan.) "Expert's Admission: Some Gas Death 'Facts' Nonsense" (*Toronto Sun*, 17 Jan.), "Science 'Has Not Proved' Gas Use" (*Toronto Sun*, 18 Jan.); "No Scientific Proof Jews Gassed, Trial Told" (*Toronto Star*, 18 Jan.) "Genocide A Myth, Jury Told" (*Vancouver Sun*, 6 Feb.) "Nazi

Once the trial ended, the Canadian media offered a flurry of articles and almost unanimously expressed repulsion for Zündel's ideas, highlighting the potential danger of hate propaganda for Canadian multiculturalism. The discussion concentrated mostly on the appropriateness of using the courts to fight racism and the need for more education on the history of World War II and the Holocaust. The media now took the opportunity to present historical facts in a more serious fashion. For a few weeks, especially in their larger weekend issues, newspapers commented extensively on the trial and condemned Zündel's position.

The press eventually reached an informal consensus that the trials had indeed given Zündel a platform for disseminating his dangerous ideas. Frank Jones, a columnist for the *Toronto Star*, wrote on 1 March 1985

Quietly, like a thief in the night, the insidious ideas of Zündel and his gang have sneaked their way into the consciousness of the young who may not know better and into the minds of some of their elders grasping for any straw to justify their prejudice.

Editorials expressed the fear that harm had been done to Canada's social fabric and the principles of multiculturalism.

A lingering question remains: Did the trials actually promote antisemitism and racial tension in Canada? This issue was examined by Gabriel Weimann and Conrad Winn (*Hate on Trial: The Zündel Affair, the Media and Public Opinion in Canada*) who studied the reaction in the press and the public immediately after the first trial, particularly whether it had increased antisemitism. In an elaborate statistical analysis, the authors came to several conclusions. First, except for Quebec, the public was well aware of the trials and the issues and had not gravitated toward Zündel's viewpoint. The authors speculated upon the reasons for this phenomenon. One factor may have been that the people most susceptible to Zündel's arguments did not follow the news closely. For those freer from prejudice and more attuned to the press, the trial reinforced their stand as well as their knowledge of the Holocaust. As Weimann and Winn noted, "the trial seems to have reduced prejudices against Jews in a European context but not to have affected prejudices against Jews" in Canada.<sup>22</sup> The more revealing conclusion is that the trial made people who were normally sympathetic towards Jews more aware of those with doubts about the Holocaust. Consequently, there was a

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Gas Chambers Unproven, Court Told" (*Vancouver Sun*, 7 Feb.). Even the *Canadian Jewish News* did not escape the trend. Its headlines read: "Witness: Good Food, Theater, Pool At Auschwitz" (21 Feb.); and, "No Nazi Genocide Policy, Defendant Tells Court" (28 Feb. 1985).

<sup>22</sup> Weimann and Winn, *Hate on Trial*, 163.

common perception that Holocaust denial is spreading in society. While stating that the trial had made them personally less prone to anti-Jewish reactions, many respondents thought that its “climate” made their neighbors more susceptible to antisemitic attitudes. The survey found that anti-Jewish prejudice and ignorance of Jewish issues were still a problem in Canada. On the other hand, it demonstrated that

Large numbers of Canadians were knowledgeable and unprejudiced in the Western provinces,... university graduates, especially women, were almost devoid of prejudice.

More negatively, it showed that young people were “strikingly ignorant of the Holocaust and were twice as inclined as people in their middle years to blame Jews for their victimization.”<sup>23</sup>

Much of Holocaust denial literature relies on the myth of a *Judeo-Masonic conspiracy* aimed at global control and the enslavement of the non-Jewish world. The deniers add that the rest of the world will see the dark design only after the conspirators reach their goals. They insist that religious and moral forces must unite in an all-encompassing fight of light against darkness, ethics against immorality, freedom against slavery, and Christianity against Judaism.

This antisemitic conspiracy theory allows every event to be set in an all-encompassing universal context. The media and entertainment industry are allegedly targeted by Jews because they are a means to control public opinion and break the moral fiber of the nation. Thus, the Jews are also able to silence any voice of opposition that sought to reveal the truth about their machinations. With this conspiracy theory, deniers like Zündel could fit all of their arguments into a distorted, preexisting explanation of history. Within the system, everything was clear; from outside of the system, everything became fantasy. Typically, deniers construct history backwards, forming premises for conclusions they have already accepted. For example, they argue that since the Zionists sought to create a Jewish state, they needed support among the Western powers. But because that support did not exist, the Jews invented a reason to induce sympathy. Specifically, they had fabricated a story of genocide to compel the West to offer support. To generate the illusion of a genocide, they had to provoke a world war. This was achieved by causing Germany’s ruin in two ways: first, the humiliating armistice conditions imposed after the defeat in World War I, followed by the Great Depression. The Jews had earlier instigated World War I to ensure Germany’s defeat in 1918. In this reading of history, 1948 explains the Second World War, which explains 1929, which explains 1918, and so on.

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 163–64.



In their description of World War II, the Holocaust deniers repeatedly claimed that it was a *defensive* war against “belligerent Jews” who were trying to enslave Europe. The Germans, with their strong link to “Aryan” roots, were simply the first to recognize the danger.

Deniers like Zündel have consistently painted the Germans as the *victims* of calumny, forced to carry the blame for crimes they did not commit and to pay damages for losses that never occurred. In reality, it is the Jews who should be required to pay for the suffering they relentlessly inflicted upon Germany. As the principal (if unrecognized) aggressor against Nazi Germany, the Jews were responsible for all war damages. Hence, Zündel and other deniers present their actions as a response to Jewish persecution and their fight as a crusade to defend innocent victims.

## Conclusion

Holocaust deniers have long been adept at attracting media interest and public attention. Like David Irving in England, Ernst Zündel seemed to savor legal proceedings. The courtroom kept him in the public eye, perpetuating an image of a “martyr for truth” persecuted by Jewish lobbyists and their acolytes. Trials also helped him to collect funds for legal and illegal activities. This, of course, raises some troubling questions about the use of the legal system as a tool for hate propaganda. This problem confronts all democracies and there is no simple solution. The issue is not really “freedom of speech,” as many fringe groups would have us believe but the abuse of the judicial system as part of a media circus. Most of Zündel’s and Irving’s antics happened before or during legal proceedings; once the verdict is in, their voices seem to fade. They reclaim the position of “victim” only at the next trial.

One might wonder why public ridicule, scorn, and humiliation do not deter “revisionists” and other fringe groups. They seem to seek the largest possible audiences, regardless of the negative reactions they may face. The answer is found in a simple calculation. If a revisionist can reach 100,000 listeners through a radio broadcast, and if he gains the interest of only one-half of one thousandth, this still represents fifty potential candidates for indoctrination. Even with the scorn of the remaining 99,950, this would still be construed as a great success. Hence, there may have been a kernel of truth in Zündel’s boast that the million free dollars in advertising guaranteed him “victory” regardless of the verdict in the trial. Furthermore, the trials reinforced his status in the far Right milieu, and thus helped to raise funds for the cause and for himself.

Moreover, in his quest for exposure, Zündel effectively used the power of the Internet. Like several other extreme political groups, he quickly realized that the worldwide web could bypass national legislation and allow the transmission of controversial and, indeed, heinous messages with impunity. The legal system reacted slowly, but new legislation is now in place in Germany, Britain, France, and some other countries that prohibits the dissemination of Holocaust revisionism. The question of cross-border transmission on the Internet remains firmly on the agenda of the legal system.

“Revisionist” discourse has consistently tried to undermine the dignity of the Jewish people and to legitimize the emergence of open antisemitism. It may be condemned as extremist and racist, but it has nonetheless generated questions about the role and the morality of Jews in other areas—as demonstrated by the unceasing attacks against Israel in the media. Holocaust deniers like Zündel systematically accused the Jews of today of carrying out the same crimes as did the Nazis. Using a fabrication like the *Protocols*, he focused his hate propaganda against the so-called “Jewish conspiracy” to dominate the world.

Zündel predicted in *The West, War and Islam* that a new Holocaust was on the horizon. He wrote that a Jewish conspiracy threatened the enslavement of the Arabs and called for a radical response. This included the glorification of Hitler and the presentation of the German people as victims. Obscuring the systematic extermination of the Jews and other “non-Aryans” remains a prerequisite for the rebirth of Nazism as a viable ideology and a political alternative. Once this is done, as Zündel advocated since the beginning of his career, neo-Nazis and antisemites in general can think about how to complete the “Final Solution” that they deny ever existed.

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Milton Shain and Margo Bastos

## Muslim Antisemitism and Anti-Zionism in Postwar South Africa<sup>1</sup>

One of the fundamental goals of apartheid was the social and intellectual separation of South Africa's so-called racial groups—Africans, “Colored,” Indians, and whites. Although the first three groups, generally lumped together as “blacks,” interacted with whites in the workplace, in domestic work arrangements, and in other informal settings, they never engaged seriously in the normal social sense. Thus the Muslim community, residing mainly (although not exclusively) in the Western Cape region, was far removed from its “white” neighbors.<sup>2</sup> Rigid separation between Muslims and white South Africans, including Jews, began to erode only in the late 1980s.<sup>3</sup> Socioeconomic boundaries continue to exist; it will take decades to erode that informal but almost hermetic veil. One major change, however, is that a public platform is now afforded to all voices and viewpoints, including those of the Muslim population. During the 1990s, an articulate (and for some, disturbing) voice of Islam began to be heard by more and more South Africans.

Shortly after its formation in 1996, a Muslim vigilante movement known as People against Gangsterism and Drugs (PAGAD) made international news when a well-known Cape Town gangster, Rashaad Staggie, was shot, doused with gasoline, and burned alive in front of hundreds of onlookers.<sup>4</sup> Similar militancy was evident at a number of anti-Israel and anti-Zionist protests held in the 1990s, where “one Zionist, one bullet,” was the common refrain—echoing the well-known Pan-Africanist Congress slogan, “one settler, one bullet.” For whites in general and for Jews in particular, the sight of placard-waving Muslims, many in kaffiyahs, conjured up images of Iran, Algeria, and the West Bank and gave

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1 Our thanks to Abdulkader Tayob for his thoughtful comments. Needless to say, the opinions and conclusions offered here are those of the authors alone.

2 South African Muslims, mostly Sunni, numbered 553,585 (1.4 percent of the total population) in the 1996 census. Muslims were considered part of the “Colored” population; they are the descendants of 17th-century political prisoners brought to the Cape from Indonesia—ex-slaves, 19th-century immigrants, and the offspring of black/white miscegenation. See Ebrahim Moosa, “Islam in South Africa,” in *Living Faiths in South Africa*, ed. Martin Prozesky and John de Gruchy (Cape Town, 1995).

3 See John Kane-Berman, *South Africa's Silent Revolution* (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1990).

4 See *Cape Times*, 5 Aug. 1996.

rise to a perception that Muslim fundamentalism was on the rise. To some extent this perception was accurate, since South African Muslim militancy also reflected worldwide developments. At present, there is both greater animosity toward the Jewish State and increased antisemitism. However, it would be incorrect to assume that Muslim–Jewish cordiality characterized the past. Rather, the geography of apartheid, coupled with state repression and the relatively insular and non-confrontational character of the conservative Muslim elite,<sup>5</sup> was what once enabled Jews to feel a false sense of harmony with South African Muslims.<sup>6</sup>

Generally ignored by the white and Jewish media, Muslims in South Africa had long expressed anti-Zionist feelings; as early as 1925, the *Muslim Outlook* had criticized “Jewish capitalists” for allegedly forcing Arab peasants off the land.<sup>7</sup> Whereas the white-owned and Eurocentric media sympathized wholeheartedly with the Jewish state from its establishment in 1948, Muslims viewed the new-found state as a catastrophe<sup>8</sup> and castigated Israeli military victories against Arab forces as barbaric.<sup>9</sup> Sharing in the humiliation of their “brothers and sisters,” South African Muslims used “Zionism” as a term of opprobrium and perceived Israel as an aggressor state.<sup>10</sup> Muslim expressions of frustration and anger, however, rarely entered the public (that is, white) domain.

But by the time Israeli forces occupied southern Lebanon in 1982, a new generation of Muslims had begun to challenge its more conservative elders. Inspired by new radical teachings and by the African student uprising in Soweto in 1976,

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5 Muslim politics in the 1950s and 1960s revolved mainly around issues of Orthodoxy. See Abdulkader Tayob, *Islamic Resurgence in South Africa* (Cape Town, 1995), ch. 2.

6 The historiography of South African Jewry has, by and large, ignored Muslim–Jewish relations. Among the exceptions are Gideon Shimoni’s “South African Jews and the Apartheid Crisis,” *American Jewish Year Book* 88 (1988): 3–58; which made use of interviews of prominent Muslims, conducted by Tzippi Hoffman and Alan Fischer, in idem, eds., *The Jews in South Africa: What Future?* (Johannesburg, 1988). For more recent coverage on Muslim attitudes toward Jews, see Jocelyn Hellig, *Anti-Semitism in South Africa Today* (Tel Aviv: Project for the Study of Anti-Semitism, 1996), and Milton Shain, “Antisemitism and South African Society: The Past, the Present, and the Future,” inaugural lecture, University of Cape Town, 1998.

7 *Muslim Outlook*, 18 Apr. 1925.

8 See Muhammed Haron, “The *Muslim News* (1960–1986): Expression of an Islamic Identity in South Africa,” in *Muslim Identity and Social Change in Sub-Saharan Africa*, ed. Louis Brenner (London, 1993), 222.

9 See, for example, the article titled “Barbarity of the Jews,” which appeared in the *Muslim News*, 14 July 1967 (“1948 and 1967 show that despite centuries of wandering in Europe [the Jews] have not lost their barbaric tendencies which previously incurred the wrath of God”). See also *ibid.*, 28 July 1967.

10 See, for example, *Muslim News*, 28 July 1967; Tayob, *Islamic Resurgence in South Africa*, 85.



and buttressed by Khomenism and the international Muslim struggle against imperialism, younger Muslims increasingly rejected the more accommodating behavior of the Muslim establishment. Historically, many of the Muslim elite had identified with the white ruling class, taking refuge in a self-defined sense of religious and cultural superiority.<sup>11</sup> Notwithstanding, “progressive” Islamic groups also existed, some of them dating back to the 1950s: in the Transvaal, there was the Young Men’s Muslim Association (1955) and the Universal Truth Movement (1958); in Natal, the Arabic Study Circle (1950) and the Islam Propagation Centre International (1957); and in the Western Cape, the Cape Muslim Youth Movement (1957) and the Claremont Muslim Youth Association (1958).<sup>12</sup>

In the Transvaal and Natal, the emphasis was on promoting wider understanding of Islam. In the Cape, however, Islamic groups were far more political. For instance, the *Islamic Mission*, a newsletter sponsored by the Claremont Muslim Youth Association, serialized the anti-state writings of Abdul A’la Mawdudi (1903–1979) and Sayyid Qutb (1906–1966).<sup>13</sup> The fortnightly *Muslim News*, together with other Muslim publications, increasingly vilified Zionist “intrusion” and focused attention on “the tragedy of Palestine,” regularly displaying photos of Israeli soldiers attacking Arab children and eyewitness accounts of “Israeli atrocities.”<sup>14</sup> Significantly, local Muslims were also warned about “Zionist designs.” Readers were implored to avail themselves of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and to familiarize themselves with its contents.<sup>15</sup>

Among the prominent anti-apartheid activists in the Cape was a cleric, Imam Abdullah Haron, who had a profound influence on South African Muslims.<sup>16</sup> Yet his death in police custody in 1969 was met with silence on the part of the Muslim clergy, and this in turn left younger Muslims feeling betrayed and disillusioned.<sup>17</sup> The search began for a “socially relevant Islam,” as epitomized in the formation

11 See Farid Esack, *Qur’an, Liberation and Pluralism* (Oxford, 1997), 20.

12 See Tayob, *Islamic Resurgence*, 82–83. The Claremont Muslim Youth Association was initially part of Call of Islam, a short-lived umbrella group of Muslims who opposed the Group Areas Act. See Farid Esack, “Three Islamic Strands in the South African Struggle for Justice,” *Third World Quarterly* 10, no. 2 (1988): 473–98.

13 See Tayob, *Islamic Resurgence*, ch. 3; and Desmond Charles Rice, “Islamic Fundamentalism as a Major Religiopolitical Movement and its Impact on South Africa” (M.A. thesis, University of Cape Town, 1987), 438–52.

14 See, for example, *Muslim News*, 23 Aug. 1963, 22 May 1964, and 22 Sept. 1968.

15 *Muslim News*, 10 Apr. 1971.

16 See Rice, “Islamic Fundamentalism,” 452.

17 See Esack, *Qur’an, Liberation and Pluralism*, 52. See also the interview with Abdurrashid Omar in Hoffman and Fischer, *Jews in South Africa*, 143–49.

of the Muslim Youth Movement in 1970 and the Muslim Students Association in 1974.<sup>18</sup> A range of Islamic activities was increasingly coordinated and guided by what was understood to be an authentic modern Islamic paradigm that, while not focusing on apartheid, did not entirely ignore it.<sup>19</sup> In calling for an “Islamic way of life,” groups such as the Muslim Youth Movement “reflected the black consciousness movement’s appeal to an authentic black identity in South Africa.”<sup>20</sup>

Although substantial opposition to the new Islamism persisted, particularly among those consolidating Deobandi thought in the Transvaal and in Natal, “progressive” forces did have an impact.<sup>21</sup> On occasion, the state even intervened, several times banning the publication of anti-Zionist articles in the *Muslim News*.<sup>22</sup> Muslim militancy was particularly evident in the wake of the United Nations resolution of 1975 that equated Zionism with racism, which was hailed as a victory for the Palestine Liberation Organization and a defeat for the United States and Israel.<sup>23</sup> By the late 1970s, a Palestine Islamic Solidarity Committee had been established in Durban and the Muslim Youth Movement had embarked on an Islamic campaign that included study programs, camps, and manuals.<sup>24</sup> The material for these programs, much of it provided by Islamic groups abroad, targeted Zionism, secularism, capitalism, and Communism as the major threats to Islam.<sup>25</sup>

Added impetus to South African Muslim militancy was provided by the success of the Iranian revolution in 1979. In its wake, the writings of Ali Shari’ati (1933–1977) and the Ayatollah Khomeini were included on Muslim Youth Movement reading lists. Although Iran was not seen as a model for South African Muslims, a group called Qibla was founded in 1980 that was patently inspired by the overthrow of the Shah. “Islamic Revolution in South Africa” became a popular slogan in Cape Town. Meanwhile, Muslim demonstrations against Israel and Zionism at the University of Cape Town and the University of the Witwatersrand

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18 Esack, *Qur’an, Liberation and Pluralism*, 33. For a detailed examination of the Muslim Youth Movement, see Tayob, *Islamic Resurgence*.

19 Tayob, *Islamic Resurgence*, ch. 4, esp. 118–19.

20 Ibid., 122.

21 Ibid., ch. 4.

22 See Haron, “The *Muslim News* (1960–1986),” 222–23.

23 See, for example, *Muslim News*, 28 Nov. 1975; interview with Ibraheem Mousa in Hoffman and Fischer, *Jews in South Africa*, 171–74.

24 On the Islamic Solidarity Committee, see Haron, “The *Muslim News* (1960–1986),” 223.

25 See Tayob, *Islamic Resurgence*, 140.

(following the Sabra and Shatilla massacres in Lebanon in 1982) revealed the extent of anti-Zionism among younger South African Muslims.<sup>26</sup>

In 1983, the ruling National Party drafted a new constitution that granted limited political representation and the right to vote to “Coloreds” and to Indians. Muslims were included in the proposed franchise (Africans—some 70 percent of the population—were not). The proposed constitution, which came up for a vote in November 1983, was opposed by a broad coalition of groups that urged a boycott. Even the conservative Muslim Judicial Council, the largest representative body of imams and sheiks in the Western Cape, refused to support the National Party’s initiative.

The nascent Muslim consensus concerning a “no-vote” on the constitution crumbled, however, with the formation of the United Democratic Front (UDF), an umbrella organization that included not only non-Muslim groups but also Communists, “amoral” secularists, and Zionists.<sup>27</sup> The inclusive nature of the UDF presented a fundamental challenge to Muslims.<sup>28</sup> For a short period the Muslim Judicial Council, almost by default, affiliated itself with the UDF, as did Al Jihad, a small, self-styled Shia group. The Muslim Youth Movement, however, denounced it, while Qibla expressed opposition to its absence of revolutionary ideology. Even the *Muslim News* saw the UDF as “ideology-less” and “dangerous.” According to an article in the paper: “This is the WCC [World Council of Churches] cum Zionist and Stalinist politics which the MJC is playing at. This is not the ‘Call of Islam,’ it is the call of the Shaytaan [Satan] to take the oppressed of this country to a solution [from] Washington and Moscow.”<sup>29</sup> Affiliation with the UDF, for many, was tantamount to selling out Muslim identity.

The *ulama*, the conservative Muslim clergy, was also opposed to the UDF. As Farid Esack notes, the *ulama* had a well-established *modus vivendi* with the apartheid state, seeking

to avoid *fitnah* (disorder), to obey the political authorities, to identify with the lesser of the two evils (i.e., with apartheid rather than communism) and to hold on to the known, in this

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<sup>26</sup> See *Varsity: Official Student Newspaper of the University of Cape Town* 41, no. 9 (Aug. 1982).

<sup>27</sup> The UDF was essentially an internal wing of the then-banned African National Congress, whose leaders at the time were in exile.

<sup>28</sup> See Abdulkader I. Tayob, “Muslims’ Discourse on Alliance against Apartheid,” *Journal for the Study of Religion* 3, no. 2 (Sept. 1990): 31–47; and Esack, “Three Islamic Strands.”

<sup>29</sup> *Muslim News*, 13 July 1984, cited in Tayob, “Muslims’ Discourse on Alliance against Apartheid,” 38–39.

case, sexist and exclusivist clerical theology, rather than the unknown of communitarian theological reflections on the Qur'anic text.<sup>30</sup>

In essence, the UDF was seen as a threat to Islam; the conservative Muslim establishment was not prepared to see Christians, Jews, and the "Other" (however defined) as partners in its political struggle. Interfaith solidarity was considered sinful, harboring the potential, in the words of Adil Bradlow, to "reduce Islam to the level of a religion in the western sense of the word."<sup>31</sup>

Bradlow argued that affiliation with the UDF would "prevent the presentation of Islam [to the oppressed] as the major liberating power" and would be "tantamount to an act of *shirk* [polytheism], associating others with Allah, for He Alone is 'Sovereign.'"<sup>32</sup> As Esack explains, such opposition to interfaith solidarity was rooted the notion that anything non-Islamic was, ipso facto, void of virtue, while any freedom outside the parameters of Islam was of no consequence.<sup>33</sup>

Notwithstanding, there were other Muslims who were determined to share in the anti-apartheid struggle with others, including Christians and Jews. This is not to say that they jettisoned the religious basis of their opposition to apartheid. Instead, building on a more humanistic and inclusive tradition—including the writings of Shari'ati and Taleqami (1910–1979)—these Muslims found justification for their views within Islam. In particular, leaders of the Call of Islam (established in 1984 by a breakaway group from the Muslim Youth Movement and the Muslim Students Association) represented a specifically South African Islamic face within the UDF. Their message, spread through mass rallies, pamphleteering, and involvement in political funerals, directly challenged the Muslim establishment.<sup>34</sup> One of their leaders, Ebrahim Rasool (Western Cape secretary of the UDF) argued that the UDF would "create the conditions whereby Muslims will take their rightful place in the struggle. It does not simply take an appeal from the Qu'ran to create revolutionaries among Muslims."<sup>35</sup> More significantly, Rasool and others advocating interfaith solidarity drew upon Islamic tradition and Qur'anic texts to

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30 Esack, *Qur'an, Liberation and Pluralism*, 254.

31 Adil Bradlow, "United Democratic Front: An Islamic Critique" (1984), 9, cited in Esack, *Qur'an, Liberation and Pluralism*, 41. See also Ebrahim Moosa, "Muslim Conservatism in South Africa," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 69 (1989): 79.

32 Bradlow, cited in Esack, *Qur'an, Liberation and Pluralism*, 41.

33 Ibid., 41.

34 Although the Muslim Youth Movement also took an anti-apartheid stance, it did not align itself with any political movement.

35 Quoted in "Muslims Mobilize," *New Era* (Mar. 1988), cited in Esack, *Qur'an, Liberation and Pluralism*, 34.

legitimize their stance. “The Qu’ran makes it clear that non-Muslims per se are not our enemy,” Rasool argued. “[Enemies] of Islam must be defined by the way in which they undermine Islamic values. Values like justice.”<sup>36</sup>

In debates concerning interfaith solidarity, however, the position of the “Other,” including the Jew, proved most contentious. While it would be wrong to suggest that there was an obsession with the presence of Jews, the Zionist question did complicate attitudes. By the 1980s, “progressive” South Africans shared a powerful mood of Third World anticolonialism. Within this framework the illegitimacy of Zionism was an important component, especially given South Africa’s close technological, scientific, and military ties with the Jewish state, which dated back to the mid-1970s.<sup>37</sup>

Qibla capitalized on this mindset in its opposition to the UDF. Describing the organization as Zionist-controlled and operating at the behest of the international Jewish financial conspiracy, Qibla was able to tap into a deep-rooted anger that identified Zionism as the “citadel of imperialism.” Indeed, for some observers, Jewish and Zionist manipulation was responsible for apartheid.<sup>38</sup> The Muslim press regularly wrote about international financial machinations centered on Zionism. Even local newspapers, noted Sheikh Nazeem Mohammed, president of the Muslim Judicial Council, were “controlled by the Jews.”<sup>39</sup> These conspiratorial ideas were taken further by Ibraheem Mousa, a journalist and academic, who spoke of Jews as being “in control of a large stash of economic power in South Africa.”<sup>40</sup> Even those Jews committed to the struggle against apartheid were never fully trusted. The majority of Jews, claimed Sheikh Mohammed, had “obviously thrown in their lot with the Afrikaners” and “identified themselves undoubtedly with the white people. There are those who are not aligned, but it has no effect on the entire Jewish community.”<sup>41</sup> Charitable endeavors on the part of Jewish institutions during times of crisis—for instance, following the destruction of shanties in Crossroads, a black township outside Cape Town—were also viewed with skepticism.<sup>42</sup>

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36 Interview with Ebrahim Rasool in Hoffman and Fischer, *Jews in South Africa*.

37 In 1976, Prime Minister B. J. Vorster came to Israel on a state visit that yielded technological, scientific, and military agreements between the two countries. See James Adams, *Israel and South Africa: The Unnatural Alliance* (London, 1984), 17.

38 See interview with Ebrahim Rasool in Hoffman and Fischer, *Jews in South Africa*.

39 See interview with Nazeem Mohammed, *ibid*.

40 See interview with Ibraheem Mousa, *ibid*.

41 See interview with Nazeem Mohammed, *ibid*.

42 See interview with Ebrahim Rasool, *ibid*.

In the late 1980s, Muslims in the “Colored” areas began to take part in mass demonstrations, with the result, according to the BBC, that “the streets of Cape Town resembled those of Tehran.”<sup>43</sup> Once Prime Minister Fredrick W. de Klerk lifted the ban on illegal organizations in February 1990, marches became even more common.<sup>44</sup> Bosnia, Kashmir, and “Palestine” were the main topics of protest, and both the U.S. and Israeli embassies were frequent targets of picketing.

In May 1990, the Call of Islam initiated a conference that attracted Islamic organizations from throughout the country.<sup>45</sup> Although there were some indications that more progressive positions were being accepted, even by critics of modern Islamic thought, a powerful strain of anti-state discourse persisted at the conference. Qibla continued to reject proposals for a negotiated settlement with the South African government. Its leader, Achmat Cassiem, also called for exclusivist Islamic unity in an appeal that attracted many conservative and radical Muslims.

The clearest indication of Islamic resurgence was the ongoing conflict between Jewish and Muslim students at the Universities of Cape Town and Witwatersrand. At a number of solidarity meetings for Bosnian Muslims, American and Israeli flags were burned.<sup>46</sup> Jews, notes Esack, “were invariably equated with blood-sucking Zionists, and Christians with imperialists.”<sup>47</sup> Shortly before South Africa’s first democratic elections in April 1994, Cassiem founded the Islamic Unity Convention, a movement that claimed to be a union of 200 groups, although in essence it was a “front for marginalized religious figures and a few small organizations who accept[ed] the pre-eminence of Qibla and its leader.”<sup>48</sup> Muslim unity was proclaimed a “cardinal article of faith,” and the community was implored to boycott the election. Although this call was ignored, the “pure Islamic solution” became increasingly attractive as a moral malaise swept post-apartheid South Africa.

A visit in May 1994 by Yasir Arafat kept the Middle East firmly in focus. Speaking in a mosque in Johannesburg, Arafat told South African Muslims that “jihad will continue.... [Y]ou have to fight and start the jihad to liberate Jerusalem, your

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43 Cited in Esack, “Three Islamic Strands,” 486.

44 See Esack, *Qur’an, Liberation and Pluralism*, 224.

45 See Tayob, *Islamic Resurgence*, 182–83.

46 See Allie A. Dubb and Milton Shain, “South Africa,” in *American Jewish Year Book* 94 (1994): 375.

47 Esack, *Qur’an, Liberation and Pluralism*, 225.

48 Farid Esack, “Pagad and Islamic Radicalism: Taking on the State?” *Indicator SA* 13, no. 14 (Spring 1996): 9.

sacred shrine.”<sup>49</sup> The following year, placards reading “Kill a Jew and Kill an Israeli” and “Jewish Blood” were displayed outside the Israeli embassy in Cape Town.<sup>50</sup> At an international Muslim conference titled “Creating a New Civilisation of Islam,” held in Pretoria in April 1996, speakers referred to Jews as a powerful economic force and blamed Zionists for all of society’s evils. A few months later, anti-Israel and antisemitic mailings were received by the Union of Orthodox Synagogues in Cape Town. These condemned “Nazionist barbarity” and quoted the Qur’an: “Strongest among men in enmity to the believers wilt thou [Mohammed] find the Jews and the pagans.”<sup>51</sup>

It was in this context that PAGAD, a Qibla-inspired movement, emerged.<sup>52</sup> Against a background of unemployment and poverty and the breakdown of law and order in the aftermath of apartheid, Muslims began to participate in marches to the homes of known drug dealers. PAGAD, however, also had a more explicit political platform, as evidenced by its flaunted ties with Hamas and Hizbollah. According to Esack, such ties were expressions of identification with the Muslim community worldwide (the ummah). It was also indicative of a powerful anti-Zionism that constantly drew parallels between the former apartheid state and Israeli oppression of Palestinians.<sup>53</sup>

In January 1997, following a bombing in a mosque in Rustenburg, members of the Muslim community accused the Mossad of responsibility. A month later, Qibla led a vociferous march on the Israeli embassy, culminating in the usual Israeli flag-burning. A similar march took place in Johannesburg, organized by the Islamic Unity Convention. On the eve of Yom Kippur that year, Muslims held pro-Hamas demonstrations outside a Pretoria mosque and placed a full-page advertisement in the Pretoria News criticizing the newspaper’s “biased and one-sided version of events in the Middle East.”<sup>54</sup> An incident in Hebron (in which a Jewish extremist distributed posters depicting Mohammed as a pig) led to heated

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49 See Milton Shain, “South Africa,” *American Jewish Year Book* 96 (1996): 357.

50 “South Africa,” *Antisemitism World Report 1996* (London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research and American Jewish Committee, 1996), 311.

51 “South Africa,” *Antisemitism World Report 1997* (London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research and American Jewish Committee, 1997), 356.

52 See Esack, “Pagad and Islamic Radicalism,” 9.

53 Ibid., 10. In 1996, there were reports that Hamas delegates were planning to meet with key South African politicians. Although the report later turned out to be erroneous, further reports that Hamas had training camps in South Africa were treated seriously (though never confirmed) by the national unity government led by the African National Congress. See Milton Shain, “South Africa,” *American Jewish Year Book* 97 (1997): 419.

54 See Milton Shain, “South Africa,” *American Jewish Year Book* 98 (1998): 402.



protests in Pretoria and Cape Town. Shortly thereafter, a home that housed a Jewish book center in Cape Town was firebombed, and phone threats were made against a Jewish home for the elderly and a synagogue. Although Imam Rashied Omar, the vice president of the World Conference on Religion and Peace, issued a condemnation, the Muslim Judicial Council kept its silence.

Tension between Muslims and Jews was exacerbated by the continued stalemate in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. When the mayor of the Cape Metropolitan Council, the Reverend William Bantom, was invited to attend an international mayoral conference in Israel in May 1998, Muslim organizations (supported by the African National Congress provincial caucus) pressured him not to go. Israeli jubilee celebrations in Cape Town that month were marred by Muslim protestors, led by Qibla, who shouted "One Zionist, one bullet" and "Viva Hizbollah and Hamas."<sup>55</sup> In an exchange of letters to the *Cape Times*, Sheikh Achmat Sedick, the secretary general of the Muslim Judicial Council, condemned South African participation in the jubilee; Seymour Kopelowitz, the national director of the Jewish Board of Deputies, countered that anti-Israel demonstrations were "clearly aimed at South African Jews and not towards people living many thousands of miles away in the Middle East."<sup>56</sup>

South Africa's refusal to issue a visa to Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, spiritual leader of Hamas, sparked another round of protests.<sup>57</sup> In a telephone interview from Kuwait that was broadcast on a Cape Town Muslim radio station, Yassin denounced all Zionists as terrorists. Qibla protested against the government decision outside the gates of Parliament, and Sheikh Ebrahim Gabriels of the Muslim Judicial Council declared that Muslims "did not recognise the Israeli State which was founded illegally on Palestinian land."<sup>58</sup>

The radicalization of Islam in South Africa from the 1970s onwards was marked by a distinctly negative shift in Muslim attitudes toward South African Jews and by increasing public protest in line with the "normalization" of South African society in the 1990s. Such protest, it should be noted, took place in a conducive atmosphere: leaders of the African National Congress, whose links with the PLO dated back to their years in exile, continued to maintain close ties with

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<sup>55</sup> In addition, the Islamic Students Society at the University of Cape Town staged a protest opposite the Isaac and Jesse Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies and Research in order to mark the 50th anniversary of the *nakba* (catastrophe) that had befallen the Palestinian people in 1948. See "The Battle of Kaplan," *Iqraa*, 29 May 1998.

<sup>56</sup> *Cape Times*, 5 and 11 May 1998.

<sup>57</sup> An invitation had been issued to Yassin by two South African government ministers, Dullah Omar and Valli Moosa, who had met with the Hamas leader in Saudi Arabia in April 1998.

<sup>58</sup> See *SA Jewish Report*, 22 May 1998.



the organization in the post-apartheid era and fully supported the aspirations of the Palestinian people (although recognizing as well Israel's right to exist).<sup>59</sup> Notwithstanding, Muslim protests had a resonance beyond mere empathy for fellow Muslims in the Middle East.

The historic relationship between Jewish and Muslim South Africans incorporated within it the potential for conflict. Certainly in the Western Cape, some of the Muslim anger against Jews was underpinned by landlord–tenant relations in the inner city; by encounters within the textile industry (where Jews were prominent as employers and Muslims as workers); and, of course, by the general anger concerning white privilege with which Jews were understandably associated. As Ebrahim Rasool noted with regard to more recent times, “the Jewish community is also by and large the business community, the owners of the big shops, the factories. More often than not, our relationship with the Jewish community is one where we are around negotiating tables with them. Our workers striking at their factories and so forth.”<sup>60</sup>

A dialectical relationship thus operated between negative stereotyping that was rooted in historic encounters, radical teachings, and specific realities. This said, the most important factor influencing Muslim–Jewish relations in the last quarter-century is undoubtedly Zionism and the Jewish community's public and unequivocal support for Israel. Even without the historic ties between the apartheid state and Israel, tensions would have been unavoidable. Conflict, however, was ensured by the coincidence of the Pretoria–Jerusalem axis at the very time that liberation circles were framing their struggle in terms of an attack on global imperialism that was centered on the United States and Israel. By the 1980s, antisemitism—intimately linked to anti-Zionism—appeared to be deeply rooted. Taj Hargey, a Muslim academic, explained the connection in terms of an “incompetent clergy” that was unable to deal with Zionism intellectually and rationally and thus resorted to “sheer emotive” antisemitism. “So they go onto the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. They mention other scurrilous material, usually long noses, being stingy—the Shylock imagery of Jews.”<sup>61</sup>

One sees here a range of attitudes, a “cultural code,” to use Shulamit Volkov's terminology.<sup>62</sup> Volkov was referring to a cluster of ideas widely shared by Germans

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59 In this regard, it is noteworthy that Yasir Arafat was applauded when he equated Zionism with racism in an address he gave before the South African parliament in August 1998.

60 See interview with Ebrahim Rasool in Hoffman and Fischer, *Jews in South Africa*, 115.

61 See interview with Taj Hargey, *ibid.*, 155.

62 See Shulamit Volkov, “Antisemitism as a Cultural Code: Reflections on the History and Historiography of Antisemitism in Imperial Germany,” *Leo Baeck Year Book* 33 (1978): 25–46.

from the 1890s, including old-style nationalism, a conservative anti-emancipatory worldview, and antisemitism. In contrast, the Muslim cultural code incorporated anti-imperialism, a general rejection of Western liberalism, capitalism, and socialism, and a virulent anti-Zionism. In both the German and the South African cases, antisemitism was a shorthand label for a batch of ideas.

Given this package, it is easy to see the connections between anti-Zionism and antisemitism. Classic anti-Jewish motifs are often embedded in Muslim anti-Zionist discourse and propaganda. For some Muslim critics, Zionists are diabolically evil and hatred for Israel goes beyond the bounds of normal political conflict. Consider Achmed Deedat, author of *Arabs and Israel: Conflict or Conciliation?* (1989), who runs the Islamic Propagation Centre International in Durban. This is a well-funded organization, reportedly aided by the Bin Laden family, that for decades has disseminated anti-Hindu, anti-Christian, anti-Zionist, and antisemitic leaflets to thousands of households.<sup>63</sup> With regard to Jews, the emphasis is on power, cunning, and duplicity—themes that were underscored by Bernard Lewis in his attempt to unravel the nexus between antisemitism and anti-Zionism.<sup>64</sup> Here, as elsewhere, it is clear that South African Muslim hostility is not confined to anti-Zionism. At one march in Cape Town, for example, Darwood Khan, a member of the African National Congress regional executive, was heard shouting, “Hitler should have killed all the Jews.”<sup>65</sup>

The narrow line between anti-Zionism and antisemitism is also evident in Holocaust denial, which in recent years has made an appearance among the South African Muslim community. In March 1997, for instance, a program on a Qibla-oriented Muslim radio station in Cape Town suggested that the Holocaust was exaggerated and that the peace process in the Middle East was an American Zionist swindle.<sup>66</sup> A year later, the same radio station featured an interview with Yaqub Zaki, a British Muslim ideologue who claimed that the “million plus” Jews who died during the Second World War had succumbed to infectious disease. Zaki, spends much of his time engaged in elaborate speculation concerning Jewish conspiracies; for instance, that the Bolshevik Revolution was funded by the Jewish banking firm of Kuhn, Loeb, and Company; or that Woodrow Wilson was an adulterer whom Jews threatened to expose in order to promote

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<sup>63</sup> See *The Mercury*, 26 Sept. 1998; Shain, “South Africa,” *American Jewish Year Book* 97 (1997): 420; and Allie A. Dubb and Milton Shain, “South Africa,” *American Jewish Year Book* 92 (1992): 413.

<sup>64</sup> See Bernard Lewis, *Semites and Anti-Semites* (New York, 1986), 237.

<sup>65</sup> See Allie E. Dubb and Milton Shain, “South Africa,” *American Jewish Year Book* 95 (1995): 362.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

their nefarious goals; and that the Freemasons, controlled by Jewish financiers, were the force behind the Balfour Declaration, insisting that Communism and Zionism were opposite sides of the same coin. The ultimate insult was provided by the radio interviewer, who expressed hope that “tonight’s in-depth analysis of Zionism in Israel has cleared the opacity that there might have been with regard to what truth is and what falsity is.”<sup>67</sup>

There can be little doubt that Muslim-Jewish relations have deteriorated in the past three decades. On the one hand, the Muslim community should not be viewed as a monolith. As noted, various intellectual discourses can be heard within the community, some of them innovative and “progressive,” with an emphasis on Islamic humanism, universalism, and interfaith cooperation. On the other hand, all Muslim groups share a hostile critique of Zionism. In some cases this hostility is separated from antisemitism; in others, Zionism and Judaism are conflated into a combination that incorporates notions of international Jewish finance and imperialism.<sup>68</sup> This phenomenon was noted more than a decade ago by Farid Esack. “Nothing that the Jews do will be enough for Muslims,” he explained, when asked if Jews would be accepted by the Muslim community if they renounced all recognition and support for Israel.<sup>69</sup>

Esack’s depressing assessment still seems to hold. At one end are conservative Muslim forces, battered by the impact of democracy and liberalism, who seek an Islamic solution to their community’s problems—refusing to recognize the post-apartheid state even as they take advantage of South Africa’s newfound tolerance and freedom.<sup>70</sup> At the other end are the majority of Muslims who wish to accommodate Islam within the secular South African state.<sup>71</sup> The battle lines between these two stands are evident in the PAGAD phenomenon. Beginning with marches and action against criminals, the movement then moved into the terrain of punishing “religious gangsters.” In September 1998, the home of a progressive Islamic scholar, Ibraheem Mousa, was firebombed. This sort of action,

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<sup>67</sup> Interview with Yaqub Zaki, “Prime Talk,” 8 May 1998.

<sup>68</sup> For an analysis of this conflation beyond South Africa, see Joseph Nevo, “Zionism Versus ‘Judaism’ in Palestine Historiography,” in *Medieval and Modern Perspectives on Muslim-Jewish Relations*, ed. Ronald L. Nettle (Luxembourg, 1995).

<sup>69</sup> See interview with Farid Esack in Hoffman and Fischer, *Jews in South Africa*, 128.

<sup>70</sup> See Abdulkader I. Tayob, “Jihad against Drugs in Cape Town: A Discourse-Centered Analysis,” *Social Dynamics* 22, no. 2 (1996): 27–28.

<sup>71</sup> See Suren Pillay, “Globalization, Identity and the Politics of Good and Evil: Re-presenting Gangsters and Pagad” (M.A. thesis, University of the Western Cape, 1998), 3.

coupled with general threats and other forms of violence, generated a groundswell of feeling against PAGAD.<sup>72</sup>

The current lines of division appear to replicate those of the early 1980s: interfaith cooperation versus an “Islamic solution.” It is possible that those seeking cooperation with other faiths will gain the upper hand and rid the Muslim community of vigilantes who, in the final analysis, pose a serious threat to the very community they wish to protect. Attitudes toward the “Other” are embedded in this struggle. Should the accommodationists win, interfaith cooperation and the building of bridges between the Muslim and Jewish communities is a possibility. Jewish behavior, however, seems far less relevant in this equation. Muslim–Jewish relations in South Africa have been defined by processes largely beyond Jewish behavior or actions. Indeed, it is changes within the wider polity, both in the global and South African sense and in the specifically Muslim sense, that have in essence defined and informed Muslim attitudes and behavior.

## Epilogue

Given the emergence of Holocaust denial, together with the conspiratorial cast of mind, the opening of the Cape Town Holocaust Centre in 1999 posed an obvious challenge for Jameel McWilliams, a reporter from *Muslim Views*, who was amongst a group of reporters invited to an opening press briefing. Despite an attempt to be balanced in an article on the exhibition, McWilliams suggested underlying notions of Jewish culpability while hinting at Holocaust denial. Thus he explained that he was sorry more attention had not been devoted to the Weimar period, which he believed would have provided an understanding of Hitler’s actions. “The hyper-inflation is one [reason for the collapse of the Weimar republic and Hitler’s subsequent rise to power], because rightly or wrongly, the Jews were blamed for it.” While admitting to being moved by visuals of the death camps, McWilliams nevertheless argued that these camps were the subject of controversy. “A lively ‘numbers game’ has long been in play, and the exact purposes of the camps debated,” he noted. Nonetheless, McWilliams did acknowledge that “even if these things are disputed” the camps were “terrible places.”<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Between January and October 1998, there were 165 incidents of urban violence attributed to PAGAD. See *ibid.*, 99, n. 36; also see Farid Esack’s article, “Not Just the ‘Other’ but Ourselves,” *Cape Times*, 16 Sept. 1998.

<sup>73</sup> *Muslim Views* (Aug. 1999).

In a subsequent series of articles in *Muslim Views*, McWilliams made clear his real sentiments about the Holocaust. Global conspiracies, Zionist imperialism, Jewish dishonesty, and Holocaust denial all came to the fore. To be sure, McWilliams introduced “revisionist” historiography and questioned the sacred nature of the “six million” figure—a form of “Holy Writ” as he put it. For those wishing to face the “truth,” *The Myth of the Six Million* by Feygele Peltel Myendzizshetski; *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century* by Arthur Butz; *The Six Million Swindle* by Austin Joseph Rapp; and *Did Six Million Really Die?* by Richard Harwood were recommended.<sup>74</sup> Issues of hygiene in the camps were introduced for those reflecting upon the “legendary figure of six million Jews dead in the Holocaust,” and stress was placed on non-Jewish victims of the Nazis. “Auschwitz was crowded by people who had only the most basic idea of hygiene. The result was the spread of disease, especially typhus, which is caused by lice,” wrote McWilliams. “So how many really did die?” he asked:

Probably this can never be known with certainty, but it is an interesting fact that the Yar Vashim [sic] memorial in Jerusalem lists about one and a quarter million. What happened to the other four and three quarter million? Debunkers of the Six Million Myth, who describe it as the biggest hoax since the Donation of Constantine...generally concur that approximately one million Jews died in the camps from all causes.

If six million did indeed die in the camps, the probability is high that most of them were non-Jews.

McWilliams went on to explain that the furnaces at Auschwitz were necessary to burn dead bodies to prevent the spread of disease. “We are constantly reminded of the suffering of the Jews by the media, by Hollywood, particularly Steven Spielberg. But where is the evidence that the Germans gassed six million Jews? Was there even a deliberate policy of extermination by the Nazis of European Jewry?”<sup>75</sup>

As noted above, Holocaust denial is a form of antisemitism and intricately tied to the anti-Zionist struggle. Thus it is not surprising that McWilliams accused Zionists of creating a guilt syndrome and repeating “the ‘Six Million’ like a mantra, the chanting of which becomes more intense with the passing of time. It is now more than half a century since the camps were liberated and one would have expected voices to have been louder then rather than now. Could it have something to do with the desire and necessity to present Israel to the world as a legitimate state?”<sup>76</sup> In the final article in the series, McWilliams discussed the

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<sup>74</sup> *Muslim Views* (Nov. 1999).

<sup>75</sup> *Muslim Views* (Jan. 2000).

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

silence and skepticism of the Catholic Church with regard to the Holocaust as well as the use of the “Six Million” as a “red herring” to divert attention from Israeli “aggression” against the Palestinians. Regarding the Vatican, McWilliams suggested that the very silence of Pope Pius XII was an indication that the Holocaust never occurred. It was, he maintained, too big an operation to be conducted in secrecy and the Vatican “would have known about it and would have spoken out, but it didn’t.”

The nexus between Holocaust denial and anti-Zionism was again apparent when McWilliams claimed Zionists invariably justified “driving the Arabs out of Palestine” by reference to “the legend of the Six Million.” “But what is so special about the suffering of the European Jews?” he asked. “What about the rest of us who lived for five years under Nazi occupation? What about all the other inmates of the concentration camps who died in them, possibly outnumbering Jews by far? What about the three million plus who died in occupied Europe? One could go on and on and yet we are constantly bombarded by the media with reminders of Six Million.” In an attempt to consolidate his thesis, McWilliams noted that the “disgusting treatment which has been meted out to the Palestinian Arabs would cause an international outcry if indulged in by anyone other than the Zionists. But how often do we hear about Deir Yassin, Sabra and Shatilla, in which entire Arab villages were massacred?”<sup>77</sup>

Muslim anger and conspiratorial thinking in South Africa reached a new apogee just before and during the United Nations World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerances (WCAR) in Durban in August 2001. Aided by what was palpably huge international support, the occasion turned into “an extension of the Arab-Israeli conflict,” and an opportunity “to insert wording into draft resolutions portraying Israel and Zionism as racist and minimizing Jewish suffering and anti-Semitism.” South Africa was a tempting context in which to equate Zionism with racism, especially given apartheid South Africa’s ties with the Jewish State.<sup>78</sup>

Prior to the conference Cape Town witnessed a 15,000-strong Muslim march in Cape Town that brought the city to a halt. The group marched to parliament to protest against what they termed atrocities committed against the Palestinians by Israel. The march was clearly part of a build up to the UN conference and included banners proclaiming Zionism as Racism and Sharon as a war criminal. Hamas was praised in the united struggle against Zionism. Sheik Achmat Sedick, secretary general of the MJC, appealed to the South African government to restore

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<sup>77</sup> *Muslim Views* (Feb. 2000).

<sup>78</sup> *South African Jewish Report*, 13 July 2001.

the “Zionism is Racism” resolution to the agenda of the WCAR and called for South Africans to “take immediate action against Israel by breaking off all diplomatic and trade relations”<sup>79</sup>

It became obvious as the conference approached that it would be, in the words of the *SA Jewish Report* editorial, “A Jamboree of Hypocrisy.” Rather than dealing constructively with “the international scourge of racism” the gathering would be “a jamboree of resentment, hatred and narrow politics”, noted the Jewish weekly.<sup>80</sup> Shortly before the Conference the Jewish Board of Deputies lodged a strongly-worded complaint with the South African Non-Governmental Organization Coalition, the official coordinating body of South African NGOs, after several of its representatives visited the Palestinian territories in early July on a “fact finding mission” as guests of a pro-Palestinian group. The group declined to meet with Israeli officials and afterwards publicly attacked Israel, despite not having the right to make political statements on behalf of all South African NGOs.

Predictably the NGO Forum of the Conference lambasted Israel in an ugly display of venom and anti-Zionism. According to Lara Grawitz, the South African Union of Jewish Students Zionist Officer, “neutral” delegations were influenced by the Palestinian media campaign at the youth summit. Attempts to present a positive view of Zionism were drowned out by Palestinian conference-goers who pushed the equation of Zionism with Racism and Israel as an apartheid state. The Jewish case was rapidly sidelined.<sup>81</sup>

Although the conference was an international event, local Muslim groups threw in their lot with the anti-Zionist feeding frenzy. This was “anti-Semitism in the guise of anti-Zionism,” exclaimed Marlene Bethlehem, national president of the Jewish Board of Deputies, when commenting on the conference. Various other Jewish spokespersons condemned the charade. Judge Dennis Davis noted that the conference omitted the question of Israel’s security and instead replaced South Africa with Israel as an apartheid society. “The onslaught on Israel and the Jewish people is an absolute scandal and it is racism and anti-Semitism of the worst kind,” explained Mervyn Smith, former national president of the Jewish Board of Deputies. “It is a mobilization of sentiment that knows no emotional or hypocritical barriers.”<sup>82</sup>

The irony of a conference meant to combat racism and prejudice turning into a “hate-fest” was not lost on the *SA Jewish Report*. The result, it noted laconically,

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> *South African Jewish Report*, 3 Aug. 2001.

<sup>81</sup> *South African Jewish Report*, 14 Sept. 2001.

<sup>82</sup> *South African Jewish Report*, 31 Aug. 2001.

“has been to demonstrate how alive and potent one of the most ancient forms of racism—anti-Semitism—is, in that it can be spread by formal international bodies like the UN.”<sup>83</sup> “Radical Islam is on the march, and Israel has been identified as the ‘little Satan’ and lumped together with America, the ‘big Satan.’ Both are seen as enemies to be destroyed at all costs in a holy war,” noted the *SA Jewish Report* three weeks later.<sup>84</sup> The sale of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* at the conference, distributed through the Muslim-run Ahlul Bait Foundation of South Africa, confirmed this judgment.

Given the cast of mind evident at Durban, it is not surprising that, following the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and on the Pentagon, conspiratorial ideas were taken further by Muslim commentators. After the initial perfunctory condemnation of the attacks, *Muslim Views* declared with the use of familiar rhetoric that the occasion was a “defining moment for Muslims.” The United States was criticized for its “Islamophobic” reaction and accusatory claims were made against media coverage in the wake of the event. The “almost immediate naming of Bin Laden as chief suspect and Islamophobic reactions around the world,” was condemned and the United States was accused of polarizing the international community. Third World and Islamic countries were considered potential targets of United States retaliation. This would, explained *Muslim Views*, exacerbate conflict in the Middle East. While offering sympathy to the victims and their families, the MYM and MJC warned against “hasty conclusions, especially after the discovery of the true perpetrator of the Oklahoma bombing.” The Media Review Network, an Islamic group, merely expressed concern that “Muslim terrorists” would be unfairly blamed.

As the analysis continued, Muslims criticized television coverage for being dominated by CNN and local talk shows were accused of “displaying a fair level of ignorance and prejudice of Islam and Muslims.” No mention was made of the numbers killed in the attacks, although readers of *Muslim Views* were provided with a report from the Council on American-Islamic Relations stating that there had been three hundred attacks on Muslims in America and that the FBI had harassed American Muslims in a mosque. In short, the emphasis of Muslim comment was not on the horrific nature of the attack but rather on the repercussions for Muslims. Thus attacks on Muslims and racial profiling on airlines were the focus of comment; the FBI’s implication of 19 suspects with Middle Eastern names was questioned. According to *Muslim Views*, Western hysteria masked any realization of the “real reason that America was attacked” and stopped any

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<sup>83</sup> 7 September 2001.

<sup>84</sup> *South African Jewish Report*, 28 Sept. 2001.



serious need to reflect on what the “US government is doing in the world.”<sup>85</sup> Invariably Zionist connections were identified. Ibn Al Fikr captured that nexus in a letter to *Muslim Views* which reminded readers that “the pilots who hijacked the planes are war criminals no less than Ariel Sharon. The main difference is they are dead and Sharon is still running amok in occupied Palestine. He continues to murder innocent civilians just as they did.”<sup>86</sup>

Sharon has, of course, been in a coma for the past seven years, but the nexus between Holocaust denial, anti-Zionism, and antisemitism remains evident. In the wake of the Danish cartoon fiasco, a huge Muslim protest march took place in Cape Town. Although incendiary anti-Jewish and anti-Zionist speeches were reportedly nipped in the bud, there were displays of posters denying the Holocaust. “The biggest myths: Israel, the Holocaust, Freedom, Democracy” was inscribed on one poster, neatly capturing the Islamist worldview. What this had to do with a protest against cartoons bearing Muhammad’s name evidently perplexed a reporter for a major Afrikaans-language daily. In an article, “Is it once again okay not to like the Jews?,” he noted that one person in the crowd explained that such placards were in order because Jews should not be allowed to make cartoons of Muslims. The Danes and the Jews, he continued, were all in the same boat.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> *Muslim Views* (Sept. 2001).

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> *Die Berger*, 18 Feb. 2006.



Danny Ben-Moshe

## Holocaust Denial in Australia

The nature of Australian Holocaust denial organizations, their activities, and their place in broader far Right circles differs from similar groups in other countries. This is explained by the dominant role of the Australian League of Rights in far Right politics, the libertarian origins of the Australian Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), the lack of sizeable neo-Nazi groups in Australia, and the dominance of anti-Aboriginal and anti-Asian issues on the far Right agenda. Unlike many European countries where denial is explained as a response to their wartime collaboration with the Nazis, this motive does not exist in Australia, which fought against the Nazis and their allies.

Although Holocaust denial is a fringe activity in Australia, it has significantly increased over the last two decades with a concomitant growth in collaboration between Australian and overseas Holocaust deniers, led by the three main Holocaust denial organizations in Australia; the Australian League of Rights, the Australian Civil Liberties Union, and the Adelaide Institute. However, until the 1980s there was only one racist group for whom Holocaust denial was a central focus—the Australian League of Rights (hereafter the League). They challenged the “Holocaust hoax” long before it gained momentum in Europe and North America during the 1970s and, unlike the Australian Civil Liberties Union and Adelaide Institute, rather than copying the ideas and activities of overseas deniers, the League developed their own.

According to historian Hilary Rubenstein, “by the 1950s Holocaust denial was a frequent component of League of Rights propaganda” (a process overseen by Eric Dudley Butler who established the organization in 1946 and led it until his semi-retirement in 1991), a period in which he dominated Australian far Right politics.<sup>1</sup> The Holocaust was explained after 1945 by Eric Butler as “a propaganda offensive from start to finish.”<sup>2</sup>

The League’s general ideology was based on the social credit, anti-collectivist, and antisemitic notions developed in the 1930s by discredited British economist C. H. Douglas. He had explained the Depression, and his social credit alternative, in terms of real power being vested in the hands of the financiers—supposedly Jews bent on world domination.

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<sup>1</sup> Rubenstein, Hilary, “Early Manifestations of Holocaust Denial in Australia,” *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal* 14, no. 1 (Nov. 1997): 93–109.

<sup>2</sup> *New Times*, Jan. 1991.

The League's antisemitism in general, and Holocaust denial in particular, was a logical result of Butler's theological world view. The "theological" framework which explains the League's Holocaust denial is illustrated in Butler's three-page article "The 'Jewish Holocaust.' Threat to Christianity" which shows that his denial was motivated by an attempt to exonerate Christian complicity in antisemitism and especially the Holocaust. He writes

If as Zionist propagandists are insisting, the alleged "Holocaust" during the Second World War was the culmination of two thousand years of Christian persecution of the Jewish people, and the roots of "anti-semitism" are to be found in "The New Testament," particularly St. Mathew's gospel and that Christians everywhere must accept collective guilt for the systematic gassing of millions of Jews in German concentration camps, it is the duty of Christians to face the far-reaching implications of the "The Holocaust" issue. The first thing that must be said is that the "holocaust" issue is not simply one of history but has become a religious question, one of a faith which ignores any evidence suggesting that the "holocaust" story may be false.<sup>3</sup>

With an estimated 2,000 activists in the League, Holocaust denial has been supported by the organization's core supporters, although the less active would have been attracted to the League for its other political activities, for example lobbying on issues such as the debate about whether Australia should become a republic.

## Holocaust Denial and Civil Liberties

The Australian Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) headed by John Bennett was the second organization established in Australia for which Holocaust denial became a primary objective. The ACLU's main strategy is to campaign for Holocaust denial as a freedom of speech and civil liberties issue. Bennett, a retired lawyer in his late sixties, claims he used to believe in the Holocaust until he read Arthur Butz's 1977 book *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century*, recalling "it was if the blinders had been lifted from my eyes."<sup>4</sup> He added: "I believe, as a lawyer, that allegations—especially those which cause offence to an ethnic group, in this case, Germans—should not be made without supporting evidence."<sup>5</sup>

Bennett achieved national coverage for denial in 1979 when the *National Times* newspaper published a 13-point memorandum he was preparing to send

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<sup>3</sup> *New Times*, May 1995.

<sup>4</sup> Supplement to *Spotlight*, 3 Mar. 1980.

<sup>5</sup> *Your Rights*, March 1998.

to academics based on the thesis of American professor Arthur Butz and that of other deniers he had read, such as Robert Faurisson and Helmut Diwald.<sup>6</sup> Later that year Bennett made his first trip outside of Australia to attend the first international “Revisionist Convention” in Los Angeles organized by the Californian-based Institute for Historical Review (IHR).<sup>7</sup> Bennett said of his participation, “As a bored public servant I just find it intellectually stimulating.... I’m a detached cynic.... [W]e’re in very short supply in this conformist society.”<sup>8</sup> His participation in the conference led to increased involvement with the IHR, and his becoming an Editorial Advisory Committee member of IHR’s *Journal of Historical Review*.

Bennett’s embrace of denial led to his 1980 suspension and eventual removal from the Victorian Council of Civil Liberties (VCCL). He had been Honorary Secretary of the VCCL since 1966, but its leadership was concerned that his personal views would be seen as those of the VCCL.<sup>9</sup> By 1984 he established the ACLU, a name which has worked to Bennett’s advantage, for while the League is taboo, many unsuspecting media and politicians have assumed the ACLU is indeed a bona fide civil liberties organization for whom they have provided a platform.

The ACLU is a small organization run from Bennett’s home,<sup>10</sup> and Holocaust denial appears to be part of his broader worldview. However, through his widely-available annual civil liberties guide, *Your Rights*, the media seek his commentary on freedom of speech issues, and other Holocaust deniers take his legal counsel when their freedom of speech is curtailed.

## Fredrick Toben and the Adelaide Institute

Although the Adelaide Institute is the most recently established of the three Holocaust-denying organizations, its founder and director, Fredrick Toben is Australia’s best-known Holocaust denier. The Adelaide Institute adds to the political work of the League and the legal work of the ACLU by offering a quasi-historical dimension to Holocaust denial, although none of its leaders are trained historians.

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<sup>6</sup> Rubenstein, “Early Manifestations,” 93.

<sup>7</sup> *ADL Facts*, June 1980.

<sup>8</sup> *The Bulletin*, 18 Sept. 1979.

<sup>9</sup> *The Age*, 2 Apr. 1980.

<sup>10</sup> Bennett, letter to *Without Prejudice*, 10 Apr. 1991, claimed 400 members in 1991, although only about 50 attended the organization’s AGM during this period, *The Age*, 6 Oct. 1990.

Toben came to national attention in April 1999, when he was arrested after presenting Holocaust denial material to a state prosecutor in Germany, where denying the mass murder of European Jewry took place is considered a criminal offence. While his supporters presented him as a “martyr for truth,” it is far more plausible that he wanted to remake himself as Australia’s David Irving.<sup>11</sup> After a three-day trial in November 1999, Toben was convicted and sentenced to ten months in prison. Having already served seven months in a Mannheim prison while awaiting trial, he was freed after paying 6000 Deutschmarks (AUS \$5000).<sup>12</sup> These events, and a finding against him by the Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission in 2001 that material on his Internet site breached the 1995 *Racial Hatred Act* by denigrating Jews, succeeded in placing Holocaust denial, in the Australian public arena in the same way actions against Ernst Zündel did in Canada in the 1980s. Toben documented his views and experiences in his book, *Fight or Flight: the Personal Face of Revisionism*.

Toben emerged as a player in the international “revisionist” movement with Willis Carto, describing him as “the pre-eminent Australian holocaust denier.”<sup>13</sup> His activities were reported in varying degrees by Ernst Zündel and the IHR. The Adelaide Institute Internet site is one of six that Bradley Smith’s Committee for Open Debate on the Holocaust highlighted in their “revisionist archive.”<sup>14</sup>

Toben had arrived in Australia in 1945 with his family from Germany as a one-year-old. After gaining undergraduate degrees from Melbourne University in Australia and Wellington University in New Zealand, he undertook postgraduate studies in Germany, receiving a Ph.D. in philosophy from Stuttgart University. In advancing Holocaust denial he portrays himself, his ideas, and his organization in academic terms. “I wrote my thesis on Karl Popper” he claims, “and I therefore cannot accept closed thinking.”<sup>15</sup>

His denial extends beyond the Holocaust, with Toben arguing,

The mind-set of those who believe in the existence of homicidal gas chambers is the same as that of scientists who believe in the HIV equals AIDS hypothesis. It is a deeply totalitarian mind-set which lacks the flexibility and honesty that is the hall-mark of truly civilised people.”<sup>16</sup>

11 <http://www.adelaideinstitute.org> accessed 13 Nov. 1999.

12 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 Nov. 1999.

13 <http://www.williscarto.com/toben.html> accessed 8 July 2002.

14 [wysiwyg://13/http://vho.org/Archive.html](http://www.wysiwyg://13/http://vho.org/Archive.html) accessed 3 July 2002.

15 Letter to B’nai B’rith Anti-Defamation Commission, 2 Nov. 1990.

16 *Truth Missions*, 2 May 1994.

Toben was an employee of the Victoria Department of Education and Training in Melbourne until his dismissal in 1985 on grounds of incompetence and disobedience, a move he challenged and claims to have won in the courts.<sup>17</sup> After driving a school bus for four years, he gained relief work in Adelaide where he settled, with the Adelaide Institute being his full-time occupation for several years. Unemployed, Toben began to move in far Right circles, specifically that of the League, whose 1990 national seminar he addressed on the subject of Aboriginal land rights and multiculturalism.<sup>18</sup> His involvement with the League would have undoubtedly exposed him to their views on Holocaust denial, and subsequently on February 9, 1994 he produced a one-page flyer called *Truth Missions* which was handed to members of Adelaide's Jewish community attending a charity premier of *Schindler's List*. By June 1994, *Truth Missions* was renamed the *Adelaide Institute*—a Holocaust-denying publication which evolved into an organization of the same name and objective, offering conferences, speakers, and the most comprehensive Australian denial Internet site.

To add credibility to his cause, Toben modeled the name of his publication and organization on the respected think-tank, the Sydney Institute. This strategy has been vindicated, with the Adelaide Institute referred to in the media as a think-tank, and with Toben described as a historian, despite having no formal history qualifications. Unlike the League or the ACLU, the estimated 250 members of the Adelaide Institute are dedicated Holocaust deniers. As with the ACLU, the Adelaide Institute is run inexpensively out of Toben's suburban home, with income generated through membership fees, and some members being in a position to provide extra financial support.<sup>19</sup>

## Antisemitism

All three groups of deniers claim that they are engaged in historical enquiry and open debate. However, a broader analysis demonstrates clear hostility toward Jews. Indeed, the evidence suggests that their Holocaust denial is an extension of their antisemitism. This is particularly glaring in their reliance on and belief in the authenticity of the *Protocols*. This is indeed a logical part of Holocaust denial

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<sup>17</sup> [http://www.adam.com.au/fredadin/travel\\_diary.html](http://www.adam.com.au/fredadin/travel_diary.html) accessed 4 Dec. 1999.

<sup>18</sup> *New Times*, Nov. 1990.

<sup>19</sup> Adelaide Institute associate Michael Mazur, for instance, pledged to financially assist their international conference described below (*Adelaide Institute*, no. 80 [Oct. 1998]).

philosophy, for if the Shoah did not happen there must have been a massive worldwide Jewish conspiracy to perpetuate the fraud.

The *Protocols* were published in Melbourne in 1945 by the social credit movement,<sup>20</sup> and a year later, Butler authored *The International Jew*—an Australian version of the false document. While conceding that the authenticity of the *Protocols* may be disputed, Butler clearly endorsed its portrayal of the Jewish plot for global control. The League became the main Australian distributor of the *Protocols*, viewing events through its prism of a global Jewish conspiracy. ACLU vice-president Jonathan Graham regularly refers readers to the *Protocols* in his column in the far Right publication, *The Strategy*, claiming it is “not a forgery but a blueprint which can be seen being put into action....”<sup>21</sup>

Toben’s deputy until November 2000 was the Berlin-born David Brockschmidt, who had an unusual background for a Holocaust denier. His parents were declared Righteous Among the Nations for helping supply trucks to Oscar Schindler during the war, and he spent eleven years working for the British army in the Rhine region as a civilian, and two years in Israel from 1977–1979 before settling in Australia.<sup>22</sup> Brockschmidt describes “the schemes of the International Jews” engaged in a “world-wide conspiracy for the overthrow of civilisation and for the reconstruction of society on the basis of arrested development, of envious malevolence, and impossible equality.”<sup>23</sup> This is based on his belief in “the cunning and crafty behaviour of powerful Jewish groups in the financial world, in the world media, in global culture, in world politics and in practically all aspects of life,”<sup>24</sup> while simultaneously referring to the “anti-Gentile Babylonian Talmud” as “the root of evil.”<sup>25</sup>

In Tasmania, the Adelaide Institute’s Olga Scully has made the distribution of the *Protocols* a regular part of the Adelaide Institute’s work, together with cartoons portraying ugly hooked-nose Jews sitting on piles of money and tricking the world into their conspiracy.<sup>26</sup> When distribution of the *Protocols* led to a hearing

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20 Rodney Goultman, “The Protocols and the Printer,” *Journal of Australian Jewish Historical Societies* 11 (1990): 155–59.

21 *The Strategy*, June 1999.

22 *Intelligence Survey*, July 1995.

23 *Adelaide Institute*, Aug. 1995.

24 *Open letter to the leaders of world Jewry*, 20 June 1996, <http://www.adam.com.au/fredadin/worldjew.html> accessed 2 Nov. 1998.

25 *Ibid.*

26 *Australian Jewish News*, 16 Oct. 1998.



before the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission, Scully claimed the “truth” of the *Protocols* as her defense.<sup>27</sup>

Equally, the Australian far Right have long maintained opposition to Communism as a central focus of their ideology. As an anti-imperialist movement, Communism was opposed to the British Empire with which the far Right was closely identified. Moreover, Communism’s anti-racist agenda meant additional rights for Aborigines and Asians and a broad cosmopolitanism. Furthermore, until the collapse of the former Soviet Union, the Communist threat to Australia from Asia was regarded with genuine concern. For the extremist Right, Communism was seen as a Jewish movement, which deniers argued was advanced through the “Holocaust myth.”

As an organization dedicated to the British Empire and the Crown, the myths of antisemitic anti-Communism were a key ideological component of the League’s rationale. For example, in 1943 Father Patrick Gearson, a Melbourne-based professor of theology who became a prominent League supporter, authored *Communism Unmasked* under the pseudonym Jean Patrice. Describing Communism as being “a Jewish movement inspired by Satan and hence diabolically clever,” early editions of the book focused on Jewish communist “atrocities.” Since 1970, this work has been published and distributed by the League, and is unequivocal in its denial of the Holocaust. In *The War Behind The War* (1940), Butler argued that the avenue through which Jews achieved power since the French Revolution was through socialism. Antisemitism and anti-Communism thus became a complementary focus of League activity.

The Adelaide Institute and the ACLU also adhere to the belief in a direct link between Judaism and Communism. In the words of Brockschmidt, “there is a philosophical and religious link between Talmudic Judaism and Marxism-Leninism.”<sup>28</sup> Equally, for former ACLU secretary and Adelaide Institute Associate, Geoff Muriden, Bolshevism “was a Jewish creation maintained by Jews, which would make them liable for the murders, tortures and slavery committed in its name.”<sup>29</sup> Thus the deniers turn the Jews from victims into aggressors. For example, Brockschmidt and Muriden brazenly refer to the “Bolshevik-Jewish holocausts.”<sup>30</sup>

Family experience explains why some individuals subscribe to denial. Explaining how her family fled to Germany from Russia where they were well looked after, Scully says

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<sup>27</sup> [http://www.adam.com.au/fredadin/media\\_release\\_olga\\_scully\\_01.html](http://www.adam.com.au/fredadin/media_release_olga_scully_01.html)

<sup>28</sup> *Adelaide Institute*, Aug. 1995.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *Adelaide Advertiser*, 26 Oct. 1995; *New Times*, Apr. 1995.

If I can do a little bit to repay that, then I will because we would have all died if it had not been for them, yet whenever you read about them they are all Nazis who gas 6 million Jews and it's a whole lot of lies.<sup>31</sup>

Little is known about Toben's family background, although being of German origin he appears to reflect the motivations of deniers, minimizers, and relativists in Germany that want to dissociate the name of Germany from the events of the Second World War. Bennett is not known to be of German origin but he has a strong affiliation to the country, claiming in 1999 to have visited there for ten of the previous twelve years.<sup>32</sup>

## Operating Methods

The Holocaust deniers disseminate their views in a multitude of ways, but irrespective of the methods employed their arguments are repackaged versions of those devised by European and North American deniers. As such, Australian deniers add little to the ideas of their overseas peers and they are highly dependent on them. Their main claims are:

- The six million figure is a myth perpetuated to achieve Zionist goals in Palestine, with Bennett arguing that in 1938 “there were only 6.5 million Jews in Europe,” and the actual number of Jews to die in the War was about 500,000.<sup>33</sup>
- There is no “proof,” according to Toben, that even those 500,000 were murdered, for there was no policy of extermination. Bennett explains that the 1942 Wannsee Conference, at which the Final Solution was agreed upon, “refers to the evacuation to the East not to extermination.”<sup>34</sup>
- The victims, according to Bennett, actually died from disease, most notably typhus.<sup>35</sup> Toben asserts that this explains the presence of Zyklon B, for rather than kill Jews by gassing it was, as Bennett concurs, used to kill the disease that threatened them.<sup>36</sup> The League claims 100,000 died of disease.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> *Wimmera Mail Times*, 7 June 1999.

<sup>33</sup> *Melbourne Times*, 10 Feb. 1982.

<sup>34</sup> *Your Rights* (1993).

<sup>35</sup> *Toorak Times*, 16 Mar. 1988.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> *New Times*, May 1995.

- The Adelaide Institute asserts that there were no gas chambers,<sup>38</sup> and the ACLU states they were “reconstructed or fabricated” after the war.<sup>39</sup>
- The Holocaust was created, according to the League, to justify the formation of the State of Israel.<sup>40</sup>
- The Germans were victims, not persecutors, in what Toben describes as the “Dresden Holocaust.”<sup>41</sup> In a July 1982 letter by Bennett to the University of Melbourne student newspaper *Farrago* stating that the only Holocaust was of a million Germans and Japanese who died as a result of Allied saturation bombings.<sup>42</sup>

The ways in which these arguments are advanced by the three denial groups reflects their differing operating methods. Thus the League’s Holocaust denial is advanced in their publications, the monthly *New Times Survey* and the weekly *On Target*; it features regular meetings of front organizations, such as the Conservative Speakers Club, which are often addressed by Holocaust deniers such as Toben; by selling tapes of lectures given at their forums, in addition to sending these for free to public libraries; not to mention publishing Holocaust denial books through their publishing arm Veritas, whose authors include David Irving; by running Letters to the Editor campaigns; and organizing Australian speaking tours for overseas deniers.

## The ACLU

The ACLU’s main activity is the annual publication of *Your Rights* which is also available online, as well as from most local news agencies. The attraction of this booklet is the succinct summation of legal advice on a range of issues from tenancy laws to police questioning, but it also exposes purchasers to Holocaust denial, and to opposition to non-white immigration and Aboriginal reconciliation. In choosing the name for his organization and publication Bennett hoped its legitimate sounding title would give it access that would otherwise be denied. This deceptive suggestion of being a bona fide civil liberties publication, has secured for *Your Rights* the promotional quotes which appear on its back cover from popular magazines like *New Idea*, *Women’s Weekly*, *Vogue*, *Simply Living*,

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<sup>38</sup> *Adelaide Institute*, 27 Jan. 1995.

<sup>39</sup> *Your Rights* (1993).

<sup>40</sup> *On Target*, 3 Nov. 2000.

<sup>41</sup> *Adelaide Institute*, 28 Feb. 1995.

<sup>42</sup> *Farrago*, 14 July 1982.

and *Cosmopolitan*. It was even positively reviewed in the journal of the Victorian Law Institute.<sup>43</sup>

Despite *Your Rights* being the subject of Federal Court injunction hearings, an anti-Discrimination hearing in New South Wales, and having the national bookseller Angus and Robertson removing it from their shelves, it is likely to remain in circulation for the foreseeable future.<sup>44</sup> Thus, a segment of the community which would not otherwise come across denial material is thereby exposed to it. Purporting to be a civil liberties organization, the ACLU lobbies on legal issues with a racial dimension.

Like the League, the ACLU succeeds in getting Letters to the Editor published and its spokesmen appear as commentators on current affairs programs on related issues, such as the debate about regulation of the Internet, a subject of great importance to the far Right as a whole.

The main activity of the Adelaide Institute is the publication of their eponymously titled newsletter and its electronic version *Adelaide Institute Online*. The hard copy publication is a cheap stapled photocopy, usually consisting of articles that have appeared in the press in relation to the Holocaust—articles from Holocaust-denying websites; and pieces about the Adelaide Institute, especially from Jewish sources. By comparison, the Institute website, which has always been more comprehensive and impressive, offers an array of articles, many by Toben, and photos of him at Auschwitz standing in a gas chamber pointing to holes where he contends the gas would exit the chamber. After a 2003 legal finding forced Toben to remove denial material from his website, it has been replaced with general far Right material and anti-Zionist commentary.

Toben, like the IHR, digs into archives to find the “truth” about the Holocaust, and consistent with international denial efforts since the *Leuchter Report*, the Institute also undertakes “scientific” research to prove their case. For example, with funding from undisclosed sources, Richard Krege, an electronics engineer in his thirties, went to Treblinka in 1999 where he used ground penetrating radar to find that soil under which Jews had been buried was undisturbed. This led him to conclude there were no mass graves there and thus Treblinka was not a death camp. Indicative of how such “reports” generate media interest, the *Canberra Times* in Australia’s capital city and the *Examiner* in Tasmania reported his findings without challenge. Krege’s findings were disseminated on the Internet

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<sup>43</sup> *Law Institute Journal*, August 1999.

<sup>44</sup> *Australian Jewish News*, 28 May 1993.

by the Holocaust Review Press, the Committee for Open Debate on the Holocaust, David Irving's Focal Point, and the IHR.<sup>45</sup>

Toben appears to regard himself as an ambassador-at-large for Holocaust denial, attending Jewish community meetings, often with other Adelaide Institute officials. Whenever an opportunity arises, he stands to ask questions and introduces himself in the process. In April 1998, for example, he joined a tour at Melbourne's Holocaust Museum. According to witnesses, he repeatedly challenged the guide, disputing the assertion that smoke came from the crematoria. He also claimed that the railway lines into the Birkenau concentration camp were built after the war. An Auschwitz survivor interjected that he personally saw the smoke billowing from the crematoria, that he personally traveled on those trains, and that he had lost his entire family in the Holocaust. Toben remained calm throughout the exchange, left his Adelaide Institute business card and departed.<sup>46</sup>

Toben is the main orator on Holocaust denial on the speaker circuit, and has played a key role in ensuring that denial has become a central belief of the far Right as whole. He has been very active in writing "Letters to the Editor" and calling talk-back radio, a very popular form of Australian media. As a result of his German trial, Toben acquired the highest profile of any Australian denier, and is often quoted in the media when denial news stories are generated by his legal cases. His prominence among the Holocaust deniers invited to Tehran by Iranian President Ahmadinejad in early December 2006 was therefore no surprise.

While the deniers clearly desire *academic* respectability, they are, in fact, hostile toward universities. Toben describes how "history departments at our universities resemble ideological faculties reminiscent of Marxist-Leninist state-run institutions,"<sup>47</sup> blasting as "cowards" the many academics who "will be shamed for having remained silent on the Jewish Holocaust issue" when they know the truth.<sup>48</sup> Although there have been no dedicated university campaigns such as those undertaken by denier Bradley Smith in America, there are four main aspects to the Australian deniers academic campaign.

First, university libraries are contacted to purchase denial books for their holdings. Second, historians are engaged in debate about denial. Accordingly,

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<sup>45</sup> *Canberra Times*, 24 Jan. 2002; *The Examiner*, 24 Jan. 2002, <http://www.codoh.org/bbs/messages/2407.html> and <http://www.fpp.co.uk/Auschwitz/Treblinka/groundscan.html> and <http://www.ihr.org/jhr/v19/v19n3p20radar.html> all web sites accessed 7 Aug. 2002.

<sup>46</sup> *ADC Briefing*, Sept. 1998.

<sup>47</sup> <http://www.adam.com.au/fredadin/50-brock.html> accessed 2 Nov. 1998.

<sup>48</sup> *Truth Missions*, 14 Mar. 1994.

Bennett has written to academics asking for their views on the Holocaust, raising denial issues and suggesting the availability of Holocaust denial material.

In September 1996, Toben and Brockschmidt repeatedly disrupted an Adelaide University continuing education class called *Hitler's Germany: Will History Repeat?*<sup>49</sup> Third, they expose students to denial literature. Bennett personally distributed literature in the University of Melbourne Student Union building during the Jewish student's Holocaust Awareness Week in April 1998, and he has written letters to student union papers.<sup>50</sup> Fourth, they organize Holocaust denial speakers on campus, for example Bennett accompanied David Irving on a talk at Melbourne.<sup>51</sup>

Most academics do not engage with deniers, on the basis that debating the issue with them confers legitimacy on their ideas. Only one academic has openly identified with them—Dr. William DeMaria, a lecturer at the School of Social Work and Social Policy at the University of Queensland. However, still hoping to influence students who have no personal memory of the Second World War but who will one day become influential members of the Australian community, deniers have continued their efforts in the universities.

The League, the Adelaide Institute, and the ACLU maintain a close and complementary relationship. The League has portrayed Bennett as “Australia’s leading and most influential libertarian,”<sup>52</sup> while Bennett has praised the League “for its fight against media censorship on issues such as immigration, multiculturalism and finance.”<sup>53</sup> Bennett personally attended the testimonial dinner to mark Butler’s semi-retirement, where he praised his “courage and tenacity.”<sup>54</sup> Toben, while denying being a League activist, said he held those who were “in the highest regard” for having “shown a deep concern for the well being of Australia.”<sup>55</sup>

The three groups rely on each other for audiences. For example, Bennett has addressed several League meetings and written for League publications,<sup>56</sup> while Toben conducted a national speaking tour for the League on his return

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<sup>49</sup> *Australian Jewish News*, 29 July 1994.

<sup>50</sup> *Farrago*, 14 July 1982.

<sup>51</sup> *The Age*, 15 Apr. 1986.

<sup>52</sup> *New Times*, July 1992.

<sup>53</sup> *New Times*, Nov. 1989.

<sup>54</sup> *New Times*, July 1992.

<sup>55</sup> Letter to *Adelaide News* which Toben sent to the B'nai B'rith Anti-Defamation Commission, 23 Dec. 1991.

<sup>56</sup> *New Times*, 1989.

from Germany in 2000.<sup>57</sup> The three organizations similarly rely on each other for mutual promotion. Tapes of Adelaide Institute and ACLU talks to League meetings are distributed by the League, who also promote *Your Rights*.<sup>58</sup> The Adelaide Institute publishes material by Butler, and ACLU vice president Graham Pember refers readers of his *Strategy* column to the League's *On Target*.<sup>59</sup> The three organizations provide other assistance to each other. For example, when the League arranged screenings of a David Irving video after he was denied entry into Australia in 1993, it was Bennett who organized the Melbourne showing,<sup>60</sup> and when the League arranged for Canadian lawyer Doug Collins to visit Adelaide as part of a national speaking tour, the Adelaide Institute was the local contact address.

The three organizations also turn to each other when legal and political difficulties arise. When Toben was incarcerated in Germany, his deputy David Brockschmidt addressed the League's Adelaide Conservative Speakers Club on the events surrounding Toben's trial.<sup>61</sup> The ACLU set up a defence fund for Toben's German trial which raised \$6,000,<sup>62</sup> and Bennett planned to travel to Germany to advise Toben during his incarceration.<sup>63</sup> The three organizations provide each other with practical and moral support, a core constituency, and a rationale that they would otherwise be denied.

## International links

The importation into the country of overseas denial and deniers has been fundamental to the development of Holocaust "revisionism" in Australia. Given the limited resources in Australia, deniers from abroad add a dimension that makes the work of the Australian Holocaust negators more viable as they regularly publish and refer to the work of their overseas peers. The League has gotten mainstream media coverage by inviting speakers who attract media attention to Australia. This included the 1988 speaking tour of Dr. Robert Countess of Alabama, an editorial advisory board member of the IHR<sup>64</sup>; and the 1991 visit of the Cana-

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<sup>57</sup> *On Target*, 14 Jan. 2000.

<sup>58</sup> *On Target*, 2 Apr. 1984.

<sup>59</sup> *The Strategy*, Mar. 1999.

<sup>60</sup> *The Age*, 20 May 1993.

<sup>61</sup> *On Target*, 28 May 1999.

<sup>62</sup> *Wimmera Mail-Times*, 14 May 1999.

<sup>63</sup> *Wimmera Mail Times*, 7 June 1999.

<sup>64</sup> *Australia Israel Review*, 1–14 Sept. 1988.

dian lawyer Douglas Christie who had represented Holocaust deniers such as Ernst Zündel.

The clearest illustration of the local use of overseas deniers was during the first Australian Revisionists Conference that took place in August 1998 in Adelaide. There were four speakers from overseas, including Butz from America and Jürgen Graf from Switzerland who delivered the keynote address. Sixteen deniers participated by video or phone, including Robert Faurisson, Mark Weber, Ahmed Rami, Ernst Zündel, and Charles Weber.<sup>65</sup>

The relationship between Australian and overseas deniers is mutually beneficial. The overseas negationists increase their sense of relevance, purpose, and effect. Organizations such as the IHR based in California cite their participation in Australian activities in order to present themselves as an international organization. Similarly, the relationship Australian deniers have with their overseas peers makes them feel that however marginal they are locally, they are relevant internationally. As an IHR report about the 1998 Adelaide conference stated, “For some time now, Australia has been one of the most dynamic battlefields in the worldwide struggle against the historical blackout. And at the forefront of the battle there is the Adelaide Institute.”<sup>66</sup>

Both Toben and Bennett regularly attend IHR conferences, but the more active of the two is Toben, who has extensive contacts with deniers across the globe. His European contacts are well documented in his travel diary of a 1998 trip to Europe which was devoted to meeting deniers, visiting concentration camps, including Auschwitz, and delving into archives where his findings merely reaffirmed his beliefs. In London he met Germar Rudolf to discuss the involvement of *Adelaide Institute Online* in an English language publication Rudolf had been planning, and he stayed with Rudolf on the farm of British National Party leader Nick Griffin. In Poland he met with Tomasz Gabis, editor of the magazine *Stancyk* which features denial; in Vienna he spent time with Emil Lachout, an engineer who supposedly “proved” there were no gas chambers; and in France he visited Robert Faurisson at his home.<sup>67</sup>

In addition to reinforcing Toben’s worldview and providing him with information to disseminate in Australia there was a practical dimension to these contacts. Ludwig Bock, who had personally been convicted for Holocaust denial,<sup>68</sup>

<sup>65</sup> [www.adelaideinstitute.org/newsletters/news80.html](http://www.adelaideinstitute.org/newsletters/news80.html) and [www.adelaideinstitute.org/newsletters/news81.html](http://www.adelaideinstitute.org/newsletters/news81.html) accessed 13 July 2000.

<sup>66</sup> [ihr.org/ihr/v17/v17n6p-6.html](http://ihr.org/ihr/v17/v17n6p-6.html) accessed 26 June 2000.

<sup>67</sup> [www.adam.com.au/fredadin/travel\\_diary.html](http://www.adam.com.au/fredadin/travel_diary.html) accessed 4 Dec. 1999.

<sup>68</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 Nov. 1999.



represented Toben during his German trial, and German supporter Eric Rossler paid the fine imposed on Toben by the German court.<sup>69</sup>

## Israel, the Middle East, and the Left

A central thesis of the deniers is that the Holocaust “hoax” was created to justify ongoing support for the State of Israel. This rationale has led the denial movement to win many adherents in the Middle East. Indeed, there are increasing links between Australian deniers and Middle Eastern regimes and groups which support denial. For example, the Libyan regime of Colonel Gaddafi was active in Australia, particularly during the 1970s and 1980s. Bennett wrote an article for the first edition of the pro-Libyan magazine *The Green March* in 1986,<sup>70</sup> and in 1988 he reportedly traveled to Libya as part of a delegation to sit on a “tribunal” to “judge” the U.S. bombing of Libya.<sup>71</sup> The ACLU’s Graham Pember liked to refer readers of his *Strategy* column to Radio Islam, providing an extremist Islamic source of denial for Australians to access.

When Toben held his 1998 international denial conference in Adelaide, the United Arab Emirates Ambassador to Australia attended.<sup>72</sup> In December 1999, Toben spent three weeks in Iran<sup>73</sup> where he lectured on denial to university students<sup>74</sup> and was interviewed by the *Tehran Times*, which described him as a “German researcher residing in Australia.”<sup>75</sup> Since then he was interviewed from Australia by Iranian television about the Pope’s 2000 visit to Jerusalem, claiming that “the Jewish politicians are using the Holocaust and the six million dead figure as a justification for suppressing the Palestinians and for claiming that Jerusalem is their undivided capital.”<sup>76</sup> During his attendance at the 2006 Holocaust denial festival in Iran, Toben was again, a prominent figure. Toben clearly enjoys the sense of importance this provides, and the Iranians benefited from using a Western figure to reinforce their views. Middle Eastern issues, more specifically anti-Zionism, have indeed taken an increasingly prominent place in

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<sup>69</sup> *Adelaide Advertiser*, 16 Nov. 1999.

<sup>70</sup> *The Green March*, Feb.–Mar. 1986.

<sup>71</sup> *Bulletin*, 25 Apr. 1989.

<sup>72</sup> *Weekend Australian*, 24 Oct. 1998.

<sup>73</sup> *Australian Jewish News*, 10 Dec. 1999.

<sup>74</sup> *Australian Jewish News*, 4 May 2001.

<sup>75</sup> *Tehran Times*, 8 Dec. 1999.

<sup>76</sup> *Adelaide Institute*, No. 106, Apr. 2000 and No. 107, April 2000.

Toben's activities. After the Australian High Court ordered him to remove denial material from his Internet site, it has been largely dedicated to the Palestinian cause, which provides a basis for indirect denial.

In August 2003 Toben and his Adelaide Institute colleague Mohammed Hegazi attended a conference in Iran on the Palestinian Intifada at which Toben was one of the speakers. The Adelaide Institute website included photos of Toben wearing a black and white keffiyah, next to women in traditional Islamic dress as he described how they questioned the Holocaust. In other photos Toben and Hegazi appeared next to two Palestinians who had witnessed the "Zionist 'Holocaust'" of the people of Palestine. At Tehran University they stood in front of a recreated Palestinian home demolished by the Israeli army. The caption read: "A demolished home symbolizes the actual ethnic cleansing of Palestinians from their own homes: millions of Germans suffered this fate at the end of World War Two, carried out by the same Axis of Evil that supports aggression against and oppresses the Palestinians."

Australian collaboration with Middle Eastern regimes and organizations over Holocaust denial is consistent with trends internationally. Ties to those involved in Middle Eastern denial have the potential to introduce more extreme forms of antisemitism into Australia. It is no accident that several deniers, such as Jürgen Graf, have made Iran their home and Toben has suggested that he may follow their lead.<sup>77</sup> He said in relation to Federal Court action arising from the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission finding against him, that he "would apply for political refugee status in Iran if and when his condition of stay in Australia becomes insecure."<sup>78</sup> In the interim, Toben remains active in the broad Middle Eastern anti-Zionist crusade, boasting that he traveled to Jordan during the 2003 war in Iraq in an attempt to offer himself as a human shield. In August 2003, he declared: "The tragedy in Iraq deflects from the Palestinian tragedy, and peace will only come to the Middle East with the dismantling of the Zionist, apartheid, racist state of Israel."<sup>79</sup>

The increasing prevalence of Holocaust denial in the Muslim world has the potential to increase support for Holocaust denial in Australia from within the Islamic and Arabic communities, as has already occurred in Europe and North

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<sup>77</sup> Abraham Cooper and Harold Brackman, "The Fight Against Holocaust Denial," *Midstream* (April 2001).

<sup>78</sup> *Australian Jewish News*, 18 May 2001.

<sup>79</sup> *ADC Online* 5, no. 2 (Aug. 2003).

America. Incidents of this nature have happened in Australia in the past.<sup>80</sup> This could lead to alliances between Islamic extremists and the traditional far Right, a practice which is evident in Europe and North America. In addition, with denial often related to extreme forms of antisemitism in the Middle East, these ties may increase the radical character of denial amongst groups such as the League, ACLU, and the Adelaide Institute in Australia. Moreover, as Islam in South East Asia is influenced by the extremist Islamic groups from the Middle East there may be a growth of denial in Asia in which Australian deniers could play a role. Indeed on his way to Iran for the conference on the Intifada in August 2003, Toben stopped in Malaysia where he gave a lecture to the history class of Professor A. B. Kopanski at the International Islamic University in Malaysia.<sup>81</sup>

Holocaust denial is also likely to appear in the Australian Islamic/Arabic community in relation to attacks against Israel. For example, in October 2000 as the Al-Aqsa “Intifada” erupted, the *Australian Muslim News* published on its front page a statement from the president of the Supreme Islamic Council of New South Wales, Gabr Elgafi, which stated that the Council

deplores the Israeli Government and its army for the atrocity and the barbaric behaviour in the State of Palestine. We the Muslims of New South Wales urge the Australian Government and the Prime Minister to demonstrate their disgust and disapproval of the events in Palestine and the Israeli territories. We find ironical that the victims of the so called holocaust have had a lapse of memory.<sup>82</sup>

The Middle Eastern dimension adds another potential source of support for deniers from the hard Left where anti-Zionism plays a central role. Anti-Zionism, particularly amongst elites, has been identified as a new form of antisemitism with implications for Holocaust denial.<sup>83</sup> Evidence of the Israeli-Nazi equivalence in left-wing circles has been widely seen since the outbreak of Israel-Palestinian fighting in September 2000. In 2003, as controversy raged about Israel’s security fence, the Sydney *Morning Herald* broadsheet published a cartoon which equated the West Bank with the Warsaw Ghetto, through two walls.<sup>84</sup> Hatred for Israel on

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**80** Jeremy Jones, “Holocaust Revisionism in Australia,” *Without Prejudice* vol. 4, (Dec. 1991): 53.

**81** [www.adelaideinstitute.org](http://www.adelaideinstitute.org) accessed 17 Aug. 2003.

**82** *Australian Muslim News* (Oct. 2000): 1.

**83** Paul Iganski and Barry Kosmin, eds., *A New Anti-Semitism? Debating Judeophobia in 21st-Century Britain* (London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research, 2003); see also Robert S. Wistrich, “Cruel Britannia: Anti-Semitism among the Ruling Elites,” *Azure*, no. 21 (Summer 2005), 100–24.

**84** See editorial, *Australian Jewish News*, 22 Aug. 2003.

the Left, which involves breaking down the taboo of the Holocaust, could thus fuel Holocaust relativism and lead to direct collaboration between anti-Zionists and Holocaust deniers as has occurred in Europe. Indeed, in 2003 the left-wing Melbourne Underground Film Festival in Australia offered screenings on the Israeli occupation from “a Palestinian perspective” together with the screening of films by Irving and Faurisson. This was a clear sign of the developing relationship between Holocaust relativism, denial, and left-wing anti-Zionism.

## David Irving

Any discussion about Holocaust denial in Australia would be incomplete without considering the British historian David Irving. While obviously not an Australian denier, he has done more than anyone else to make Holocaust denial an issue of public debate in Australia. Australian denial organizations were centrally involved in this process, with Irving acting as a vehicle to promote their agenda. Irving first visited Australia in March 1986 on a national tour organized by the League publishing arm, Veritas, to promote his book *Uprising*. League leader Butler and Irving appeared to have a close relationship, with Butler hosting him in his home during this visit.<sup>85</sup> Overseas, Butler also chaired meetings for Irving, such as that held in Winnipeg in 1987.<sup>86</sup> Because of his relatively high profile, Irving attracted extensive and mostly uncritical media interest during his visit, far more than the local deniers could generate for themselves.

After Irving failed to find a British publisher for *Churchill's War*, Veritas published the book and organized a 1987 tour of Australia for Irving to promote it. The Australian Jewish community became increasingly concerned at the higher profile Irving was giving to Holocaust denial and as reports emerged in 1992 that he would be visiting again, the Jewish community began to lobby for him to be denied an entry visa.<sup>87</sup> In 1993 Irving received a letter from the Government informing him that he was being denied a visa based on concern that “the effect your presence in Australia will have within the community” and “that your proposed visit...would have been disruptive to the Australian community.”<sup>88</sup> Thus

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<sup>85</sup> *The Bulletin*, 13 May 86.

<sup>86</sup> *On Target*, 30 Nov. 1990.

<sup>87</sup> *The Age*, 2 Dec. 1992.

<sup>88</sup> *The Australian*, 19 Feb. 1993.

began a cycle of repeated visa applications which enveloped the sick cause of Holocaust denial in the false halo of free speech.

While denied personal entry, in 1993 Irving produced a video especially designed for an Australian audience, “The Search for Truth in History,” with the local deniers responsible for its promotion. Newspaper advertisements promoting the video listed Muriden and the ACLU’s contact details, and in a program organized by Veritas and Bennett, the video was scheduled to be shown nationally but most talks were cancelled because of protests.<sup>89</sup> However, this whole process made denial an almost daily news item, fed by interviews with Irving from the UK and America.

Irving received some practical benefit from this Australian support during his 2001 libel trial in London.<sup>90</sup> 288 donations were received from Australia alone, ranging from \$10–\$2000, in the period leading up to his trial.<sup>91</sup> Irving was assisted in preparing information for his cross-examination by Australian public servant Michael Mills. This demonstrates that an Australian such as Mills who has no impact on the debate about the Holocaust in Australia, can play a more significant role when connected to prominent overseas deniers.<sup>92</sup> Following the court’s decision against Irving, the ACLU sought to provide financial assistance for his appeal.<sup>93</sup>

The Internet has undoubtedly broadened the reach of all deniers and is the primary means through which non-Australian deniers can reach an Australian audience. Irving’s Internet site, for example, provides a section for purchases with Australian credit cards.<sup>94</sup> While the Internet does not offer the range of coverage of mainstream media, it has been the means by which Irving interacts with Australians in a mutually beneficial and close relationship.<sup>95</sup> The ACLU and League promote his books, which are available at their meetings,<sup>96</sup> while Toben lauds Irving as “one of the few historians to have their moral and intellectual integrity intact.” Irving returned the favor by issuing a statement in support of Toben during his own legal difficulties in Australia.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> *The Age*, 19 June 1993.

<sup>90</sup> *The Age*, 20 May 1993.

<sup>91</sup> *The Weekend Australian*, 15–16 Apr. 2000.

<sup>92</sup> *Generation*, May 2000.

<sup>93</sup> According to columnist Jill Singer, *Herald Sun*, 14 Apr. 2000.

<sup>94</sup> <http://www.fpp.co.uk/orderforms/orderformAustral.html> accessed 17 July 2002.

<sup>95</sup> See, for example <http://www.fpp.co.uk/Letters/Rightwing/Knight241101.html> accessed 3 July 2002.

<sup>96</sup> *ACLU newsletter*, no. 110 (April 1996).

<sup>97</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 Apr. 1999.

By lending his name to the Australian deniers, Irving has been able to assist their campaign and they have remained committed to him despite the London court's decision unequivocally branding him as a racist, antisemite, and Holocaust denier.

## The Far Right

Holocaust deniers are sufficiently connected to the broader far Right that they can use these links effectively to advance their cause. It is far Right tolerance of Holocaust denial that provides the deniers with a base to increase their support. For example, the militia magazine *Lock Stock and Barrel* does not directly espouse negationist theses, but it does carry advertisements from Olga Scully.<sup>98</sup> Moreover, Holocaust denial is a crucial part of the white supremacist agenda, openly espoused by Australian neo-Nazi skinheads and New Age racists obsessed with UFOs, lost civilizations, and alternative health. It has long been embraced by militant Christian Identity ministries who have distributed the *Leuchter Report* and Ernst Zündel's tapes. It also creeps into the agitation of the racist Right opposed to Asian immigration and multiculturalism.

Denial clearly generates antisemitism, so protecting freedom of speech must be balanced with protecting the Holocaust denier's Jewish targets. Despite the centrality of freedom of speech, there are legal limitations on hate speech to which the Jewish community has recourse, primarily the 1995 Racial Hatred Act. This prohibits racially offensive or abusive behavior, covering public acts "reasonably likely in all the circumstances to offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate that person or group." The Executive Council of Australian Jewry (ECAJ) took action against both Toben and Scully under the act with the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC). In 2001, HREOC ordered Toben to remove material from his Internet site which breached the act by denigrating Jews, and to apologize to ECAJ,<sup>99</sup> while Scully was similarly ordered to apologize for her literature.

However, for Toben and Scully the process reinforced their world view, with both stating they would ignore the findings. Toben responded to the pending case by switching to an overseas Internet Service Provider, but in a 2002 landmark ruling, the Federal Court found the 1995 Racial Hatred Act applied to the Internet

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<sup>98</sup> *The Age*, 3 Nov. 1998.

<sup>99</sup> *The Age*, 8 July 2003.

and ordered Toben to remove material from his Internet site. The Federal Court ruled that he would be in contempt of court if he refused to do so, making him accountable under Australian law even if the material is hosted in another jurisdiction. This was an important precedent in relation to online racism in Australia and may also influence similar deliberations by courts overseas. The Federal Court decision against Toben, which was upheld following an appeal, was also of particular importance because it found that Holocaust denial breached the Racial Hatred Act objectively, rather than being subjective to the feelings of the complainant. Scully was also found to breach the act with the risk that if she continued to distribute her material she would be in contempt of court. Toben removed offending material and the threat remains of being held in contempt of court should he add denial material to his Internet site. Ultimately, if Toben moved overseas it would be hard to enforce any decision handed down by an Australian court but his legal liability would probably prevent his return to Australia.

Despite the important precedent of the High Court decision against Toben, the ability of the judiciary to identify the antisemitic nature of denial remains a moot point. When, for example, the Jewish Community Council of Victoria sought an interim injunction to prevent the screening of Irving's film at the Melbourne Underground Film Festival, the judge said it may be offensive to some members of the Jewish community but it did not constitute racial vilification under the Victorian Racial and Religious Tolerance Act. He found the film to be "quite bland" despite references such as "traditional enemies" and "dining out on the Holocaust." Reflecting the importance of freedom of speech in Australia, the judge said he made the ruling to uphold the right of the Victorian population to engage in robust discussion. Legal responses to Internet regulation may well prove pivotal in the future of Holocaust denial in Australia and indeed internationally.

In terms of Holocaust denial on the Internet, the work of Australian deniers will also be affected by the situation overseas. In his German trial, for instance, Toben was acquitted of charges of defaming the memory of the dead on the Internet because the offending information was installed outside the German jurisdiction. However, an appeal to the German Supreme Court found he might be tried as the material could be downloaded in Germany. This has global implications for Internet regulation, but its practical effect means that Toben is unlikely to return to Germany. This indicates that the future prospects of Holocaust denial in Australia will be directly affected by global responses to it.

Denial in Australia will also be effected by developments in the negationist movement overseas. For example, the reduced funding that the California-based IHR enjoys, as compared to the past will affect its activities in Australia and the support it can offer figures such as Toben. In terms of responding to Holocaust denial, the Jewish community runs extensive Holocaust educational programs

while in both government and private high schools, Holocaust literature such as the *Diary of Anne Frank* is widely read. However, educational authorities, both Jewish and general, will need to consider as part of these efforts the development of specific educational programs aimed at addressing the issue of Holocaust denial. This will be increasingly important as survivors of the Holocaust, who speak to thousands of schoolchildren each year, pass away.

An indication of the potential for Holocaust denial was provided well over a decade ago by the best-selling and award-winning 1994 book by Helen Demidenko, *The Hand That Signed the Paper*. This case demonstrated that some of Australia's leading literary figures and intellectuals were willing to embrace a book whose central thesis, while not denying the Holocaust, found a defence for it. The book presented "Jewish-Bolshevik" persecution of Ukrainians in the 1930s as a parallel to the Holocaust and a kind of "justification" for it. All three Holocaust denying organizations enthusiastically embraced the novel. Although *The Hand That Signed the Paper* is a work of fiction and as such is distinct from overt denial, this experience suggests that a time may arise when literary figures will similarly defend a work of Holocaust denial. Indeed, in February 2000, the Victorian Minister for the Arts, Mary Delahunty, in a hypothetical discussion said she would hope to "have the courage" to put public money into a play based on the work of David Irving.<sup>100</sup>

It is easy to dismiss Holocaust deniers as extremists. But with the passage of time, the advantages of the Internet and international support, the potential exists for them to establish an "alternative history." Acceptance of denial's core thesis is by no means limited to the racist fringe. The Chief Historical Examiners for the High School certificate in one state and a school history teacher in another have reportedly said, when referring to revisionism, that there is an alternative point of view. A danger lies in the appeal of relativism to some Western liberals as was seen in responses to Norman Finkelstein's book, *The Holocaust Industry*. While hard core deniers remain small in number, scores are known to attend their meetings, hundreds are sympathizers, and they reach thousands through their mailing lists.

Denial of the Shoah can and does lead to overt antisemitism. It can also put Holocaust survivors, of which Australia has the highest per capita number anywhere outside of Israel, on the defensive. This is what Nadine Fresco, a French

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**100** Arts Today, ABC Radio National, 16 Feb. 2000. When criticized for this, she said Holocaust revisionism was outside the boundaries of what is acceptable and therefore would not be publicly supported. Mary Delahunty to B'nai B'rith Anti-Defamation Commission, Inc., 21 Feb. 2000.



authority on Holocaust denial, describes as the “double liquidation,” denying not only the dead but also the living.<sup>101</sup>

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**101** Nadine Fresco, in *Holocaust Remembrance: The Shapes of Memory*, edited by Geoffrey Hartman (Oxford, 1994), 191.



Rotem Kowner

## The Strange Case of Japanese “Revisionism”

Japan occupies a special place in the research concerning attitudes toward the Jews in modern times. Japanese antisemitism has not evolved from an encounter with Jews, and it lacks deep historical roots or religious origins. It has never gained wholehearted governmental support or become a national ideology; neither has it developed because of any significant conflict between modern-day Israel and Japan. Moreover, antisemitism has never penetrated the lower classes or attracted popular support. Manifesting itself almost exclusively in written form, it has never been exacerbated to the point of material or physical assaults upon Jews living in Japan.

Nevertheless, after 1918, the encounter of the Japanese with the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* heralded the emergence of antisemitic views in the country along with a growing public interest in the role of Jews in world politics and the economy. The *Protocols* were not only a catalyst, but also a mirror of negative Japanese attitudes to Jews in general. When anti-Jewish views were rife, interest in the *Protocols* grew, and when Japanese antisemitism languished, so did interest in the book. This fluctuation was often a reflection of Japanese xenophobic nationalism in general, and its bizarre antisemitic attitudes in particular, and should be treated as such.<sup>1</sup>

At the end of World War I, Japan was burdened by social discontent, and its elite was apprehensive of the spread of Communist ideas into the working masses. The encounter with a foreign book that offered not only a partial account for the world turmoil, but also a colorful warning seemed effective and the book was soon embraced. Some of the Japanese who welcomed the book, however, were also admirers of Jews, partly because they exaggerated Jewish power. From their local perspective, they had a good reason to view the *Protocols* as confirming their positive preconceptions, and this duality has remained an unmistakable characteristic of Japanese attitudes to this very day.

Two decades earlier, during the Russo-Japanese War, these future philosemites and antisemites received an unequivocal demonstration of Jewish “power,” when a single banker, Jacob H. Schiff of the New York bank, Loeb, Kuhn and

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<sup>1</sup> On the *Protocols*, see “Symposium: The *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, Aum, and Antisemitism in Japan (David Goodman); The *Protocols* in a Land without Jews: A Reconsideration (Rotem Kowner); Comments (Ben-Ami Shillony),” *Antisemitism International*, nos. 3–4 (2006): 55–79. This journal, published by the Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem is edited by Robert Wistrich.

Company, obtained for Japan about half of its desperately needed foreign loans. Half a year after the conclusion of the war, when Schiff arrived to Japan to receive the Order of the Rising Sun from Emperor Meiji, virtually all the political, military, and business elite took part in the banquets given in his honor. Thereafter, Schiff's meddling in world politics, at least in Japanese eyes, did not cease. Even as late as during World War I, he refused to allow his firm to participate in any Russian war financing.

It is important to note that the *Protocols* were not unanimously accepted in Japan at face value. While some were quick to translate it, others were even quicker to refute it. However, the interest in the *Protocols* generated in Japan following their publication in Western languages led to their full translation in 1924 by an army officer named Yasue Norihiro [Senkô] (1888–1950) under the pseudonym Hô Kôshi. This prompted the Army General Staff three years later to dispatch Yasue, who was on a study tour in Germany, to Palestine to further examine the Jewish situation there.<sup>2</sup>

Although antisemitic ideas began to take root in Japan during the 1920s, only during the following decade was there a substantial increase in antisemitic publications in Japan. They represented a conservative reaction to liberalism and socialism by ultranationalist scholars and military figures, and served as an explanation for the growing conflict with the United States and Great Britain. While reflecting much of the Japanese approach to the external world at that time, these publications were merely a feeble echo of the identity crisis Japan experienced during its cataclysmic turn against the West. It was the rise of fascism which contributed to the greater interest in antisemitic writings in the 1930s. Like Yasue before him, the writings of Navy Captain Inuzuka Koreshige, who was in charge of the Jewish refugees in Shanghai from 1939 to 1942, are a vivid example of the duality of Japanese attitudes.<sup>3</sup>

While heavily relying on the *Protocols*, Inuzuka held Jews in awe and offered to create for them an Asian homeland, and expected to benefit from their influence and power. Believing that Jews controlled the finance, politics, and media in the United States and Great Britain, Inuzuka and Yasue, by then colonel and the liaison with the Jewish Far East Council from 1938 to 1940, formulated the Japa-

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2 On Yasue's visit to Palestine, see David Kranzler, *Japanese, Nazis, and Jews: The Jewish Refugee Community in Shanghai, 1938-1945* (New York, 1976), 207.

3 On Yasue's ambivalence to Judaism and his appreciation of the Zionist effort, alongside fears of Jewish power, see Yasue Norihiro, *Kakumei Undô o Abaku—Yudaya no Chi o Fumite* (Unmasking a revolutionary movement: Setting foot on Jewish land) (Tokyo, 1931), 1.

nese policy permitting the entry of Jewish refugees from Germany into Shanghai.<sup>4</sup> While it is true that German influence on Japan was weakened by the racial friction and limited military cooperation between the two nations, one can argue that the *Protocols* had a certain positive effect on Japanese decision makers in China and Manchuria, since it made them believe that Jewish power might be instrumental for their empire. In this sense, Japanese promulgators of the *Protocols* markedly differed from European antisemites who never interpreted the book in any positive, or at least constructive, light.<sup>5</sup>

Ironically, by 1940 both Inuzuka and Yasue were regarded by German officials as "friends of the Jews."<sup>6</sup> More important, however, is the fact that Japan, despite signing the Anti-Comintern Pact with Germany in 1936 and the Tripartite Pact with Germany and Italy in 1940, never joined the two in deporting Jews, using them as a labor force, or facilitating their extermination. German pressure notwithstanding, Japan's overall benevolent policy toward Jews (although marred occasionally by harsh treatment) during World War II, demonstrates the limited detrimental, if not ambivalent, effect the *Protocols* exerted in Japan in the first two decades after its publication.

The decline of Japanese interest in the *Protocols* after 1945 is no less revealing. Except for one minor reference to it, in the twenty-six years that followed Japan's surrender no author dealt with the book, nor was it republished.<sup>7</sup> Japanese society was occupied by fundamental needs such as rebuilding its cities and industrial infrastructure and restoring its economy. It was less troubled by identity issues. For this reason the interest in Jews—always a marginal topic in the Japanese society—totally subsided. In 1970, however, a book by Yamamoto Shichihei (using the seemingly more authoritative pseudonym Isaiah Ben-Dasan), *Nihonjin to Yudayajin* (The Japanese and the Jews), heralded a new era of growing international aspirations and a return to global competition.<sup>8</sup> Two years earlier, the

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4 See Pamela Rotner Sakamoto, *Japanese Diplomats and Jewish Refugees: A World War II Dilemma* (Westport, Conn., 1998), 27–28.

5 On Inuzuka's plans, see Marvin Tokayer and Mary Swartz, *The Fugu Plan: The Untold Story of the Japanese and the Jews During World War II* (New York, 1979).

6 It is unclear whether the motive was his age or views, but within a short time, the Army released Yasue from active service. See Krebs, *The "Jewish problem,"* 117; Françoise Kreissler, "Japans Judenpolitik (1931–1945)," in *Formierung und Fall der Achse Berlin-Tokyo*, ed. by Gerhard Krebs and Bernd Martin (Munich, 1984): 187–210, 203–4.

7 In 1958 Matsumoto Fumi reprinted Kubota Eikichi's translation of the *Protocols* from 1938; see Matsumoto Fumi, *Fuji Kaidan'in Konryû* (Building the altar at Mount Fuji) (Tokyo, 1958).

8 Isaiah Ben-Dasan [Yamamoto Shichihei], *Nihonjin to Yudayajin* (The Japanese and the Jews) (Tokyo, 1970).

Japanese economy had surpassed that of Germany, becoming the second largest economy in the capitalist world. The Japanese quest for recognition following the success of the Tokyo Olympic games of 1964 and the World Exposition in Osaka in 1970 was accompanied by a renewed search for self-definition.

Shichihei's book offered just that, although it was basically about Japan rather than Jews. For this reason, but also for the writing style and the timing, it became a sensational success and sold more than three million copies. Less than a year passed before Nagafuchi Ichirô authored his own version of the *Protocols*.<sup>9</sup> In the mid-1980s Japan witnessed a second surge of antisemitic writings, which included many references to the *Protocols*, or at least notions of a Jewish ambition to gain control of the world. It is not surprising that this reemergence of the *Protocols* occurred when it was predicted that the Japanese economy would supercede that of the United States, and the Japanese were facing a second identity crisis. Like the situation half a century earlier, this time, too, there was increasing friction with the United States, reinforced by rising nationalism in Japan.

There have been various views on the actual significance of Japanese antisemitic writings and their impact on Japanese society. They range from alarmist fears to ironic deflation of the phenomenon. Some experts argue that Japanese antisemitism leads to anti-Jewish hatred and anti-Israel views, while others suggest that it is a marginal phenomenon that may even reinforce positive images of a successful group, thereby providing Jews and the state of Israel with some credit they do not necessarily deserve.

The exposure to antisemitic literature has not led to a substantial shift in perceptions of the Jews, but it tends to slightly underscore its positive and negative facets. In some cases and for some individuals it may lead to suspicion and distrust, while for others, as Prof. Ben-Ami Shillony of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem has pointed out, it may lead to greater respect and admiration. The majority of Japanese are ignorant of the *Protocols* and unaware of the long legacy of antisemitism in the world and its offshoots in Japan.<sup>10</sup> This negative implication notwithstanding, antisemitism has not led to any cases of physical violence against Jews for being Jews.

The *Protocols* in Japan do, however, combine both a long-term demonization of Jews (of more than 80 years), with an occult image of a sinister group that clandestinely gathers and plans to rule the world. It is really not important, if the

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<sup>9</sup> Nagafuchi Ichirô, *Yudayajin to Sekai Kakumei: Shion no Giteisho* (The Jews and the world revolution: the Protocols of the Elders of Zion (Tokyo, 1971).

<sup>10</sup> Rotem Kowner, *On Ignorance, Respect, and Suspicion: Current Japanese Attitudes Towards Jews*, ACTA no. 11 (Jerusalem: SICSA, 1997).

book is genuine. The belief in the power of the Jews is much stronger than any rational refutation and serves far more important goals than its authors could dream about.

Since the antisemitic surge of the late 1980s, Jewish organizations have made several attempts to halt the publication and distribution of the *Protocols*. Their most fruitful activities took place during the *Marco Polo* Affair, which ultimately led to the appearance of many articles about Jews and the Holocaust, mostly positive and some even self-reflective.<sup>11</sup> This certainly was a breakthrough in the Japanese intellectual treatment of this issue in the last twenty years.<sup>12</sup>

It should be emphasized in this context that antisemitic authors in Japan initially ignored the Holocaust, in line with a longstanding lack of popular awareness regarding the subject. Although Anne Frank's *Diary of a Young Girl*, published in Japanese in 1952, had been a bestseller, most readers regarded the book as an account of a universal war victim and remained oblivious to the Jewish identity of its heroine. More informed interest in the Holocaust began to be expressed only during the Eichmann trial a decade later, which was covered by several Japanese journalists.

When Holocaust denial attracted widespread attention in the West in the course of the 1980s, it was only a matter of time until Japanese antisemitic writers followed suit. Uno Masami, a Christian pastor who in 1986 had published two antisemitic books in Japan which together sold over a million copies, led the field.<sup>13</sup> In 1989, he became the first Japanese to publicly deny the Holocaust, as well as establishing strong ties with various Holocaust-denial organizations. In books and lectures, he denounced the "lies" in Anne Frank's diary and argued that the Holocaust was "Jewish propaganda."<sup>14</sup> In the wake of Uno's publications, an increasing number of Japanese began to show interest in Holocaust denial. In 1992, for example, Keiichiro Kobori, a professor at the University of

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11 See Goodman and Miyazawa, *Jews in the Japanese Mind: The History and Uses of a Cultural Stereotype* 2nd ed. (Lexington Mass., 2000), 271–76; Rotem Kowner, "Tokyo Recognizes Auschwitz: The Rise and Fall of Holocaust Denial in Japan, 1989–1999," *Journal of Genocide Research* 3 (2001): 257–72; Herbert Worm, "Holocaust-Leugner in Japan: Der Fall 'Marco Polo'—Printmedien und Vergangenheitsbewältigung," in *Japan 1994/95: Politics und Wirtschaft*, ed. by Manfred Pohl (Hamburg, 1995): 114–61.

12 For some suggestions for practical measures, see Kowner, *Tokyo Recognizes Auschwitz*, 269–70.

13 On the Japanese perception of the Holocaust and Holocaust denial, see n. 11, and Rotem Kowner, "The Rise and Fall of Holocaust Denial in Japan, 1989–1999" (2001).

14 See, for instance, Uno Masami, *Miezaruru teikoku: 1993, shionisto, yudaya ga seikai o shihai suru* [The invisible empire: the Zionist Jews will control the world in 1993] (Tokyo, 1989).

Tokyo, praised the work of the California-based Institute for Historical Review (IHR), one of the leading Holocaust-denial organizations, in an article published in the prestigious daily *Sankei Shimbun*. The IHR, for its part, has invited Japanese speakers to its annual convention, and several Japanese “revisionists” have submitted articles to its newsletter.<sup>15</sup>

This “revisionism” cannot be divorced from the role that Jews occupy in the minds of the Japanese. The most common view is that Jews serve as a reflection of the Other, representing or displacing the preoccupation with external elements (the West, foreigners in Japan) about which the Japanese feel conflicted, but which are less “legitimate” targets of criticism. Jews are also used to facilitate internal needs: they serve as a beacon of Japan’s quest for self-definition, namely as reinforcement of a sense of uniqueness, as well as an explanation for Japan’s problems (e.g., economic distress and international criticism), and as a warning for future developments. In addition, the Japanese have a fascination for works dealing with the occult, supernatural phenomena, and conspiracies. The Jews are already perceived as an unfamiliar and legendary people; some authors, responding to market demand, also portray them as manipulators of the world’s political and economic system.<sup>16</sup>

Based on three surveys that I conducted among more than 600 students during 1995–1996, I contend that Jews, in their virtual nonexistence in Japan, often play the role of demonic conspirators.<sup>17</sup> Rationally, the majority of Japanese do not accept such a notion. Yet many Japanese—including businessmen, politicians, and members of the more educated echelon—turn to antisemitic literature for the comforting rationales to be found there. It is surely more appealing to blame Japan’s economic or political “misfortunes” on some outside demonic force rather than submitting to a sober appraisal of the country’s past and future path.

Given the recent wave of antisemitic literature, one may wonder whether it is possible to alter the Japanese mindset toward Jews. In fact, the unique characteristics of Japanese antisemitism may make the problem easier to deal with. In the case study presented below, the “*Marco Polo* affair,” it will be shown how publication of an article promoting Holocaust denial led to a fully orchestrated

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<sup>15</sup> On the ties of the Institute for Historical Review and Japan, see Kenneth S. Stern, *Holocaust Denial* (New York: American Jewish Committee, 1994), 49.

<sup>16</sup> For further discussion, see Kowner, *On Ignorance, Respect, and Suspicion*; Jennifer Golub, *Japanese Attitudes toward Jews* (Pacific Rim Institute of the American Jewish Committee, 1992).

<sup>17</sup> See Kowner, *On Ignorance, Respect, and Suspicion*.



operation against the spread of antisemitism in a manner that may have changed the course of current attitudes toward Jews in Japan.

To understand the context of this affair, it is important to remember that the year 1995 was an *annus horribilis* for the Japanese. On 17 January, the city of Kobe was shaken by a great earthquake that left more than six thousand people dead. Two months later, millions of underground commuters in Tokyo were subjected to a series of nerve gas attacks that killed twelve and injured some five thousand. On the economic front, 1995 marked the end of a spectacular rise that had lasted several decades. After the yen-dollar rate reached an all-time high in April, with Japan's GNP amounting to more than 80 percent of that of the United States, the economy took a sharp downturn, entering into a painful recession.

It is against this backdrop that the first widely publicized case of Holocaust denial in Japan took place. The affair began on 14 January 1995 with a ten-page article published in the monthly *Marco Polo*. Owned by the prestigious publishing house Bungei Shunju, *Marco Polo* had a circulation of about 200,000 and was aimed at young, affluent, and educated Japanese men. The offending article, entitled, "The Greatest Taboo in Postwar History: There Were No Nazi Gas Chambers" was a classic piece of Holocaust denial. According to its author, a neurologist named Nishioka Masanori, there was scant evidence to show that Jews were systematically killed in gas chambers. The Final Solution, he claimed, was merely a plan to resettle Jews in the East, as Hitler never desired the annihilation of the Jews. In all, the article concluded, the "Holocaust" was nothing more than Allied propaganda.<sup>18</sup>

Over a period of several years, Nishioka had submitted his article to more than sixty Japanese journals. "The Greatest Taboo" was finally accepted by *Marco Polo* in June 1994. However, the magazine's editor, Hanada Kazuyoshi, decided to withhold publication until January 1995 in order to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz.<sup>19</sup> It was there, he wrote in his introduction to the article, that "the greatest taboo of postwar history is being kept secret.... Why is it that Japan's media do not write on this matter?"<sup>20</sup>

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18 Nishioka Masanori, "Sengo sekaishi saidai no tabu: Nachi gasu shitsu wa nakkata" [The greatest taboo of postwar history: there were no Nazi gas chambers], *Marco Polo* (February 1995): 170–79.

19 See Iwakami Yasumi, "Mujaki na Holocaust revisionist" [An artless Holocaust revisionist], *Takarajima* 30 (April 1995): 18–27. Before coming to *Marco Polo*, Hanada served as editor of the weekly *Shūkan Bunshun*, which in 1993 published a large advertisement for a three-volume, virulently antisemitic work.

20 Introduction by Hanada to Nishioka, "Nachi gasu shitsu wa nakkata," 171.

## Echoes and Responses

Responses to the article published in *Marco Polo* can be divided into three stages. In the first stage, the Japanese media ignored the article, in part because most of the public attention was focused on the horrendous aftermath of the earthquake in Kobe. Thus it came about that the article was “discovered” by foreigners, namely, members of the Committee Against Antisemitism in Japan, a watchdog group established in August 1994 by Jewish residents of the country.<sup>21</sup> The committee first decided to inform several Jewish organizations and embassies about the content of the article. Then, once coverage of the earthquake had subsided, it issued its own public statement.

Three entities responded quickly to the committee’s alert. Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League in the United States, wrote to the editor of *Marco Polo* and demanded a retraction in the next issue of the magazine. Simultaneously, the Los Angeles-based Simon Wiesenthal Center dispatched a protest to the Japanese ambassador to the United States and sent Rabbi Abraham Cooper, an associate dean of the Center and a veteran opponent of Japanese antisemitism, to Japan. A day later, the Israeli embassy sent its press attaché to *Marco Polo*’s editorial office to protest the publication and demand an apology. The assistant editor who met with the attaché expressed no apology; he did, however, offer to provide space in the next issue for a rebuttal of the article’s accusations.<sup>22</sup>

The second stage focused on the threat of a boycott against the journal and its publisher. After Bungei Shunju refused to retract or apologize for the article, Rabbi Cooper decided to contact eight companies whose advertisements had appeared in the latest issue of *Marco Polo*. Volkswagen was the first to respond, announcing that it would cease advertising in the magazine. Two days later, Mitsubishi Motors and Mitsubishi Electric followed suit, while Cartier Japan took the more radical step of suspending its advertising in all Bungei Shunju publications.<sup>23</sup>

The final stage involved local and foreign media pressure. Ten days after *Marco Polo* hit the stands, the Associated Press reported on the Holocaust-denial article, and by the next day, the Japanese media had picked up the item.<sup>24</sup> At first,

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<sup>21</sup> For a detailed account of the Committee against Antisemitism in Japan, see Nicolas Davis, “The *Marco Polo* Affair” (unpubl. seminar paper).

<sup>22</sup> See “Publisher Closes *Marco Polo* for Anti-Jewish Article,” *Daily Yomiuri*, 31 January 1995, 1; “Japanese Criticized for Holocaust Denial,” *Chicago Tribune*, 25 January 1995.

<sup>23</sup> See “Volkswagen Pulls Advert from Japanese Magazine,” *Jewish Chronicle*, 27 January 1995.

<sup>24</sup> See, for example, “Jews Blast Article Denying Holocaust,” *Asahi Evening News*, 25 January 1995; “Nachi no gasu shitsu no hitei ni kōgi” [Protests about the denial of Nazi gas chambers],

Hanada continued to defend his decision to publish Nishioka's article, arguing that freedom of expression extended as well to the publication of nonconformist views. Criticism of Hanada, however, mounted as more and more newspapers, both domestic and foreign, reported on the affair. On January 27, Bungei Shunju evinced its first signs of capitulation, instructing its agents in the United States to notify Abraham Cooper that it was weighing the possibility of closing down the magazine.

At this point, the course of events accelerated. On 30 January, Bungei Shunju dismissed Hanada and announced that publication of *Marco Polo* had been permanently suspended. The dismissal announcement was accompanied by a letter of apology written to Cooper by Tanaka Kengo, the president of Bungei Shunju, in which the latter admitted to an overall lack of understanding regarding the Holocaust. Both the announcement and the apology received wide media coverage both at home and abroad.<sup>25</sup>

Even the Japanese government—which in general is reluctant to involve itself in media affairs—felt obliged to denounce the article. But an even more dramatic and arguably more successful outcome of the Jewish campaign against *Marco Polo* was the sensation it sparked in the Japanese media. On February 2, three days after his written apology, Tanaka met with Cooper at a joint press conference. In front of hundreds of representatives of the print and broadcast media, Tanaka reiterated his apology and announced that closure of *Marco Polo* was the best way to show Bungei Shunju's deep regret over the incident.<sup>26</sup>

Less than two weeks later, Tanaka was forced to step down as head of the publishing company, citing the *Marco Polo* affair as one of the factors behind his resignation.<sup>27</sup> Sources in the Japanese media later reported that the incident was only the last in a series of scandals that had rocked Bungei Shunju (moreover, they reported, both Tanaka and Hanada had been reassigned within the company). They agreed, however, that publication of the Holocaust denial article

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*Asahi Shimbun*, 26 January 1995.

25 See, for example, "Holocaust Denial Dooms Marco Polo," *Japan Times*, 31 January 1995; "Japanese Magazine Closes after Anti-Semitic Article," *International Herald Tribune*, 1 February 1995.

26 See "Publisher Eases Jewish Groups' Wrath by Closing Magazine over Holocaust Story," *Nikkei Weekly*, 6 February 1995.

27 See Kawado Kazufumi, "'Hanada ryū' o dō sōkatsu suru no ka" [How can we summarize 'Hanada's manner?'], *Asahi Shimbun*, 24 February 1995.

and, more importantly, the boycott it sparked had had a definite impact on the decision to replace Tanaka.<sup>28</sup>

In the following weeks, numerous articles and programs were devoted to various aspects of the *Marco Polo* affair. While many articles focused on the backstage power struggle at Bungei Shunju and the company's fall from grace, others examined more fundamental aspects of the affair. A few writers challenged the company's hasty capitulation to foreign pressure, arguing that the Jewish response to *Marco Polo*'s publication of "The Greatest Taboo" was indicative of undue Jewish power and influence, which, if unchecked, would be a barrier against legitimate critical discussion of the Holocaust. A majority, however, avoided criticism of the Jewish campaign against the magazine. Several journals even published sympathetic and informative articles on Jews and the Holocaust; some journalists began to criticize Japanese ignorance of Jewish suffering, while deploring the lack of professional judgment and sensationalist tendencies of their own media.<sup>29</sup> The American scholar, David Goodman, went still further, contending that the "solipsistic monologue about Jews and antisemitism" in Japan was typical of Japanese dealings with the outside world for centuries.<sup>30</sup>

Holocaust denial is admittedly still a novel and limited phenomenon in Japanese society. It seems to be promulgated only by a few individuals whose motives are not always related to antisemitism; they may instead be demonstrating a Japanese tendency to emulate foreign fashions or fads. Nonetheless, Holocaust denial in Japan has a historical context.

My belief is that this phenomenon is associated with Japan's lingering denial of its own past, namely, its actions during the second Sino-Japanese War and the Pacific front of World War II (1937–1945). A growing body of Japanese historiography presents Japan as a victim rather than as an aggressor in these wars: acceptance of such revisionist views becomes much easier when it is believed that European modern history has been falsified as well.

Since the end of the 1980s, the Japanese public has been shocked by a stream of testimonies regarding the disgraceful conduct of their country's imperial army and navy during the eight-year period of warfare. They have also become aware

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28 See Shinoda Hiroyuki, "Bungei Shunju, Tanaka Kengo zen-shachô no yûutsu" [The depression of Tanaka Kengo, former president of Bungei Shunju], *Tsukuru* (April 1995): 134–39; see also David G. Goodman, "Anti-Semitism in Japan: Its History and Current Implications," in *The Construction of Racial Identities in China and Japan*, ed. Frank Dikötter (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997), 177–98, esp. 194.

29 See, for example, *Sapio*, 23 March 1995; *Takarajima*, 30 April 1995; *Seiron* (April 1995), *Brutus*, 1 July 1995.

30 Goodman, "Anti-Semitism in Japan," 195.

of the international attention and sharp criticism focused on Japan’s reaction to these revelations. In the past, the Japanese had been somewhat insulated from documentation of their country’s wartime role. Moreover, there was no clear consensus regarding what had happened and why. Over time, however, victims of that era began to speak out, and with the emergence of a new generation of Japanese who had been born after 1945, there was increased willingness to publicize wartime testimonies that were painful and sometimes appalling.

Although the most detailed accounts were published abroad, the Japanese public gradually became familiar with the sequence of events regarding hideous experiments in biological and chemical warfare that had been conducted by the notorious Unit 731, which had resulted in the deaths of thousands of prisoners. They learned of the “comfort women”—more than 100,000 non-Japanese women who had been forced to serve Japanese troops as sex slaves.<sup>31</sup> Most shocking, however, were the revelations concerning the massacre carried out by Japanese troops in Nanjing (Nanking). According to conservative sources, some 100,000–200,000 Chinese civilians had been murdered and thousands of women raped when Japanese troops occupied the Chinese capital in December 1937.<sup>32</sup>

Unlike Germany, Japan has never publicly acknowledged full responsibility for its wartime actions. Thus, whereas Germany constructs its defeat in 1945 as a form of liberation, Japan still views it as a juncture of victimization.<sup>33</sup> Three months before the *Marco Polo* affair, Ben Hills, the Tokyo correspondent of the Australian daily, *The Age*, summarized the Japanese mindset regarding the war as follows:

Imagine a country responsible for a war in which upwards of 20 million people were killed, whose armies committed atrocities of the nature of Hitler’s “final solution”—and yet which

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<sup>31</sup> See Peter Williams and David Wallace, *Unit 731: The Japanese Army’s Secret of Secrets* (London, 1989); George Hicks, *The Comfort Women: Japan’s Brutal Regime of Enforced Prostitution in the Second World War* (New York, 1995); David Boling, *Mass Rape, Enforced Prostitution, and the Japanese Imperial Army: Japan Eschews International Legal Responsibility?* (Baltimore: Occasional Papers in Contemporary Asian Studies, 1995), 3 (128).

<sup>32</sup> See Iguchi Kazuki, Kisaka Jun’ichiro, and Shimoizato Masaki, *Nanking jiken: Nanking shidan kanei shiryoshu* [Nanking incident: data collection of the Kyoto division] (Tokyo: Aoki Shoten, 1989); Hora Tomio, Fujihara Akira, and Honda Katsuichi, eds., *Nanking daigyakusatsu no Kenkyū* [Research of the Nanking massacre] (Tokyo, 1992); Nanking daigyakusatsu no Shinsō wo akiraka ni suru Zenkoku Renrakukai [The National Association for Revealing the Truth about the Nanking Massacre], ed., *Nanking daigyakusatsu: nihonjin heno hokuhatu* [The Nanking massacre: accusation to the Japanese people] (Tokyo, 1992).

<sup>33</sup> See Ian Buruma, *The Wages of Guilt: Memories of War in Germany and Japan* (New York, 1994).

50 years on is still living in a fantasy world of denial and disbelief. Imagine a country where Adolf Hitler never died, but lived on to a ripe old age, stripped of his absolute powers but still worshipped by his people....<sup>34</sup>

At the same time, since the 1990s, pleas for introspection and reconciliation with the past have been heard more frequently in Japan.<sup>35</sup> For instance, in 1993, when the 39-year rule of the Liberal Democratic party finally ended, the newly-elected government of Hosokawa Morihiro indicated its willingness to reexamine some of the long-concealed issues of the past. In his inaugural speech, Hosokawa spoke of his “deep regret” concerning the “unbearable sufferings caused to so many by Japan’s aggressive behavior and colonial control.” Soon thereafter, Hosokawa chose South Korea as the site of his first overseas visit and issued there a “profound apology” for Japanese acts of war.<sup>36</sup>

Hosokawa’s approach, although it fell short of a full acknowledgement of Japanese atrocities, made many uncomfortable. In 1994, Nagano Shigeto, the minister of justice in a new government headed by Prime Minister Hata Tsutomu, declared in a newspaper interview that the war waged by Japan should not be viewed as a war of aggression, since it was essentially designed to free Asian colonies of Western control. Tellingly, Nagano also contended that the Nanjing massacre was a “fabrication” and that the comfort women were simply “military prostitutes.”<sup>37</sup> Although a public outcry across Asia led to Nagano’s resignation two days later, his statement expressed sentiments that were still held by a large number of Japanese and were an indication of the way in which the Japan’s leaders had largely refused to come to terms with their country’s recent past.<sup>38</sup>

Japan—again, unlike Germany—has never passed legislation either to remove immunity for war crimes or to ban the denial of its own or other coun-

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34 Ben Hills, “Why Japan Must Face Its Past,” *The Age*, 4 October 1994, cited in Gavan McCormack, *The Emptiness of Japanese Affluence* (Armonk, 1996), 230.

35 In this context, mention should be made of Japanese historian Ienaga Saburo, who waged a long struggle against the Japanese Ministry of Education. See Irie Yoshimasa, “The History of the Textbook Controversy,” *Japan Echo* 24, no. 3 (1997): 34–38.

36 McCormack, *The Emptiness of Japanese Affluence*, 226–27.

37 See “Nagano Retracts Remark about Nanjing ‘Hoax,’” *Daily Yomiuri*, 7 May 1994, 1; Takahama Tatou, “Time to drop Tatemae and Speak the Truth,” *Daily Yomiuri*, 23 August 1994, 6.

38 A second minister to resign in similar circumstances was Sakurai Shin, the director-general of the Environmental Agency, who declared that Japan had freed most of Asia from European colonialism. See “Sakurai Resigns over War Remark,” *Daily Yomiuri*, 16 August 1994, 1; “Cabinet Members’ Statements,” *Aera*, 12 September 1994, 36–38.

tries’ war crimes. In addition, it resisted offering across-the-board compensation to the comfort women, ex-POWs, or others victimized by Japanese war crimes. In this moral, political, and intellectual climate, it is not difficult to understand the interest in Holocaust denial. For if the Holocaust can be relativized or even denied, why not do the same for the Nanjing massacre—or, for that matter, any other Japanese imperialistic activities from the first Sino-Japanese War of 1894 until its surrender to Allied forces in 1945?

## Conclusions

The *Marco Polo* affair can be seen as a link in a long chain of anti-Jewish publications that appeared in Japan in the 1990s. Earlier, as noted, Uno Masami had explicitly denied the Holocaust in books published by the magazine’s publisher, Bungei Shunju. The article appearing in *Marco Polo*, however, was the most salient case of Japanese antisemitism in the postwar era. Moreover, its publication marked the first occasion on which Jews not only effectively retaliated against a specific piece of propaganda but succeeded as well in drawing attention to the broader issue of Holocaust denial and Japanese antisemitism. Indeed, the *Marco Polo* affair was a turning point in the long struggle over the Jews’ image in Japan. In its wake, the Jews merited massive positive exposure, while a warning was issued to producers of antisemitic material that their activities were being monitored and would no longer be tolerated.

Massive exposure, it is true, had negative effects as well. A few months later, another Holocaust denial scandal surfaced, which demonstrated that Japanese insensitivity (perhaps motivated as well by a desire for free publicity) had by no means vanished from the scene. Kimura Aiji, the almost unknown author of a Holocaust denial book, sued for libel two critics who had written an article attacking the book in the weekly *Shukan Kinyōbi*. In typical Japanese fashion, the judge assigned to the case appeared to be slow and indecisive. Yet the final verdict, delivered on February 16, 1999, was unequivocal: in dismissing the charges, the judge ruled that, contrary to Kimura’s claim, Nazi Germany, “as acknowledged by the international Nuremberg trial, murdered in its concentration camps great numbers of Jews by poison gas.”<sup>39</sup>

Both the Jewish reaction to the *Marco Polo* affair and the subsequent Japanese response provide some insights concerning future campaigns against

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39 For further details, see Kowner, “Rise and Fall of Holocaust Denial in Japan.”

Holocaust denial and the broader phenomenon of “intellectual” antisemitism in countries, such as Japan, that have limited acquaintance with Jews. Obviously, any engagement against antisemitism requires an organization that surveys the media and warns of any expression of antisemitism. In this regard, the strategy of “riding out the storm,” of not responding to antisemitic provocation, seems to be counterproductive. Similarly, appealing to editors’ or publishers’ goodwill in combating antisemitism or Holocaust denial appears to be ineffective, since the initial motive for publication is often the desire to spark a well-publicized scandal that will lead to increased sales.

Japanese antisemitism appears to this author to be less connected with Jews or Israel than it is a function of internal factors within Japanese society—including the desire of various segments of the Japanese leadership, to deny or sanitize elements of Japan’s own wartime past. Nevertheless, among various options, perhaps the most efficient way to combat antisemitism in Japan is to launch a coordinated counterattack that combines the awakening of the Japanese and foreign media, criticism voiced by well-known foreign personalities, political intervention, and even economic sanctions. When all of these energies are brought to bear, as happened in the *Marco Polo* affair, we may witness the continuation of a gradual change of Japanese attitudes toward Jews. Jewish concerns may come to be treated with greater awareness and sensitivity instead of being demonized.



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# Globalization, Conspiracy Theory, and the Shoah<sup>1</sup>

Ever since the beginnings of right-wing extremism, antisemitism has been one of the dominant ideological foundations that has permeated every aspect of the movement and its thought. George L. Mosse once pointed out: “Just as the right and its nationalism transformed its own myths into concrete symbols, so the enemy was not left abstract; he was embodied in Jews and parliamentarians.”<sup>2</sup> While for most educated strata, antisemitism became unacceptable after the Second World War and the revelations of the Holocaust, recent events have shown that antisemitism, often disguised as anti-Zionism or criticism of Israel has now begun to appear at all levels of society. It is the Jewish State which now embodies “the enemy” of humanity. For current right-wing extremists, antisemitism has taken on even greater importance since the birth of the State of Israel brought Jews into the public sphere of the Western World as equal actors. This gave antisemites a new focus. Now Jews are not only pulling strings behind the scenes, but they are playing starring roles on the world stage. A further layer of hate based on this switch has been added to ancient stereotypes. After centuries of secret manipulation, the Jew has come out of the closet, as it were, and has begun to influence, or even control, the world. Thus, the hatred of the antisemite for the Jew has perhaps even more of a force than before. This was anticipated in the last political testament of Adolf Hitler, when he wrote:

Centuries will pass away but...the hatred against those finally responsible...international Jewry and its helpers will grow.... I have also made it quite plain that, if the nations of Europe are again to be regarded as mere shares to be bought and sold by these international conspirators in money and finance, then that race, Jewry, which is the real criminal of this murderous struggle, will be saddled with the responsibility.<sup>3</sup>

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1 This is a much revised and expanded version of the article “Antisemitismus und Holocaust-Leugnung: Permanente Elemente des globalen Rechts-extremismus,” that originally appeared in *Globalisierter Rechts-extremismus? Die extremistische Rechte in der Ara der Globalisierung*, edited by Thomas Greven and Thomas Grumke (Wiesbaden, 2006). I am grateful for their permission to use it here and to Robert S. Wistrich for his editorial work on the text.

2 George L. Mosse, “Community in Nationalism, Fascism and the Radical Right,” in idem, *Confronting the Nation* (Hanover, 1993), 44–45.

3 <http://www.ess.uwe.ac.uk/documents/poltest.htm>

Antisemitism, always a constant on the radical Right, was commanded by one of its most iconic figures to avenge itself against the perceived “Jewish victory” at the end of the Second World War. In this effort, the far Right continued to embrace the older, traditional forms of antisemitism, while looking for new paths and methods to reach a wider audience and overcome the stigma associated with mass murder. This is a pattern Robert Chazan described a few years ago when he wrote: “every new stage in the evolution of anti-Jewish thinking is marked by a dialectical interplay between a prior legacy of negative stereotypes and the realities of a new social context.”<sup>4</sup>

This is the case with right-wing extremism, which appears in a variety of forms, but invariably relies on traditional antisemitism as both the common thread and underlying explanation of all world problems. These varieties can include traditional neo-Nazi groups, skinheads, Holocaust denial groups, or religious extremists.

Neo-Nazism, a term which encompasses a variety of meanings, continues to be an international presence. In the United States, there is currently a period of flux within the movement, as long-time leaders like Dr. William Pierce of the National Alliance and Richard Butler of the Aryan Nation have died, and some of their possible successors like Matt Hale of the World Church of the Creator have been sentenced to long prison terms. This has left a vacuum that figures like David Duke are attempting to fill. Duke, whose group EURO (European-American Unity and Rights Organization) is one of the many that claim an international presence, has devoted much energy to positioning himself to fill the movement’s leadership gap. This included spending time in Russia and the Ukraine, where he established himself sufficiently to be listed as a faculty member at a Ukrainian university.<sup>5</sup>

Duke also managed to bring together a number of prominent U.S. neo-Nazis, who met under his auspices in New Orleans in May, 2004. There they signed a document called the *New Orleans Protocol*, promising cooperation amongst the leadership and various factions of the movement. Along with the pledges came an aggressive and extensive assertion of antisemitism, which led one observer to write that

During the meeting, Duke singled out Jews as the source of the world’s problems.... Most of conference participants’ ire was directed at what they consider to be a worldwide Jewish conspiracy to destroy the white race through immigration and miscegenation.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Robert Chazan, *Medieval Stereotypes and Modern Antisemitism* (Berkeley, 1997), 135.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.whitecivilrights.com/flyers/Dr55.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.splcenter.org/center/splcreport/article.jsp?aid=83>

The fear of miscegenation, or “race mixing,” has long been part of European Nazi and American racist groups. However, the *New Orleans Protocol* particularly emphasized the Jewish role in deliberately encouraging miscegenation to weaken the white race. In other words, miscegenation was viewed not only as bad in itself, but as a weapon of the international Jewish conspiracy. According to Duke, this conspiracy is based on the underlying premise of Judaism, evidenced by the fact that, in Duke’s opinion “organized Jewry has pursued a successful agenda that has amassed incredible power in modern times.”<sup>7</sup> This explanation serves to explain Duke’s world-view and his motivation. In his own words, he is compelled to “address what Henry Ford called the ‘world’s foremost problem, a problem now critical to our people’s survival and freedom.’”<sup>8</sup> Duke explains that his “awakening” refers to the discovery he made as a young man, of “the shared roots of both Communism and Zionism.”<sup>9</sup> Having made this discovery, he went on to investigate Judaism more thoroughly, and came to the discovery that what he calls “Jewish Supremacism” is at the root of all the major problems that we now face.<sup>10</sup> Thus, for example, 9/11 was caused by Israeli actions (“Israel and its control over American foreign policy was the primary reason for this terrorism against America”).<sup>11</sup> Globalization is also a Jewish scheme that needs to be opposed:

For the last few decades of my life I have earnestly tried to inform people that those who are the true forces behind globalism are in actuality, racial supremacists. But, they are not the so-called racial supremacists the media talks about. They are not European, African or Asian supremacists, they are Jewish supremacists.<sup>12</sup>

And, of course, no mention of the Jewish conspiracy to control the world would be complete without a reference to the classic text of antisemitic propaganda, the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. While the *Protocols* remain a staple of antisemitic conspiracy theorists, it is certainly no surprise to find that Duke has given them a new, updated look.<sup>13</sup> His book, *My Awakening*, which alleges a Jewish plot to take

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7 David Duke, “Preface,” *Jewish Supremacism* at <http://www.davidduke.com/index.php?p=129>

8 David Duke, *My Awakening*, Chapter 15, at <http://www.davidduke.com>

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.

11 David Duke, *One Year Later: The Real Causes of the 911 Attack*, at <http://www.davidduke.com>

12 David Duke, *The Lies of Globalism*, at <http://www.davidduke.com>

13 On the history and present uses of the *Protocols*, along with a critical analysis and refutation of its text, see Steven L. Jacobs and Mark Weitzman, *Dismantling the Big Lie: The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (New York, 2003); Andrian Kreye, “Die Falschung,” *Suddeutsche*

over the world, is described by one sympathetic critic as “eclipsing” the *Protocols* themselves.<sup>14</sup>

Duke has also embraced other themes that can help him to popularize the movement, and shore up his leadership claims. For example, he has joined those who use ecological concerns to broaden the reach of the movement. For these theorists, there is no contradiction between ecology and neo-Nazism. In fact, ecological concerns are a direct outgrowth of their National Socialist philosophies. In Duke’s writings we find this spelled out directly:

I do, though, have an abiding love for our White race and the civilization and values that it created. I want my children and all my descendants to live in a free and healthy society, not a Third World hovel. I want to preserve the unique character and beauty of my people the same way that, as an ecology-minded individual, I desire the preservation of the Blue Whale or the great African Elephant.”<sup>15</sup>

For Duke, it is the Jews who are the enemies of ecology. Motivated by greed, they will do anything, including exploiting nature, to turn a profit. Duke asks “do we really want the Third world to be made into economic colonies for the New World Order and the new globalism? What will this do to them, to their own cultures, to the well being of the world’s ecology?” And all this to benefit “the true forces behind globalism (who) are in actuality, racial supremacists.”<sup>16</sup>

I have used Duke’s writings to sketch out some of the newer themes that have become part of the current far-right discourse. These motifs, such as the emergence of anti-globalization or ecology were often seen as part of the left or liberal agenda. They have been reworked to fit into right wing extremist discourse, retooled by giving them an antisemitic cast. But these adaptations are by no means limited to ideologues like David Duke.<sup>17</sup> The basic idea was already

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*Zeitung*, 25-26 May 2005, presents a recent German perspective on the current status of the *Protocols* at the 100th anniversary of their appearance.

**14** The citation is taken from a review entitled “Jewish Supremacism: A Powerful Expose of International Zionism” attributed to Edgar Johnston, Ph.D., found online at various sites, including <http://www.adelaideinstitute.org/USA/019.htm> This is the website of the Adelaide Institute, Australia’s most notorious Holocaust denial group. Johnston attributed this statement to “prominent Jewish leaders in Russia,” whom he did not identify.

**15** David Duke, “America is at the crossroads,” 23 Oct. 2004, <http://www.davidduke.com/index.php?p=22>

**16** David Duke, “The Lies of Globalism,” 23 Oct. 2004, <http://www.davidduke.com/index.php?p=11>

**17** See now the recent Southern Poverty Law Center article, “Syria/Iran: Duke, Other Anti-Semites, Propagandize in Middle East,” *Intelligence Report* (Spring 2006), <http://www.splcenter.org/intel/intelreport/article.jsp?aid=620>

expressed earlier by deeper and more original neo-Nazi thinkers, such as the late William Pierce in the United States, or Horst Mahler in Germany. Pierce had actually articulated such a view as far back as 1976, when he said that

There are, in fact, several issues on which we are closer to what would ordinarily be considered the left-wing or liberal position than we are to the conservative or right-wing position. One of these issues is the ecology issue: the protection of our natural environment, the elimination of pollution, and the protection of wildlife. And there are also other issues in which we are closer to the liberals than to the conservatives, although I doubt that we agree with them completely on any issue; just as we seldom, if ever, agree completely with the right-wing on any issue.<sup>18</sup>

Thus, nearly three decades before Duke proposed a similar perspective, we can find a clear statement of this theme. And, of course, we find the same diabolical causality which invokes “the Jewish assault on all our values and institutions.”<sup>19</sup> Later in life Pierce was also using anti-globalization as a theme. In a broadcast of 5 September 1998, Pierce began by saying that “Every few months for the past several years I have used this program to warn against the policy of economic globalization.” Only a few months later Pierce explicitly charged Jews with being the prime movers of globalization, when he wrote that “the process of globalization (is) being promoted by the Jews and their allies, whether international capitalists or deranged liberals.”<sup>20</sup> The neo-Nazi extremist, Horst Mahler, also began his career on the far left as a lawyer connected with the Red Army Faction, more popularly known as the Baader-Meinhof Group in West Germany. Trained as a lawyer, Mahler defended Andreas Baader in the early 1970s, and then was jailed for participating in a violent shootout that freed him for a while. While in prison, Mahler had an epiphany and turned to the right, eventually ending up in the 1990s with the neo-Nazi NPD. Mahler left that party to join Deutsches Kolleg, which considers itself as the theoretical arm of those who hope to reconstitute a Fourth Reich. Mahler’s thought contains a typically fascistic mix of left and right. For example, like both Pierce and Duke he is virulently against globalization. Mahler viewed the September 11 attacks as the first shot in a war against globalization.<sup>21</sup>

Writing ten days after the events of 9/11, Mahler said that

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**18** William Pierce, “Our Cause,” <http://www.nationalvanguard.org/story.php?id=3482>

**19** Ibid.

**20** William Pierce, “Nationalism vs. the New World Order,” in *Free Speech* (May 1998); <http://www.natvan.com/free-speech/fs985c.html>

**21** Jessica Stern, “The Protean Enemy,” *Foreign Affairs* (July/August 2003).

Globalism, already powerfully damaged by the runaway world economic crisis, will sink down upon itself, like the towers of Manhattan, under a thousand dagger strikes from Islamic fundamentalists. This collapse will finally also be the signal to the [various] peoples in the metropolises to revolt.<sup>22</sup>

According to Mahler, 9/11 meant that “Now—for the first time—a military beating has been inflicted on American ground, upon the war of extermination of the Globalists against national cultures.”<sup>23</sup> Even before 9/11, Mahler made it clear that he saw Jews as being inextricably linked to globalization. In an article dated from March 2001, he wrote

We have to find this prospect unpleasant, especially since this power hides itself behind the smoke-screen of fine-sounding words like “enlightenment,” “tolerance,” “emancipation,” “Modernism,” “human rights,” “free trade,” and “Globalism,” and attacks and destroys nations and peoples from its place of concealment.

Mahler later made it clear that the power referred to was “the Jews” by writing that in “the present World situation, Globalism, [should be linked to] the objective existence of the Jewish Question.”<sup>24</sup>

In an interview posted on the Internet, Mahler further claimed that “there is no American war against terrorism, (but instead) we are witnessing a worldwide campaign of terror, a proxy war conducted by the USA on behalf of the Jews.” He explained that:

What is generally meant by “Democracy” is actually Jewish rule, which Jewish plutocrats exercise through their control of global finance, the monetary system and the media.... I do know that the nations are going to liberate themselves from the Jewish yoke.”

He even resorted to traditional Christian antisemitism by quoting John 8:44—“For ye have the devil as father, and ye wish to carry out your father’s desire.”<sup>25</sup>

A recent analysis of Mahler’s ideology concluded:

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22 <http://www.alphalink.com.au/~radnat/mahler/partfour.html>

23 Mahler, “Independence day—2001,” 12 Sept. 2001, <http://www.alphalink.com.au/~radnat/mahler/partthree.html>

24 Mahler, “Final Solution of the Jewish Question: Discovery of God instead of Jewish Hatred,” <http://www.alphalink.com.au/~radnat/mahler/parttwo.html> A valuable summary of antisemitism in the anti-globalization movement is in Mark Strauss, “Antiglobalism’s Jewish Problem,” in *Foreign Policy* (Nov./Dec. 2003); reprinted in Ron Rosenbaum, *Those Who Forget the Past: The Question of Anti-Semitism* (New York, 2004), 271–85. See also Robert S. Wistrich, *A Lethal Obsession: Anti-Semitism from Antiquity to the Global Jihadi* (New York, 2010).

25 <http://www.stormfront.org/forum/showthread.php?p=1781479#post1781479>

Mahler condemned the U.S. as being responsible for this world order because of its “limitless craving for enrichment and power,” which showed no consideration for the fundamentals of life of nations and destroyed economies and cultures. His anti-Americanism became intertwined with antisemitism when he targeted the American East Coast as “that web of power, money and the military.” Mahler equated “imperialists” with “globalists,” claiming that they governed the US which then bled other nations dry. The financial power of the American East Coast was connected, Mahler said, to the so-called cult of Jahwe, which he defined as “the cult of world power of the chosen people.” Thus, the linkage was complete: solidarity with the Islamist attacks on the US, the struggle against imperialistic US power, or more precisely against Jewish financial control of the East Coast, and the fight against “globalization” and the Jews.<sup>26</sup>

These new forms of antisemitism, particularly as expressed in anti-American feeling, have taken a significant turn in the attempt by right-wing extremists to reach out to the Islamic world. Radical Islam is viewed as the only force capable of challenging the United States and the Western concepts of liberal democracy, racial or religious equality. The principle of “the enemy of my enemy is my friend” applies, as does the vicious antisemitism espoused by Horst Mahler ever since his espousal of a *völkisch*-racist worldview. As with the German National Socialists before the Holocaust, Mahler equates democracy with the rule of Jews who control the international financial system from which the “peoples” are seeking their national liberation.

Indeed this “liberation” has currently taken the shape of the Islamist war on the West. Again, in Mahler’s words:

[T]he “September Lie,” the gruesome fairy tale about Osama bin Laden’s unprovoked attack on the USA, is now being challenged worldwide.... From the unmistakable victory of Washington’s opponent has emerged the worldwide realization that the Jewish media monopoly represents a mortal danger for all mankind.”<sup>27</sup>

Mahler makes clear that the common enemy of Islamists and right-wing extremists is Israel and also the United States (along with the West), which is its tool. This new alliance may still be utopian for most right-wing extremists, but nevertheless such attempts have been initiated, based to a large extent on mutually shared antisemitism. For example, David Duke, in a recent commentary posted on his website said that:

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26 <http://www.tau.ac.il/Anti-Semitism/asw2002-3/hentges.htm>

27 [http://www.stormfront.org/archive/t-194896Horst\\_Mahler\\_on\\_the\\_Jews.html](http://www.stormfront.org/archive/t-194896Horst_Mahler_on_the_Jews.html)

the Jewish supremacist globalists seek to destroy the identity and heritage of all peoples while erecting a supra-national state of Jewish supremacy not only over the people of Palestine but over the entire planet.<sup>28</sup>

Duke has in recent years carried his message to places like Iran and Bahrain, where in 2002 he delivered lectures claiming that Israel was behind the 9/11 terrorist attacks in New York, and that the attacks were planned as a pretext to push the U.S. government into war with the Arab world. Duke's message was picked up by various Arab media sources, which helped it reach a wider audience including the Saudi Arabian *Arab News*, which featured a report about Duke's talks in May 2002. The website Tanzeem e-islami eagerly reproduced Duke's analysis of 9/11, entitled "The Real Evil Spirit," which blamed "the Jewish Lobby and media power...for alienat[ing] the entire Arab world" and provoking the 9/11 attacks.<sup>29</sup>

Another right-wing extremist who developed similar links is the Swiss-born financier Achmed Huber (originally Albert Friedrich Armand Huber). Huber differs from Duke in that he formally converted to Islam in 1962 in Egypt, after studying Islam in Europe with the extremist Muslim Brotherhood. Huber's neo-Nazi links began very early. In a 1965 interview he spoke of the influence of the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin al-Husseini on his outlook. Husseini collaborated with the Nazis, met with Hitler, recruited and even organized a SS division of Bosnian Muslim volunteers. Huber at this time also spoke positively of another Nazi, Johann von Leers, who had converted to Islam, taking the name of Omar Amin. Von Leers was a fanatical antisemite in the Third Reich who became a leading figure in Gamel Abdel Nasser's propaganda machine.<sup>30</sup> Huber was also associated with another shadowy figure, the Swiss lawyer François Genoud who consistently tried to bridge the Nazi-Islamist spectrum. Before his suicide in 1996, Genoud worked with the terrorist Palestinian Radical Front for the Liberation of Palestine. At the same time, he held the legal rights to the writings of Hitler, Martin Bormann, and Goebbels. He was also behind the legal defense of the notorious Nazi war criminal, Klaus Barbie.<sup>31</sup> More recently, Huber allied with Horst Mahler and spoke at NPD conventions in 2000 and 2001. At the same time, his active par-

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28 David Duke, "Syria's Assad speaks of Jewish media attack on identity of people," 8 June 2005 at <http://www.davidduke.com/index.php?p=302>

29 [http://www.tanzeem.org/resources/articles/articles/david duke-the real evil spirit.htm](http://www.tanzeem.org/resources/articles/articles/david%20duke-the%20real%20evil%20spirit.htm)

30 On von Leers see Robert Wistrich, *Who's Who in Nazi Germany* (London, 1982); Gregory Paul Wegner, *Anti-Semitism and Schooling Under the Third Reich* (New York, 2002) examines the impact of von Leers' propaganda on the German educational system during the Nazi era.

31 On Genoud, see David Lee Preston, "Hitler's Swiss Connection," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 5 Jan. 1997.



ticipation in Islamist activity included being one of the five members of the managing committee of Al Taqwa (Fear of God) Management, a Swiss-based financial institution believed by the United States and European governments to be supporting bin Laden by laundering money and providing other forms of assistance. In November 2001, Huber was listed by the U.S. government as number 56 among 62 organizations and individuals suspected of involvement in terrorist activities, and is not permitted to enter the United States.<sup>32</sup> More recently, the NPD journal *Deutsche Stimme* published an interview with the head of the local Muslim community in its May 2006 edition. The interview presented an explanation of Islam, rather than an inflammatory attack on Jews or the United States, but it showed that the German extreme Right was ready to give a sympathetic hearing to Islam.<sup>33</sup>

The career of David Myatt represents yet another version of this extreme right-wing and Islamist axis. Myatt was a longtime member of notorious British neo-Nazi groups. Indeed he was even described by an English newspaper as the “ideological heavyweight” of Combat 18, closely identified with National Socialism.<sup>34</sup> His 1997 pamphlet, *A Practical Guide to Aryan Revolution* was said to have inspired David Copeland, convicted for a series of bombings in London in 1999. A year earlier, Myatt had converted to Islam, but still continued to write neo-Nazi material that can be found on websites such as the Aryan Nation and White Revolution. Myatt, who took the Moslem name of Abdul-Aziz Ibn Myatt, continued to be a prolific writer after his conversion. As one website devoted to his work puts it “Many of these articles praise and defend Osama bin Laden, and praise and justify suicide attacks (or “martyrdom operations” as he and others call them) in Palestine, Afghanistan, and elsewhere. Myatt—using his Muslim persona—also defended the September 11 attacks and the bombings in Bali. Indeed, “Abdul Aziz” Myatt wrote one of the most detailed defenses in the English language of martyrdom operations, entitled *Are Martyrdom Operations Lawful According to Quran and Sunnah?*<sup>35</sup> Myatt has also made a point of trying to amplify the connection between Islam and National Socialism. For example, a posting in his name to the neo-Nazi Aryan Nation website contains “The National-Socialist Guide to Understanding Islam” which is introduced as an attempt to find a “genuine and

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32 [http://www.pbs.org/newshour/updates/november01/moneylist\\_11-7.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/updates/november01/moneylist_11-7.html)

33 <http://www.deutsche-stimme.de/Ausgaben2006/Sites/05-06-Gespraech.html> My thanks to Thomas Grumke for this reference.

34 *The Observer*, 9 Feb. 2003, <http://observer.guardian.co.uk/review/story/0,6903,891761,00.html>

35 J. R. Wright, “David Myatt Biographical Information: The Life and Times of David Myatt,” <http://www.geocities.com/davidmyatt/biog.html> According to Wright, this article was even used by Hamas as a justification of some of its own terrorist activities.

worthwhile co-operation between Muslims and people, such as National-Socialists, who accept a non-Muslim way of life and who are also fighting the dishonour which is Zionism.”<sup>36</sup> Elsewhere, Myatt speaks openly of the proposed alliance between radical Islamists and neo-Nazis. His article “Why Islam is our Ally” ends with the following conclusion:

But many, many Muslims, and some National-Socialists, have seen through the lies, the propaganda of the Zionists—for we know what is going on, in this world, and why. Muslims have and are gathering together to try and do something practical about it by taking up arms. Surely, now it is the turn of National-Socialists, who can and who should join with or aid those warriors of Islam who are fighting, in a practical way, the Zionists, who are fighting the lackeys of the Zionists, and who are fighting those governments who are doing the dirty work for their Zionist masters.<sup>37</sup>

While questions have been raised about the sincerity of Myatt’s conversion, or whether he still is a Muslim, there can be no question that the underlying link for Myatt, as for others, was the *hatred of Jews* shared by both the extreme right wing/neo-Nazi movement and radical Islam. Myatt also uses “Nature” to justify Nazi ideology in Darwinian terms, writing that “In essence, Aryan National-Socialism is a working in harmony with Nature to produce further evolutionary change.”<sup>38</sup>

Over the past few years, Myatt’s influence in the movement has steadily grown. Originally limited essentially to a British audience, he has received wider exposure in recent times through his conversion, after which he traveled and spoke in some Arab countries. In the West, his writings, once considered too esoteric and intellectual, can be found on popular neo-Nazi websites such as Stormfront, Aryan Nation, White Revolution, and others. His views also reflect the movement’s growing interest in creating a link with radical Islam, based on the common ideology of antisemitism. For example, the Aryan Nation, a group that achieved a certain echo in the United States in the 1980s has since fallen on hard times—having lost their compound and suffered the death of their leader, Richard Butler. They now feature on the front page of their website greetings in Arabic, along with the following quotes—among others from Obergruppenführer Gottlob Berger in 1942: “...a link is created between Islam and National-Socialism on an open, honest basis. It will be directed in terms of blood and race from the North, and in the ideological-spiritual sphere from the East.” Another quote comes from

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<sup>36</sup> <http://www.agentofchaos.invisionzone.com/lofiversion/index.php/t696.html>

<sup>37</sup> David Myatt, *Why Islam is our Ally*, [http://nexion3.tripod.com/islam\\_ally.html](http://nexion3.tripod.com/islam_ally.html)

<sup>38</sup> David Myatt, “The Philosophical Foundations of Aryan Religion,” [http://www.stormfront.org/archive/t-98628The\\_Philosophical\\_Foundations\\_of\\_Aryan\\_Religion.html](http://www.stormfront.org/archive/t-98628The_Philosophical_Foundations_of_Aryan_Religion.html)

Palestinian Arab leader Haj Amin al-Husseini, speaking on Berlin radio in 1944: “Arabs! Rise as one and fight for your sacred rights. Kill the Jews wherever you find them. This pleases God, history, and religion. This saves your honor.”

This recent emphasis on rebuilding a Nazi-Islamic alliance is still perceived as new and questionable by some of the more traditional members of the Aryan Nation.<sup>39</sup> On the other hand, those in favor of this link can invoke the respect and attention that Adolf Hitler and other Nazis expressed for Islam. Clearly, in a fractured movement, the current Aryan Nations sees potential benefits in being identified with Islamist extremists. This contrasts vividly with William Pierce’s insistence after 9/11 on dissociating himself from those white supremacists who admire the “testicular fortitude” of the Muslim hijackers.<sup>40</sup>

There is another area where Arabs and the neo-Nazis have found common ground, namely in Holocaust denial (known as the Auschwitz Lie in Germany). This has encouraged the integration of Arab antisemitism and anti-Zionism into the white supremacist program. The annual conferences of the Institute for Historical Review, the center of the Holocaust denial movement in the United States, included over the years speakers and topics that reflect an Arab perspective. The 2002 conference program featured “Arab scholar Said Arikat (who) will shed new light on the background to the dramatically unfolding events in the Middle East.”<sup>41</sup> David Irving’s conferences have also featured speakers on current Middle Eastern topics from the “Arab” standpoint.<sup>42</sup> The website of Ahmed Rami, Radio Islam, is especially notorious for the intermixing of classical antisemitism, Holocaust denial, and strident anti-Zionism in a Muslim perspective. Rami, a veteran agitator who fled Morocco and served a prison sentence for hate speech in Sweden, has an Arabic section on his website and has been featured on Al-Jazeera, the Arab news network.<sup>43</sup>

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**39** <http://www.aryan-nations.org/> Another dissenting voice is that of veteran Alaskan neo-Nazi David Pringle, who has spoken out against David Duke’s Middle Eastern outreach. Pringle was quoted as claiming that Duke ran the risk of becoming known as another “Hanoi Jane,” referring to the controversial visit of Jane Fonda to Hanoi during the Vietnam War; <http://www.splcenter.org/intel/intelreport/article.jsp?aid=620>

**40** See the report from the Southern Poverty Law Center, where it is reported that “leader William Pierce recently upbraided Roper for a private comment he made—wishing that his members had ‘half as much testicular fortitude’ as the Sept. 11 hijackers.... Pierce called Roper’s praise for the mass murderers ‘ill-advised private comments.’” <http://www.splcenter.org/intel/intelreport/article.jsp?aid=125>

**41** <http://www.ihr.org/conference/14thconf/speakers.html>

**42** <http://www.fpp.co.uk/cinc/2004/program.html>

**43** <http://rami.tv/>

The first real attempt to bring together prominent leaders of Holocaust denial, neo-Nazism, and Arab anti-Zionism was a non-event, although one whose proposed agenda was noteworthy. A conference scheduled for the spring of 2001 was organized by Jürgen Graf who fled Switzerland to avoid a prison sentence for hate speech and had ended up in Iran. There he found a welcoming atmosphere and support, as the Iranians officially embraced Holocaust denial.<sup>44</sup> The proposed conference featured a roster of international neo-Nazis and Holocaust deniers including William Pierce, Horst Mahler, Roger Garaudy, and Robert Faurisson along with Arab Holocaust deniers and “representatives of Hezbollah and other radical Muslim groups.”<sup>45</sup> After a great deal of international condemnation, the conference was finally cancelled by the Lebanese government, although a watered down version was held later in Jordan without most of the major figures who had been scheduled to appear in Beirut.<sup>46</sup> However, Iran has persisted in strenuous efforts to become an international center for Holocaust denial. In December 2005, Iran’s president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad touched off an international outcry when he labeled the Holocaust “a myth.”<sup>47</sup> Ahmadinejad was not finished, however, and called for an international conference on the topic to be held in January 2006. He even sent an individual invitation to British Prime Minister Tony Blair who had severely criticized Ahmadinejad’s earlier statement.<sup>48</sup> The conference did eventually take place, but on a much lower level, involving the roster of familiar names from Western Holocaust denial circles along with the Iranian participants.<sup>49</sup>

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**44** According to the Institute of Historical Review’s own website “Iran’s official radio voice to the world, IRIB, has in recent years expressed support for Holocaust revisionism by broadcasting sympathetic interviews with leading negationist scholars and activists. Several interviews with IHR Director Mark Weber have been aired on the English-language service, and similar interviews have been broadcast with Ernst Zündel in German and with Ahmed Rami in Arabic. IRIB short-wave radio reaches millions in the Middle East, Europe and Asia.” <http://www.ihr.org/conference/beirutconf/background.html>

**45** Peter Finn, “Unlikely Allies Bound by a Common Hatred: Neo-Nazis Find They Share Views of Militant Muslim Groups on U.S., Israel,” *Washington Post Foreign Service*, 29 April 2002.

**46** Ibid.

**47** [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle\\_east/4529198.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/4529198.stm)

**48** [www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,2144,1876164,00.html](http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,2144,1876164,00.html)

**49** While veteran Holocaust deniers like Robert Faurisson and Horst Mahler were in touch with the Iranians before the conference (see “European Holocaust Deniers Involved in Iranian Holocaust Conference Plans,” 27 Feb. 2006, at <http://www.tau.ac.il/Anti-Semitism/updates.htm>), Australians Frederick Toben and Richard Krege, both of the Adelaide Institute, were the Western focal points of the conference. Their report can be found at the Adelaide Institute’s website <http://www.adelaideinstitute.org/Iran/conference1.htm>

A few years ago, Meir Litwak analyzed the Iranian case and its special attitudes toward the Holocaust, and drew some valuable conclusions.<sup>50</sup> He points out that Iranian Holocaust denial “adopts the discourse and arguments of Western neo-Nazis and anti-Semites in order to grant it pseudo-scientific value.”<sup>51</sup> He goes on to add that the validity of using these Western sources, despite Iran’s general estrangement from Western intellectual discourse, is justified by the “objectivity” of these sources on Israel and the Middle East. In other words, the fact that these Western sources are “anti-Zionist” or antisemitic is all that is needed to *justify* their use in Iranian Holocaust denial discourse, while dismissing all other evidence as merely propaganda. The fact that Western negationist sources are exploited is covered up and wrapped in a pseudo-scholarly veneer, in order to give it greater reach and authority. This also demonstrates the intensive effort made to appeal to an international audience. Iran’s goal of exporting Holocaust denial can be seen not only from the conferences that it has supported, but is also evident from the fact that a great deal of its Holocaust denial propaganda has been found in the state-owned English media. But Iran has even gone further in becoming a center of Holocaust denial. As witnessed by the words of President Ahmadinejad, the campaign has moved Holocaust denial from the murky fringes of extremism where it generally exists in the West to the center of state policy. Over the last decade and a half, through various state political and media venues, the regime in Tehran has hosted or encouraged a whole roster of Western Holocaust deniers, including some who have found refuge in Iran after being convicted of hate speech violations in the West.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, not only is Holocaust denial at the heart of Iranian power, it is unchallenged—even if on one occasion a leader of Iran’s tiny Jewish community did react to President Ahmadinejad’s notorious statements.<sup>53</sup> Where Holocaust denial in the West can be met with every form of opposition, from academic to political and legal, in Iran it is the only

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50 Meir Litwak, “The Islamic Republic of Iran and the Holocaust: Anti-Semitism and Anti-Zionism,” *Journal of Israeli History* 25, no. 1 (Mar. 2006): 267–84.

51 *Ibid.*, 280.

52 The list of visitors, according to Litwak, “Islamic Republic,” 277–80, includes Roger Garaudy who, after his 1998 conviction in France met with President Khatami, Supreme Leader Khamene’i, and Ahmed Rami, who had a special session of the Parliament held in his honor in 1990; Jürgen Graf and Wolfgang Frohlich were two European deniers who found asylum in Iran; and, as noted above, Iranian state radio interviewed Mark Weber (in English), Ernst Zündel (in German), and Ahmed Rami (in Arabic).

53 See, for example, “Iran: Jewish Leader Criticizes President For Holocaust Denial,” Radio Free Europe, <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2006/02/fb25e81f-bce9-4291-acdb-cf2c5c69fe92.html>

perspective offered by the State and its subservient media. The Iranian deniers seek to demolish the Holocaust as a means of undermining Western support for Israel—claiming that both the West and the Islamic world are victims of a massive Jewish plot reminiscent of the infamous *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.<sup>54</sup> Litwak wonders whether as younger Iranians grow restless about the government's official message, they might not grow out of Holocaust denial as one of the themes discredited by bankrupt conspiracy theories.<sup>55</sup>

The Holocaust denial movement is another example of how globalization has affected extremism. While the movement has always attempted to see itself as *international* in scope, both technology and politics have recently taken it further in that direction. Not by chance, Holocaust denial has been centered in California for almost three decades, in particular at the Institute for Historical Review, currently located in Newport Beach, California.<sup>56</sup> The Institute, originally founded under the influence of Willis Carto, a major force in American far Right extremism for decades, has in recent years been operating on its own, after Carto was ousted in a power struggle in 1994. The struggle for control of the IHR centered on a number of issues, but prominent amongst them was that Carto wanted to take the Institute's agenda into a more "racialist" direction, in other words, to expand into a wider range of topics. On the other hand, the IHR's staff, including Director Mark Weber, wanted to keep the focus on Holocaust denial.<sup>57</sup> Without Carto's financial support, the IHR was dependent on direct mail approaches for sales and

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<sup>54</sup> For recent Iranian use of the *Protocols*, see Litwak, "Islamic Republic," 272.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 280–81.

<sup>56</sup> See Deborah Lipstadt, *Denying the Holocaust* (New York, 1993), 50–51; also Pierre Vidal-Naquet's *Assassins of Memory* (New York, 1993)—an intriguing look at some of the discourse and cultural assertions, along with the implications of Holocaust denial, particularly in France. More recently, see Michael Shermer and Alex Grobman, *Denying History: Who Says The Holocaust Never Happened and Why Do They Say It* (Berkeley, 2000). There is also a substantial literature that has grown out of the David Irving trial, such as D. D. Guttenplan, *The Holocaust on Trial* (New York, 2001). Expert witnesses have published works reflecting their testimony, including Richard Evans, *Lying About Hitler* (New York, 2001) and Robert Jan van Pelt, *The Case for Auschwitz: Evidence from the Irving Trial* (Bloomington, Ind., 2002). Deborah Lipstadt's account is found in *History on Trial* (New York, 2005), while David Irving's version is found at his website, <http://www.fpp.co.uk/>

<sup>57</sup> See, for example, the statement by Arthur Butz, a longtime Holocaust denier "During 1992–1993 Willis Carto sought to transform the *Journal of Historical Review* into a journal with a racist political mission and editorial content." <http://www.ihr.org/other/endorsements.html> The page is a list of Holocaust denial luminaries who supported the ousting of Carto.

fundraising.<sup>58</sup> Therefore, they had to tailor their approach to a perspective that would attract the support needed for survival; and according to the IHR leadership, that theme was Holocaust denial, rather than race or politics.

Outside of being the source for a great deal of the denial writings that appear online, the California IHR website claimed 2½ million hits in September 2005 alone.<sup>59</sup> The first comparison I made was in November 2005, which I compared to the IHR's November 2004, page. In 2004, there were 18 stories featured and out of those 18, 16 dealt with the Holocaust, Jews, Nazis, or Israel. This was thoroughly consistent with their program, which in their own words was described as being centered on "the Holocaust issue." They also assert that "their work calls into question aspects of the orthodox Holocaust extermination story, and highlights specific Holocaust exaggerations and falsehoods..."<sup>60</sup>

However, by November 2005 the picture was different. Of the 23 stories then posted, only 14 had the themes of Holocaust and Jews. A recent look at the IHR website confirms this shift. Of the 14 stories featured, none referred to the Holocaust, almost all were concerned with current events, including the war on Hezbollah and the war in Iraq.<sup>61</sup>

The current negationist theme is clearly an attempt to build on anti-war feeling, both in the United States and abroad, and to use it to subtly attract and convince users of the argument of the site. For, if we look closely, what exactly is the message? As stated above, Jews distort reality and manipulate history for their own purposes. Thus, the distortions that are seen as connected to the way the conflicts in the Middle East are presented turn out to ultimately be just another example of Jewish conspiracy and manipulation. The title of one of the IHR articles, "The White House Cabal," confirms this—with its echoes of a secret plot to seize control of the world. In a talk in New York entitled "The Challenge of Jewish-Zionist Power in an Era of Global Struggle" (16 July 2005), IHR director Mark Weber spelled out the new focus: "no task is more urgent than breaking the stranglehold of the Jewish-Zionist grip on American political, social and cultural life."<sup>62</sup> The Holocaust was mentioned several times, but was far less central than the propaganda concerning Israel and the United States in 2006. Similarly, in

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58 See Ted O'Keefe, "Exit the Whistleblower: My Fall from Grace from IHR," <http://www.vho.org/GB/c/TOK/Whistleblower.html>

59 <http://www.ihr.org/news/110305ReachingNewPeople.html>

60 <http://www.ihr.org/main/about.shtml>

61 <http://www.ihr.org/> visited on 3 Aug. 2006.

62 <http://www.ihr.org/other/thechallenge.html>



Australia the focus among deniers like Frederick Toben was at least temporarily on the Iraq war.

This tactical shift underlined the need to get support (especially financial), as well as to widen the base and eventually penetrate as far as possible into mainstream society. To do that it appears that significant elements of the movement have decided to embrace popular “hot-button” themes, such as anti-globalization or anger over the war in Iraq, and to use them as their points of entry, in the hope that they will help move them away from the margins of Western society. However, in adopting these themes, they have not surrendered their beliefs. Instead, they have taken the topics and undergirded them with the tropes of antisemitism that have always been at the core of their belief structure. Thus, every issue eventually comes back to the Jews, their manipulations of history and society, and their malignant influence on the world. In essence, the theme of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* remains active, only the methodology has been upgraded to reflect the new age.<sup>63</sup> Along with controlling stock markets, Jews supposedly control multinational corporations and the banks that service them; instead of war aimed at controlling European powers, they now are behind Western (U.S.) invasions of the Middle East.

This type of material has been made much more accessible by the increased use of the Internet. Reaching about one billion people, the Internet has become the greatest propaganda tool in history, and extremists of all varieties have been quick to adapt to its use. There are currently about 5,500 extremist websites online, a jump from merely 1 in 1995.<sup>64</sup> This has led David Duke to write about the “White Revolution and the Internet.”<sup>65</sup> Online one can find Holocaust denial, Nazi, neo-Nazi, Ku Klux Klan, skinhead, Christian Identity, neo-pagan, and other types of antisemitism (and any other form of bigotry as well).<sup>66</sup> The effect of the Internet cannot therefore be underestimated. It has kept these ideas current by preserving every piece of antisemitism that has ever been posted, including articles that were long forgotten; by breaking down personal inhibitions and national boundaries; by creating the opportunity to target specific groups; by providing

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<sup>63</sup> For a more detailed look at the *Protocols* and its themes, see Jacobs and Weitzman, *Dismantling the Big Lie*.

<sup>64</sup> *Digital Terrorism and Hate* (Simon Wiesenthal Center, 2006).

<sup>65</sup> For a more extensive look at antisemitism on the Internet, see Mark Weitzman, “The Internet is Our Sword: Aspects of Online Antisemitism,” in *Remembering for the Future: The Holocaust in an Age of Genocide* (London, 2001), 1; 911–25.

<sup>66</sup> For a short overview of many of these different groups and ideologies, see Rick Eaton and Mark Weitzman, *The New Lexicon of Hate: The Changing Tactics, Language and Symbols of America’s Extremists* (Los Angeles, 2004).



a source for revenue and communications; and by increasing the technological sophistication of their approach. Antisemitism and other forms of extremism have now moved into the communications mainstream.<sup>67</sup> This mainstreaming, along with the other trends outlined above, shows how, sixty-five years after the Holocaust, antisemitism in its most radical form has come out of the closet and become an international reality that challenges us every day. Whether it be linked to globalization, ecology, or the war in Iraq, or the use of the latest technology, the contemporary discourse of antisemitism proves once more that within every new stage in the evolution of anti-Jewish thinking there is interplay between the “legacy of negative stereotypes and the realities of a new social context.”<sup>68</sup> Any response to the new manifestations of antisemitism must take into account both traditional forms of Judeophobia as well as the contemporary realities of globalization which have created *a new highway for antisemitism*. While antisemitism still exists in localized versions, its global impact is spread dramatically quicker and more intensively than ever before. Thus responses have to be geared toward having the same impact. Otherwise, we will be left with the sad reality that we are fighting a twenty-first century battle with twentieth century weapons, which does not bode well for the future.

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**67** See for example Arnold Leese’s “Jewish Ritual Murder,” originally published in 1938, and can now be found online on many sites, including [http://www.ety.com/HRP/bookonline/jrm/jrm\\_intro.htm](http://www.ety.com/HRP/bookonline/jrm/jrm_intro.htm)

**68** Note 3, above.



Jeffrey Herf

## Broadcasting Antisemitism to the Middle East: Nazi Propaganda during the Holocaust

With the emergence of radical Islam in recent decades, the question of the relationship between antisemitism in Europe, and hatred of the Jews in Muslim, Arab, and Persian societies has remained the subject of intense political discussion. To what extent can the Jew-hatred expressed by the radical Islamists of varying ideological hues in Al Qaeda, Hamas, Hezbollah and the government of Iran be explained by factors indigenous to these societies and cultures experiencing the pressures of attempted modernization? Or do they also have roots in antisemitic currents that came to the Middle East from twentieth-century Europe, especially during the era of fascism and Nazism.<sup>1</sup> Historians of modern Europe have exhaustively documented and analyzed the European impact on Latin America, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia in the era of colonialism. Until recently, however, the impact of Nazism and fascism outside Europe was less examined. In recent years, in part under the impact of contemporary events, this relative disinterest has given way to a flurry of scholarly interest in Nazi Germany's efforts to spread its ideology and policies in the Arab, Persian, and Muslim countries. As a result of recent research, we have a better understanding of a meeting of hearts and minds, not a clash of civilizations, that took place in wartime Berlin between pro-Nazi Arab exiles, on the one hand, and Nazi leaders, on the other. The result of that conjuncture was the production of thousands of hours of Arabic radio broadcasts and hundreds of thousands of Arabic leaflets and pamphlets that translated and diffused Nazism's radical antisemitism into an easily understandable political discourse adapted to the political realities of local circumstances in the Middle East.

Due in part to the fact that Germany's armed forces were defeated in North Africa in the fall of 1942, the several million pieces of printed materials in Arabic dropped from airplanes and distributed by propaganda units working with the General Erwin Rommel's Afrika-Korps comprised only a small portion of Nazi Germany's propaganda efforts. By far, the most important means used to spread the Nazi message was shortwave radio beamed to the region by powerful transmitters near Berlin. The archives of the German Foreign Ministry, which directed the program, hold important materials on the direction and organization of the

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<sup>1</sup> For a recent essay collection on this issue, see Jeffrey Herf, ed., *Antisemitism and Anti-Zionism in Historical Perspective: Convergence and Divergence* (London, 2006).

program. Some texts of broadcasts survive in the files of the Propaganda Ministry. Yet a combination of Allied bombing raids on government buildings in Berlin, the chaos of war, and perhaps significant amounts of document destruction meant that much of the evidence of the Arabic language broadcasts no longer exists in the German archives.

What did not survive in Berlin was recorded for posterity in wartime Cairo by officials working in the American Embassy there. Beginning in the fall of 1941, under the direction of Ambassador Alexander Kirk, a staff equipped with tape recorders and working with native Arab speakers taped, transcribed, translated, and sent to Washington a (mostly) weekly set of verbatim English translations of Nazi Germany's Arabic language radio broadcasts to the Middle East. Between the fall of 1941 to the spring of 1945, "Axis Broadcasts in Arabic" resulted in several thousand pages of texts. Kirk's despatches were sent to the Office of the Secretary of State and were circulated to the key American (and British) intelligence agencies as well as to the U.S. Office of War Information that conducted American political warfare. In summer 2007, I found them in the State Department files of the United States National Archives. Although what I will call "the Kirk transcripts" were declassified in the 1970s, they have not figured in subsequent scholarship.<sup>2</sup> With the recent findings in the American and German archives, we now have much more evidence regarding Nazi Germany's efforts to find common cause with radical Arabs and Muslims and to adapt its central propaganda themes to circumstances of the Arab and Muslim societies of the Middle East.

Needless to say, a fully adequate history of the reception and impact of this propaganda and its aftereffects in both Arab nationalist and radical Islamist ideology will require the efforts of historians who read Arabic and Persian. My current work will, I hope, be of use to them in that important endeavor.

In *The Jewish Enemy: Nazi Propaganda During World War II and the Holocaust*,<sup>3</sup> I asked what had changed between 1939 and 1941 in Nazi Germany in the nature of antisemitism, which Robert Wistrich aptly called "the longest hatred," so that for the first time in its history it became an ideology that incited and legitimated genocide.<sup>4</sup> While George Mosse and many others have documented the ideological path "towards the Final Solution," the search for origins and long

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2 On some examples of the distribution of the Kirk despatches to other agencies of the United States government, see "Dimensions of Allied Response to Hitler's 'Jewish Politics' and the Deepening of the Trap," in *Hitler, the Allies and the Jews*, ed. Shlomo Aronson (New York, 2004), 54–64.

3 Jeffrey Herf, *The Jewish Enemy: Nazi Propaganda During World War II and the Holocaust* (Cambridge, Mass, 2006).

4 See Robert Wistrich, *Antisemitism: The Longest Hatred* (New York, 1991).

continuities did not bring us to the event itself.<sup>5</sup> In *The Jewish Enemy*, I examined both very famous and very public speeches and essays by Hitler and other leaders of the Nazi regime as well as lesser-known government directives sent to the German press to depict the translation of antisemitic ideology into a narrative of ongoing events present as well in the daily and weekly news. My resulting interpretation of Nazism's radical antisemitism focused on the following points.

First, the Nazi's radical antisemitism was an interpretive framework through which the Nazi leadership misunderstood ongoing events. It was not only a bundle of prejudices. From the beginning to the end of the war Hitler and his associates concluded that their paranoid fantasy of an international Jewish conspiracy was the key to contemporary history. As E. H. Gombrich, who worked at the BBC during the war listening to German radio broadcasts, understood, the Nazis' interpretation of the actual events of the Second World War through the distorted and paranoid prism of radical antisemitism comprised the core element of Nazi propaganda.<sup>6</sup> The "logical" endpoint of this paranoia was to push German antisemitism beyond its past eras of persecution to one of genocide. There was an explanatory narrative that seemed to solve key riddles of contemporary history. Radical antisemitism offered an explanation of this central paradox of the Second World War in Europe, namely the emergence, deepening, and persistence of what Churchill called "the unnatural alliance" between the Soviet Union and the Western democracies. In the eyes of common sense, Franklin Roosevelt and Churchill had decided to make a pact with a lesser evil Stalin, in order to defeat a greater evil, Hitler.<sup>7</sup> From the perspective of Nazi antisemitic propaganda, the anti-Hitler coalition, along with the entry into the war by the United States, were the two most powerful pieces of evidence that international Jewry had created and sustained "the unnatural alliance."

Second, the key to the radicalization of Nazi antisemitism lay in its *overwhelmingly political* accusation, that "international Jewry," had started and escalated the Second World War in order to exterminate Germany and the Germans. The regime's frequently-discussed biological racism was important primarily because it pointed to a bond said to exist among all Jews. Yet though racial

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5 George Mosse, *Toward the Final Solution: A History of European Racism* (Madison, Wisc., 1985); and idem, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (New York, 1964, 1998).

6 E. H. Gombrich, *Myth and Reality in German Wartime Broadcasts* (London, 1970), 18.

7 Jeffrey Herf, "If Hitler Invaded Hell: Distinguishing between Nazism and Communism during World War II, the Cold War and since the Fall of European Communism," in *The Lesser Evil: Moral Approaches to Genocide Practices*, eds. Helmut Dubiel and Gabriel Motzkin (London, 2004), 182–95.

biology did justify horrible crimes against tens of thousands of persons judged to be “unworthy of life,” it was not central to the justification for mass murder.<sup>8</sup> While caricatures of the Jewish body filled the pages of *Der Stürmer*, the distinctively genocidal components of radical antisemitism derived from beliefs about what “international Jewry” was alleged to have done, not how Jews looked. It was the actions of what the Nazis believed was a truly active political actor, “international Jewry”—not the Jews’ supposed stereotyped physical features—that have preoccupied so much scholarship, that stood at the center of the Nazi commitment to mass murder. When the Nazi leaders spoke of what Lucy Dawidowicz called “the war against the Jews” they were not only referring to the Final Solution.<sup>9</sup> Rather it referred as well to the conventional war Nazi Germany was waging against the anti-Hitler coalition composed of Great Britain, the Soviet Union, the United States, and other Allies. On many occasions, Nazi propagandists described the war that the Allies were waging against the Third Reich as “the Jewish war.” Hitler and his associates pointed to an allegedly real political subject, “international Jewry” which was the power behind the scenes, the driving force and the glue of the Allied coalition. The history of World War II and that of the Holocaust did not only demonstrate a contingent coincidence of timing, geography and opportunity. Rather, in the minds of the Nazi leadership, there was an inherent connection between the two.<sup>10</sup>

Third, the projection and paranoia that connected radical antisemitism led to repeated and *publicly expressed* threats to murder the Jews of Europe. In speeches and writings reported in the national and world press, Hitler and his associates were clear and blunt, not secretive and euphemistic, about their intention to “exterminate” and “annihilate” the “Jewish race in Europe.” To be sure, euphemisms such as the “Final Solution,” and bureaucratic abstractions played

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8 On the importance of biological racism for the Nazi euthanasia program, see Henry Friedländer, *The Origins of Nazi Genocide: From Euthanasia to the Final Solution* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1995). Friedlander demonstrates the importance of the personnel used in the euthanasia program for subsequent mass murder by gas in the death camps. However horrifying, the ideological justification for these murders was distinct from the one that was central to the Final Solution.

9 Lucy Dawidowicz, *The War Against the Jews, 1933–1945* (New York, 1975).

10 For the full argument, see Herf, *The Jewish Enemy*; Richard Breitman, *The Architect of Genocide: Himmler and the Final Solution* (New York, 1991); Christopher Browning, *The Path to Genocide* (New York, 2000); idem, *The Origins of the Final Solution: The Evolution of Nazi Jewish Policy, September 1939–March 1942* (Lincoln, Neb. and Jerusalem, 2004); Saul Friedländer, *The Years of Extermination: Nazi Germany and the Jews, 1939–1945* (New York, 2007); and Gerhard Weinberg, *Germany, Hitler and World War II* (New York, 1995).

a role. Yet the public language of the Nazi regime was often quite frank. When Hitler, Goebbels, and other officials threatened to, and then boasted of exterminating the Jews, they meant exactly what they said. At the time, too many of their adversaries assumed that such statements were “mere propaganda” and bombast but not a guide to policy. On numerous occasions, Hitler and other leading officials publicly threatened to murder the Jews and then subsequently announced that they were in the process of carrying out those threats. They presented this ongoing policy of “extermination” and “annihilation” as an act of retaliation against a war of extermination which, they claimed, “the Jewish enemy” had launched against Germany and the Germans. The Final Solution was, in their view, an act of fully justified retaliation. Throughout World War II and the Holocaust, the paranoia and projection inherent in this view remained handmaidens of Nazi aggression and mass murder. As the Second World War continued and the toll of death and destruction on Germany’s armed forces and civilians on the home front grew, the Nazi antisemitic narrative focused rage and hatred among the Germans that were partly the byproducts of the war the Allies were waging against the Third Reich and the supposed actual decision maker—international Jewry. Hitler implemented and continued the Final Solution in a spirit of self-righteous indignation which placed this most extraordinary of events into an ordinary sequence of attack and retaliation in war. Denial of the uniqueness of the Holocaust was one of its constitutive elements. As a result of this narrative, it was to be expected that as the fortunes of war turned against Germany, hatred of Jews persisted in Germany up to the end the war.

Hitler established the core narrative of the war in his infamous “prophecy” first uttered on 30 January 1939. In that speech to the Reichstag, he publicly threatened to “exterminate” all the Jews of Europe in the event that “international finance Jewry inside and outside Europe,” provoked the world war, in fact, the very same war which he at that moment was planning to unleash.<sup>11</sup> He publicly repeated the genocidal prophecy on at least seven different occasions between 30 January 1939 and 24 February 1943.<sup>12</sup> As if to underscore the link in his own mind between the war and his policies toward the Jews, he erroneously dated the first

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11 Max Domarus, ed., *Hitler: Reden und Proklamation, 1932–1945*, 2 vols. (Wiesbaden, 1972), 1058.

12 For the text of the 30 January 1939 speech and the repetitions and variations of the prophecy on 30 January 1941, 30 January 1942, 15 February 1942, 30 September 1942, 8 November 1942, and 24 February 1943, see Domarus, *Hitler: Reden und Proklamationen*, 2: 1058, 1663–1664, 1843, 1920, 1937, 1992.

utterance of the prophecy as 1 September 1939, the day he ordered the invasion of Poland. On 30 January 1941, he said

not to be forgotten is the comment I already made on September 1, 1939 in the Reichstag that if the world were to be pushed by Jewry into a general war, the role of the whole of Jewry in Europe would be finished.... Today, they [the Jews] may still be laughing about [that statement] just as they laughed earlier about my prophecies. Now our racial knowledge is spreading from people to people. I hope that those who still are our antagonists will one day recognize the greater domestic enemy and will then make common front with us: against the international Jewish exploitation and corruption of nations!<sup>13</sup>

The speech was published in the German and the world press.

The following day, the editors of the *New York Times* wrote that

inside Germany or outside, no one in the world expects truth from Adolf Hitler...there is not a single precedent to prove he will either keep a promise or fulfill a threat. If there is any guarantee in his record, in fact, it is that the one thing he will not do is the thing he says he will do.... Nobody expects consistency from Hitler....<sup>14</sup>

Hitler was consistent in ways that *The Times* editors and many other observers did not expect. The history of the connection between Nazi propaganda and its policy and what the German historian Karl Bracher called the underestimation of Hitler by his contemporaries calls for a still uncompleted transformation of the meaning of political sophistication and insight in the face of totalitarian ideology.

In his “Political Testament” written in the Berlin bunker on 29 April 1945, Hitler blamed the Jews for World War II.<sup>15</sup> He had

left no one in doubt that this time millions of adult men would not die and hundreds of thousands of women and children burn in the cities and die under bombardment without the really guilty party having to pay for his guilt, albeit with more humane means.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 30 January 1941, pp. 1663–1664; also see “30.1.1941 Adolf Hitler: Kundgebung im Berliner Sportpalast zum 8. Jahrestag der nationalsozialistischen Machtergreifung,” in Roller and Höschel, eds. *Judenverfolgung und jüdisches Leben...* 165–66. These paragraphs were featured on the front page of *Die Judenfrage*, then published by the office of Antisemitischen Aktion. See “Der Führer sprach; Aus den Rede im Sportpalast vom 30 Januar 1941,” *Die Judenfrage* 5, no. 2 (10 Feb. 1941): 1.

<sup>14</sup> “When Hitler Threatens,” *New York Times*, 31 Jan. 1941, 18.

<sup>15</sup> See the classic account in H. R. Trevor-Roper, *The Last Days of Hitler* (New York, 1962), 225–65; and Ian Kershaw, *Hitler: 1936–1945, Nemesis* (New York, 2000), 820–28.

<sup>16</sup> Domarus, *Hitler; Reden und Proklamation*, 2: 2236–2237.



To the end, he persisted in the paranoid logic of innocence, irresponsibility and projection. The logical conclusion of Hitler's illogic was that while he was able to murder millions of Jews in Europe, *international Jewry*, in the form of the anti-Hitler coalition, had won the Second World War. Hitler's last will has sometimes been interpreted as evidence of his descent into madness under the impact of impending total defeat. Yet what is most striking about it against the background of Nazi propaganda is that it simply restated what he had been saying publicly since the beginning of the war. The paranoid vision of an international Jewish conspiracy waging aggressive and genocidal war against an innocent Nazi Germany that flowed from Hitler's pen on 29 April 1945 had been the core element of the text and imagery of the Nazi regime's antisemitic propaganda from the beginning to the end of the Second World War and the Holocaust. When the Allied powers defeated the Third Reich—and then when the state of Israel was founded—unreconstructed Nazis found further evidence of the victory of powerful international Jewry. In Arabic and Persian, in the themes of Islam, Arab nationalism, and anti-colonialism, Nazi propaganda adapted this conspiracy theory to the local circumstances of the Middle East. Its ideological assault on Zionism was central to this effort, which entailed both trying to win the war against Britain and the United States in North Africa as well as seeking to extend the Final Solution of the Jewish Question *in Europe* to encompass the Jews living in the Middle East as well.

Before the Nazis could appeal to Arabs, Persians, and Muslims in general, they needed to clarify if their "antisemitism" extended to the non-Jewish "Semites" of the Arab, Persian, and Muslim world. In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler thought it did. He spoke with disdain about hopes for "any mythical uprising in Egypt" or the idea that "that now perhaps others are ready to shed their blood for us." English machine guns and fragmentation bombs would bring such a Holy War "to an infernal end." It was, he continued,

impossible to overwhelm with a coalition of cripples a powerful state that is determined to stake, if necessary, its last drop of blood for its existence. As a *völkisch* man, who appraises the value of men on a racial basis, I am prevented by mere knowledge of the racial inferiority of these so-called "oppressed nations" from linking the destiny of my own people with theirs.<sup>17</sup>

Hitler's famous book gave antisemitism a broad meaning, one that applied first and foremost to the Jews, but that also encompassed non-Jewish "Semites" such as Arabs and Muslims.

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17 Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, trans. Ralph Mannheim (Boston, 1943, 1971), 658–59.

Disputes surrounding the Berlin Olympics of 1936 alerted German diplomats that Hitler's broad view of antisemitism posed a problem for effective propaganda aimed at Arabs, Persians, and Muslims. A narrower conception was called for—one that made clear how focused Nazi racial policy was on the Jews. The belief that the Nuremberg race laws in 1935 discriminated against “non-Aryans” caused consternation in Egypt. The coach of Egypt's Olympic team threatened to boycott the Berlin Olympics in 1936. As they were non-Aryans, he asked, why should Egyptian athletes travel to a country that regarded them as racially inferior? In a series of meetings in 1936 and 1937, high ranking officials in the German Foreign Ministry, the Propaganda Ministry, the Nazi Party's Office of Racial Politics (*Rassenpolitisches Amt*) and Himmler's Reich Security Main Office (SS) devoted many hours to reach the conclusion that Nazi racial legislation distinguished between Germans and Jews, not Aryans and non-Aryans.<sup>18</sup> Arabs, Persians, and Muslims were simply different, not inferior. The Foreign Ministry devoted considerable effort before and during World War II to convince Arabs, Persians (Iranians) and Muslims in general that its anti-Jewish policies were not based on a biological racism directed at “non-Aryans” as a whole. It was only the Jews who were the common “enemy” of Nazi Germany and the Arab and Islamic Middle East. In the diffusion of Nazi antisemitism to the Arab and Muslim Middle East, a political accusation wrapped in a conspiracy theory superseded an antisemitism based on racial biology. Nazi propagandists appealed to them as allies in a common cause, the fight against the Jews.

Short wave radio became the regime's most important means spreading its views, both in occupied Europe and around the world. In October 1939, Nazi Germany was broadcasting fifteen hours of air time in 113 daily broadcasts. The number of hours on air increased to twenty-two by January 1940, thirty-one by the summer of 1940, and fifty-three by 1943 in 147 different broadcasts.<sup>19</sup> Broadcasts were in Arabic, Afrikkans, Portuguese, Bulgarian, Dutch, English, French, Hungarian, Italian, Romanian, Serbo-Croatian, Spanish, and Turkish. During the first year of the World War II, the Germans made 89,500 foreign language broadcasts that took up 30,500 hours of radio time. By the end of 1940, about 500 people were working in the offices of German radio aimed abroad.<sup>20</sup> By 1943,

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<sup>18</sup> On these discussions see “Zugehörigkeit der Ägypter, Iraker, Iraner, Perser und Türken zur arischen Rasse, Bd. 1, 1935–1936,” Politisches Archive des Auswärtiges Amt (Berlin) R99173.

<sup>19</sup> Werner Schipps, “Vorwart,” in *Wortschlacht im Äther: Die deutsche Auslandsrundfunk im Zweiten Weltkrieg*, ed. Werner Schipps (Berlin, 1971), 9; and Gerhart Goebel, “Fernkampfwaffen im Rundfunkkrieg,” in *ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> Werner Schipps, “Die deutsche Auslandsrundfunk im Zweiten Weltkrieg” in *Wortschlacht im Äther*, 16.

the Nazi regime had sixteen stations with programming in thirteen different languages every day.<sup>21</sup> Prominent exile politicians, such as Subhas Chandra Bose from India, Rashid Ali al Khilani from Iraq, and Haj Amin al-Husseini, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, spoke frequently on these stations.<sup>22</sup>

Within the Foreign Office Political Division, the Orient Office, Division VII, oversaw propaganda and political strategy towards Egypt, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Palestine, Syria, Turkey, India, Iran, Sudan, and Ceylon.<sup>23</sup> An Office for Political Radio (*Rundfunkpolitischen Abteilung*) existed within the Foreign Office Political Division.<sup>24</sup> By 1 September 1943, its staff included 226 employees.<sup>25</sup> Kurt Kiesinger (subsequently Chancellor of the Federal Republic between 1966 and 1969), worked in the office and was its director from 1943 to 1945.<sup>26</sup> The staff of Division VII wrote and discussed German texts for broadcasts primarily in Arabic, but also in Persian or Hindi intended for audiences in North Africa, the Arab world (from Egypt to Iraq), Turkey, Iran, and India. It met regularly with the Foreign Office Arab Committee, which included experts on the region and officials responsible for contact with prominent Arab exiles such as Husseini and Khilani.<sup>27</sup> Among the various divisions of the Foreign Office working on foreign language broadcasts, only the Russia division with a staff of fifty-one broadcasting to the enormous Eastern Front was larger. By 1942, the Orient Division was larger than the offices broadcasting to Western Europe, England, Ireland, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Southeastern Europe, Eastern Europe, Northern Europe, the Far East, the United States, and Africa).<sup>28</sup> The director of Division VII throughout the

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>23</sup> "Auswärtiges Amt, Politische Abteilung," PAdAA R67478 Referat RüPers, RüHS, Bd. 3: Haushalt, Personal (Handakte Bartsch), 1939–1943, Bd. 3–4.

<sup>24</sup> "Haushaltsvoranschlag der Rundfunkpolitische Abteilung des Auswärtigen Amtes vom 1.4.1942 bis 31.3.1943, PAdAA Rundfunkpolitische Abteilung, R67477 Referate Ru Pers. Ru Hs, Bd. 1: Verwaltung Organisation 1941–1943, Bde 2–3.

<sup>25</sup> "Anlage 1: Zahlenmäßige Übersicht über den Inlandspersonalbestand der Abteilung Ru., Stand vom 1.9.1942," PAdAA Rundfunkpolitische Abteilung, R67477 Referate Ru Pers. Ru Hs, Bd. 1: Verwaltung Organisation 1941–1943, Bde 2–3.

<sup>26</sup> "Personalbestand der Rundfunkpolitische Abteilung (Berlin, August 14, 1943), PAdAA Rundfunkpolitische Abteilung, R67476 Referate Ru Pers. Ru Hs, Bd. 1: Verwaltung Organisation 1939–1945, Bde 1–2.

<sup>27</sup> "Übersicht über die Arbeitsgebiete der Rundfunkpolitischen Abteilung und ihrer Referate, Anlage 6," PAdAA Rundfunkpolitische Abteilung, R67477 Referate Ru Pers. Ru Hs, Bd. 1: Verwaltung Organisation 1941–1943, Bde 2–3.

<sup>28</sup> "Abteilung Ru, Anlage 1a," R67477 Referate Ru Pers. Ru Hs, Bd. 1: Verwaltung Organisation 1941–1943, Bde 2–3; "Anlage 1a, Abteilung Ru, Zahlenmäßige Übersicht über den

war was Kurt Munzel, a diplomat and Orientalist who had worked in the Dresdner Bank in Cairo in the decade before the war.<sup>29</sup> By 1942, he led a staff of nineteen including (judging from the names) seven native Arabic speakers, and four “scholarly assistants,” that is, Germans with knowledge of Arabic and Islam. Broadcasts were beamed to Egypt, Afghanistan, Arabia, Iraq, Syria, Cyprus, Palestine, Turkey, India, Iran, Sudan, and Ceylon. The office also published *Barid as-Sarq* (Orient Post) an Arabic language magazine, and worked closely with the Arab Committee in the Foreign Office.<sup>30</sup>

From September 1939 to the the fall of 1941, the Arabic broadcasts drew on the expertise of German Orientalists with a knowledge of Arabic and Islamic literature and poetry, together with former diplomats of the prewar years with local knowledge, and an uncertain contribution by pro-Axis Arabs living in Berlin when the war began. Most of these broadcasts had the tone of a sympathetic, well-informed, politically engaged scholar, one eager to please yet not quite able to pick up the ins and outs of local politics. Yet the early broadcasts did send a clear message that the Nazi regime, rather than celebrate the superiority of Aryans over inferior Middle Eastern “Semites,” was a friend to both Arab nationalists and Muslims. Of the approximately 2,000 days of radio broadcasting from Nazi Germany, those of December 1940 to February 1941 are the only ones for which there is extensive documentation in the German archives. As the texts indicate that Munzel wrote or co-wrote them, I will refer to the following as the “Munzel broadcasts.”

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Inlandspersonalbestand der Abteilung Ru., Stand vom 1.9.1942,” PAdAA Rundfunkpolitische Abteilung, R67477 Referate Ru Pers. Ru Hs, Bd. 1: Verwaltung Organisation 1941–1943, Bde 2–3.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. In 1948, Munzel completed a doctoral dissertation at the University of Erlangen. He returned to service in the West German Foreign Office in the 1950s. See Ludmila Hanisch, *Die Nachfolger der Exegeten: Deutschsprachige Erforschung des Vorderen Orients in der ersten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Wiesbaden, 2003), 199.

<sup>30</sup> Übersicht über die Arbeitsgebiete der rundfunkpolitischen Abteilung und ihrer Referate, Ref. VII Orient,” p. 4; “Rundfunkabteilung Inland, Personalstand 1.9.1942, Referat VII Orient,” p. 16, PAdAA Rundfunkpolitische Abteilung, R67477 Referate Ru Pers. Ru Hs, Bd. 1: Verwaltung Organisation 1941–1943, Bde 2–3. Personnel of the Orient office in the Foreign Ministry’s Rundfunkpolitischen Abteilung. Kissling became a Dozent for history and culture of the Orient and of Turkey at the University of Munich. See, among others, his *The Muslim World* (1969), *Handbuch der Orientalistik* (1959), *Islamistische Abhandlungen* (1974). Also see Kurt Munzel, *Ägyptischer-arabischer Sprachführer* (Wiesbaden, 1958 and 1983).

On 3 December 1940, Munzel's Orient Office VII broadcast "a paper about the English occupation of Egypt."<sup>31</sup> With the incantation "*Oh Mohammedaner!*" (Oh Muslims!), the broadcast made a direct appeal to Muslims and not only to Arab nationalists opposed to British rule in Egypt. It did so in the repetitive incantations of a religious sermon that evoked the authority of the Holy Qur'an and past days of piety.

Oh, God's servants! Above all of the other commandments, none is more important to the Muslims (*Mohammedaner*) than piety for piety is the core of all virtues and the bond of all honorable human characteristics. Muslims you are now backward because you have not shown God the proper piety and do not fear him. You do things that are not commanded and you leave to the side things that are. God's word has proven to be true and you are now the humiliated ones in your own country. This has come about because you don't have the piety and fear of God as your pious forefathers did. Of them, one can say that they "are strong against the unbelievers and merciful amongst themselves." Oh Muslims! (*Oh Mohammedaner!*) Direct your gaze to the holy Koran and the tradition of the prophets. Then you will see that Islamic law is driven by piety toward God and fear of his punishment. The Koran inscribed piety as above all other commandments. Read, for example, the words: "Oh, believers, be pious and do not die without being a Muslim. Stand by God and don't be divided."

Oh Muslims! I call you to piety towards God because it is an inexhaustible source and a sharp weapon. It offers the good and prevents evil. In short, it is Islam, that is, surrender to God! Oh Muslims, you've seen how God placed piety at the top of all the commandments and how God has rewarded the pious with victory and success, how he helps him in every situation....

There was some debate in the German Foreign Ministry about the extent to which the Nazi regime should make explicit Islamist appeals. Some officials preferred to direct appeals to secular nationalists. Yet the broadcasts and inner-office memos indicated that during the course of the war, the Nazi hardliners around Himmler in the SS, the Foreign Office, and the Propaganda Ministry, as well as Hitler himself perceived an elective affinity between Nazi ideology and policy and that of a fundamentalist interpretation of Islam. Nazi broadcasts repeated that the values of Islam, such as piety, obedience, community, unity rather than skepticism, individualism and division were similar to those of Nazi Germany. That such a melange of assault on modern political values was conveyed via the most modern means of electronic communication in 1940 was another example

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<sup>31</sup> Kult.R.Ref. VIII (VII) (Orient) Mn/P/B Kultureller Talk vom 3. Dezember 1940, "Ein Blatt über die Besetzung der Engländer in Ägypten," Berlin (3 December 1940), BAB R901 Auswärtiges Amt, R73039 Rundfunkabteilung, Ref. VIII Arabische und Iranische Sendungen, vorl. 39, Dez. 1940–Jan. 1941, 2.

of what I have previously called the “reactionary modernist” character of aspects of Nazi ideology and policy.<sup>32</sup> This and other broadcasts conveyed the message that a revival of fundamentalist Islam was a parallel project to National Socialism’s political and ideological revolt against Western political modernity. The message of this broadcast was that a return to a literal reading of the Qur’an and its application to contemporary events was not only or primarily a relic of a backward culture but part of the great movement now in power in Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy.

This and the host of broadcasts that followed offered evidence that National Socialism was appealing to Muslims as Muslims, not only to Arabs in their struggle against the British. While Nazi propaganda in Germany was claiming that a regrettable elective affinity existed between English Puritanism and the Jews, it also postulated a welcome affinity between National Socialist ideology and what it selected from the traditions of Islam.<sup>33</sup> On 12 December 1940, for example, German radio announced that Islam “is a religion of the community, not a religion of the individual. It is thus a religion of the common welfare (*Gemeinnutzes*) and not of self-interest (*Eigennutzes*). Islam therefore is a just and true nationalism for it calls on the Muslim to place the general interest ahead of private interests, to live not for himself but for his religion and his fatherland. This is the most important goal that Islam follows. It is at the basis of its prayers and commandments.”<sup>34</sup> The priority of “the common welfare” over self-interest was a continuing and key theme of the Nazi Party before 1933 and the Nazi regime afterwards.

It was hoped that the appeals to Islamic themes in these broadcasts would establish a willingness among Muslims to listen to Nazism’s secular political messages as well. On the same day that Radio Berlin broadcast the above message, it also sent out “A Government Statement for the Arabs”<sup>35</sup> From the same station in the same hour, perhaps with the same announcer, Nazi radio moved from the

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32 Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (New York, 1984).

33 On the elective affinity asserted by Nazi propagandists between English Puritanism and the Jews, see Jeffrey Herf, *The Jewish Enemy: Nazi Propaganda During World War II and the Jews* (Cambridge, Mass., 2006), 71–74.

34 Bundesarchiv Berlin, [Lichterfelde] (BAB) R901 Auswärtiges Amt, R73039 Rundfunkabteilung, Ref. VIII Arabische und Iranische Sendungen, vorl. 39, Dez. 1940–Jan. 1941, Kult.R, Ref. VIII (Orient), Mu/Scha “Religiöser Wochentalk vom 12. Dez.1940 (arabisch) Die Friegebigkeit,” broadcast on 12 Dec. 1940, 14–16.

35 “Zur Regierungserklärung für die Araber,” Talk vom 12. Dezember 1940 (arabisch), BAB) R901 Auswärtiges Amt, R73039 Rundfunkabteilung, Ref. VIII Arabische und Iranische Sendungen, vorl. 39, Dez. 1940–Jan. 1941, Kult.R, Ref. VIII (Orient), Mu/Scha, pp. 11–13.

specifically religious to the clearly secular and political. Listeners heard that Germany expressed full sympathy for the Arab's "struggle for freedom and independence" so that they could "take their proper place under the sun and recover glory and honor in the service of humanity and civilization." The German government's expression of "love and sympathy" for the Arabs had "found a strong echo among the German people" while strengthening "the bonds of friendship with the Arabs which the Germans have cherished for many years." This connection was not surprising, the talk continued, because Germans and Arabs shared "many qualities and virtues," such as "courage in war...heroism and manly character." They

both shared in the suffering and injustices after the end of the [First] World War. Both of these great peoples had their honor insulted, their rights were denied and trampled underfoot. Both bled from the same wounds and both also had the same enemy: namely the Allies who divided them and allowed them no claim to honor. Now Germany has succeeded to get out from under this disgrace and to regain all of its old rights so that Germany's voice is now heard everywhere and has again taken its old place.<sup>36</sup>

The idea that Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany were "the powerful, young nations" was a continuing theme of these broadcasts.<sup>37</sup> They broadcast combined appeals to Islamic traditionalism combined with evocations of the values of the Nazi *Volkgemeinschaft* and a promise of future Arabic and Islamic revival if Germany's example was followed. Yet these early broadcasts lacked a certain political punch and grasp of local idioms and politics. This changed in November 1941 when pro-Nazi Arab exiles, Haj Amin al-Husseini and Rashid al-Khilani, arrived in Berlin.<sup>38</sup> They both met with Hitler and Ribbentrop and they and their associates worked closely with officials in the Nazi Foreign Ministry in its Arab and Orient committees in the Office of Political Radio to fashion radio and print pro-

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> "Die Selbstsuch: Talk vom 16. Januar 1941 (arabisch) broadcast 16 Jan. 1941, BAB, R901 Auswärtiges Amt, R73039 Rundfunkabteilung, Ref. VIII Arabische und Iranische Sendungen, vorl. 39, Dez. 1940–Jan. 1941, Kult.R, Ref. VIII (Orient), Mu/B., pp. 62–64.

<sup>38</sup> On Haj Amin al-Husseini and Rashid Ali el Khilani in Berlin see Zvi Elpeleg, *The Grand Mufti: Haj Amin al-Hussaini, Founder of the Palestinian National Movement*, trans. David Harvey (London, 1993); Klaus Gensicke, *Der Mufti von Jerusalem und die Nationalsozialisten: Eine politische Biographie Amin el-Husseinis* (Darmstadt, 2007); Michael Mallmann and Martin Cuppers, *Halbmond und Hakenkreuz: Das Dritte Reich, die Araber und Palästina* (Darmstadt, 2006), 105–20; and Lukasz Hirsowicz, *The Third Reich and the Arab East* (London, 1966), 211–28.



paganda for Arabs and Muslims.<sup>39</sup> In his subsequently famous meeting with Husseini in Berlin on 28 November 1941, Hitler heard Husseini lavish praise on him, express his support for Nazi Germany in the war, and request that Germany and Italy issue a strong declaration in support of Arab independence from Britain. Though Hitler replied that the time had not yet arrived for issuing such a declaration, he told Husseini that when the German armies on the Eastern Front reached “the southern exit” from the Caucasus, Hitler would

give the Arab world the assurance that its hour of liberation had arrived. Germany’s objective would then be solely the destruction of the Jewish element residing in the Arab sphere under the protection of British power.<sup>40</sup>

In other words, in the same period in which Hitler had taken the decision to launch the Final Solution of the Jewish Question *in Europe*, he also made clear to Husseini that he intended to extend it as well *outside Europe*, that is, at least to the Jews living in Egypt, Palestine, Trans-Jordan, and Iraq. Husseini and Khilani and the Arabic-language radio writers and speakers accompanying them gave the Nazi regime an asset it had not had before, namely, native Arab speakers who could communicate Nazism’s messages in colloquial, fluent, and passionate Arabic. This was an important for carrying out the war against the Jews that Germany was waging in both senses of that term because it was intended both to stimulate Arab and Muslim support for the German armed forces fighting in North Africa as well as incite support for an extension of the Final Solution to the Jews of the Middle East should the Germans defeat the British and Americans in North Africa.<sup>41</sup> According to the language of the Genocide Convention adopted by the United Nations after World War II, many of the resulting broadcasts amounted to “incitement” and could thus be described as part of the crime of genocide.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> On this see Peter Longerich, *Propagandisten im Krieg : die Presseabteilung des Auswärtigen Amtes unter Ribbentrop*, (Munich, 1987).

<sup>40</sup> “No. 515, Memorandum by an Official of the Foreign Minister’s Secretariat, Record of the Conversation between the Führer and the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem on November 28, 1941, in the Presence of Reich Foreign Minister and Minister Grobba in Berlin,” Berlin (30 Nov. 1941), DGFP Series D (1937–1945) Vol. 13: The War Years, June 23–December 11, 1941, pp. 881–82, 884.

<sup>41</sup> As Tuvia Friling has pointed out, David Ben Gurion and the political leaders of the Jews in pre-state Palestine, thought a great deal about the threat of Nazi expansion in the Middle East. See Tuvia Friling, *Arrows in the dark : David Ben-Gurion, the Yishuv Leadership, and Rescue Attempts during the Holocaust*, trans. by Ora Cummings (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005).

<sup>42</sup> Clause 3 in Article 3 of the “Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide,” includes “direct and public incitement to commit genocide” as acts that should be



Alexander Kirk arrived to take up his post as head of the American Legation in Cairo on 29 March 1941, following his posting as Chargé d'Affaires of the United States Embassy in Berlin from 1939 to 1940. He came to Cairo with a deep knowledge of and opposition to the Nazi regime, and remained as ambassador until 29 March 1944. Kirk set up one of the more remarkable intelligence operations of the war devoted to what the Nazis were publicly saying, both to understand them as well as to learn how to counter their propaganda offensive. He hired a technical staff and native Arabic speakers. Kirk sent one of the first of his dispatches about Nazi radio broadcasts in Arabic to the office of Secretary of State Cordell Hull Washington on 13 September 1941, summarizing the themes of broadcasts from 18 August through 7 September 1941.<sup>43</sup> The regular summaries continued, expanding in length and detail until April 1942, when Kirk's staff began to produce verbatim transcripts in English translation of Nazi Germany's Arabic-language radio broadcasts to the Middle East. Kirk sent the texts to Washington every week until March 1944, and this was continued by his successor, Pickney Tuck, until spring 1945. In Washington, the Kirk transcripts were circulated in the State Department, the Office of War Information (which was responsible for American "political warfare"), the Office of Strategic Services and the Pentagon's various military intelligence agencies. As far as I have been able to determine, the resulting several thousand pages comprise the most complete record anywhere of Nazi Germany's efforts to influence the Arab and Islamic world via its most important propaganda program of shortwave radio broadcasts.

Kirk's memos in the spring of 1942 to Secretary of State Cordell Hull underscored both the strategic importance of Allied victory in the Middle East for the outcome of the war as a whole, as well as the need for a greater American military commitment in the region in order to prevent a German victory over Britain's armed forces in North Africa.<sup>44</sup> In a despatch of 18 April 1942, Kirk summarized

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punishable. See <http://www.hrweb.org/legal/genocide.html>

<sup>43</sup> Alexander Kirk, "Telegram Sent, September 13, 8 p.m., 1941 to Department of State from Cairo Legation, Number 1361," pp. 1–3, NARA RG84, Cairo Legation and Embassy, Secret and Confidential General Records, 1939, 1941–1947, 1941, 820.02-830, Entry 2412, 350/55/6/5, Box 4, Folder 820.02 1941.

<sup>44</sup> The Minister in Egypt (Kirk) to the Secretary of State, Cairo (16 Feb. 1942), "Concern of the United States regarding effect of Axis military advance into Egypt; plans for evacuation of American diplomatic and consular personnel from Egypt," *Foreign Relations of the United States, Diplomatic Papers 1942*, vol. 4: *The Near East and Africa* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1962), 71–73.

the broadcasts of the preceding six months.<sup>45</sup> German propaganda sought to convince the Arabs that the Axis countries had “a natural sympathy with the Arabs and their great civilization, the only one comparable with the civilization introduced by the New Order into Europe, which is now being suppressed by ‘British Imperialism,’ ‘Bolshevik barbarity,’ and ‘Jewish greed’ and more recently ‘American materialism.’”

The Arabs could “never be the friends of Britain” because her promises are false. German Arabic radio denounced the Jews “ad nauseum.” It asserted that the Jews, “backed by Britain and the U.S.A.” were “the arch-enemies of Islam.” They controlled American finance and had “forced Roosevelt to pursue a policy of aggression.” Roosevelt and Churchill were “playthings in the hands of the Jewish fiends who are destroying civilization.”<sup>46</sup> Throughout World War II, Nazi radio propaganda linked Britain and the United States in particular to support for the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine. Every statement by any public figure in Britain or the United States expressing anger over the persecution of Jews in Europe or support for a Jewish state in Palestine was taken as further proof of the truth that the Jews were in control of the governments of Britain, the United States but also of “Jewish Bolshevism” in Moscow. As was the case in Nazi propaganda in Europe, Roosevelt and Churchill were the main culprits and stooges.

In the spring, summer, and fall of 1942, as General Erwin Rommel’s North Africa Corps advanced to within sixty miles of Alexandria, the broadcasts envisaged imminent victory. On 3 July 1942 “Berlin in Arabic” announced that Germany and Italy resolved that “the troops of the Axis powers are victoriously advancing into Egyptian territory...to guarantee Egypt’s independence and sovereignty.” The Axis forces were entering Egypt

to dismiss the British from Egyptian territory...and to liberate the whole of the Near East from the British yoke. The policy of the Axis powers is inspired by the principle “Egypt for the Egyptians.” The emancipation of Egypt from the chains which have linked her with Britain, and her security from the risks of war, will enable her to assume her position among the independent sovereign states.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Alexander Kirk to Secretary of State, “Telegram 340, General Summary of Tendencies in Axis Broadcasts in Arabic,” Cairo (18 Apr. 1942), NARA, RG659, United States Department of State, Central Decimal File, 1940–1944, 740.0011/European War 1939, Microfilm Records M982, Roll 114, p. 21414.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 1–2.

<sup>47</sup> “Despatch No. 502 from the American Legation at Cairo, Egypt, Axis Broadcasts in Arabic for the Period July 3 to 9, 1942, Cairo, July 21, 1942,” NARA, RG 84 Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State, General Records, Cairo Embassy, 1942, 815.4-820.02, Box 77, p. 1.

The radio then broadcast the following statement by the Grand Mufti of Palestine, Haj Amin al-Husseini:

The Glorious victory secured by the Axis troops in North Africa, has encouraged the Arabs and the whole East, and filled their hearts with admiration for Marshall Rommel's genius, and the bravery of the Axis soldiers. This is because the Arabs believe that the Axis Powers are fighting against the common enemy, namely the British and the Jews, and in order to remove the danger of communism spreading, following the [Allied, JH] aggression on Iran. These victories, generally speaking, will have far reaching repercussions on Egypt, because the loss of the Nile Valley and of the Suez Canal, and the collapse of the British mastery over the Mediterranean and the Red Sea, will bring nearer the defeat of Britain and the end of the British Empire."<sup>48</sup>

The German and Italian declaration was one that Husseini and Khilani had been seeking ever since they arrived in Rome and Berlin and expressed their support for the Axis powers. Given that neither Vichy France nor Fascist Italy had gone to war in order to guarantee independence and sovereignty to the Arabs, Hitler and Mussolini had postponed making any such statement. Now that an uprising in Egypt might undermine British armed forces, the dictators agreed to do so.

The Kirk transcripts recorded a steady diet of antisemitic arguments that echoed the political accusations at the core of Nazi propaganda in Europe. The Nazis claimed that Britain and the United States had become stooges of the Jews, that World War II was a Jewish war, and that Allied victory would mean Jewish domination of the Middle East. The Americans recorded one of the most remarkable Nazi broadcasts of the war—"The Voice of Free Arabism"—at 8:15 p.m. Cairo time on 7 July 1942. It illustrated the links between the general propaganda line in Europe and its adaptation to the Middle East context. The text is entitled, "KILL THE JEWS BEFORE THEY KILL YOU"—a statement that equaled that of Hitler and Goebbels in its antisemitic radicalism. The broadcast began with a lie:

a large number of Jews residing in Egypt and a number of Poles, Greeks, Armenians and Free French, have been issued with revolvers and ammunition" in order to "help them against the Egyptians at the last moment, when Britain is forced to evacuate Egypt."<sup>49</sup>

The statement continued:

In the face of this barbaric procedure by the British we think it best, if the life of the Egyptian nation is to be saved, that the Egyptians rise as one man to kill the Jews before they have a chance of betraying the Egyptian people. It is the duty of the Egyptians to annihilate the

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 1–2.

<sup>49</sup> "KILL THE JEWS BEFORE THEY KILL YOU," *ibid.*, 13.

Jews and to destroy their property. Egypt can never forget that it is the Jews who are carrying out Britain's imperialist policy in the Arab countries and that they are the source of all the disasters, which have befallen the countries of the East. The Jews aim at extending their domination throughout the Arab countries, but their future depends on a British victory. That is why they are trying to save Britain from her fate and why Britain is arming them to kill the Arabs and save the British Empire.

You must kill the Jews, before they open fire on you. Kill the Jews, who have appropriated your wealth and who are plotting against your security. Arabs of Syria, Iraq and Palestine, what are you waiting for? The Jews are planning to violate your women, to kill your children and to destroy you. According to the Moslem religion, the defense of your life is a duty which can only be fulfilled by annihilating the Jews. This is your best opportunity to get rid of this dirty race, which has usurped your rights and brought misfortune and destruction on your countries. Kill the Jews, burn their property, destroy their stores, annihilate these base supporters of British imperialism. Your sole hope of salvation lies in annihilating the Jews before they annihilate you.<sup>50</sup>

Here, applied to the Arab and Moslem context, was the same logic of projection and paranoia that was the defining feature of Nazism's radical antisemitism. It is impossible to be more blunt. It combined the political accusations of Nazism with evocation of the religious demands of Islam. A statement such as this was unusual only in the extent to which it voiced the genocidal threats that were more implicit in many other assertions about the venality and power of the Jews that were broadcast on Nazi Arabic-language radio.

In their important recent work, *Halbmond und Hakenkreuz: Das Dritte Reich, die Araber und Palästina* [Crescent and Swastika: The Third Reich, the Arabs and the Palestinians], German historians Michael Mallmann and Martin Cuppers have revealed that German intelligence agents were reporting back to Berlin that if Rommel's North Africa Corps was victorious and was able to enter Cairo and Palestine, it could count on support from some elements of the Egyptian officer corps as well as from the Moslem Brotherhood. They also discovered that an *Ein-satzgruppe* of SS troops in Rome was prepared to depart to Palestine to murder the Jewish population if Rommel won the battle of Al-Alamein. German officials expected as much support for that endeavor from the local Arab population as Ukrainians had given to SS units on the Eastern Front.<sup>51</sup> As Hitler indicated to Husseini at their meeting of 28 November 1941, the fate of both the Allied armies as well as the Jewish population in the Middle East hung in the balance. The purpose of the propaganda was both to draw Arabs and Muslims to the side of the

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 13–14.

<sup>51</sup> Michael Mallmann and Martin Cuppers, *Halbmond und Hakenkreuz: Das Dritte Reich, die Araber und Palästina* (Darmstadt, 2007), especially chs. 7–9.

Axis as well as to incite them to support Nazi plans to extend the Final Solution beyond Europe's geographical limits.

Much work remains to be done on the reception of Nazism in wartime Cairo and the Middle East. Tantalizing hints of "fifth column" activity in the Muslim Brotherhood, by students at Al-Azhar University in Cairo, Young Egypt, and some parts of the officer corp are to be found in reports by American and British diplomats and intelligence agencies. The immediate postwar months and years produced evidence regarding the very enthusiastic reception of the Grand Mufti's message in the Muslim Brotherhood in Cairo. In summer 1945, Husseini fled Germany but was arrested in France. Under suspicious circumstances he "escaped" French custody and arrived in Cairo. Marshall Tito's government in Yugoslavia wanted to put him on trial for war crimes for his role in inspiring and organizing an SS division of Bosnian Muslims. The Allies were fully aware of his antisemitic incitement on wartime radio. However, an Office of Strategic Services report of 23 June 1945 on "The Near East and the War Crimes Problem" revealed a quite different reaction to these events in the Middle East.<sup>52</sup> The authors wrote that "in the Near East the popular attitude toward the trial of [Nazi, JH] war criminals is one of apathy. As a result of the general Near Eastern feeling of hostility to the imperialism of certain of the Allied powers, there is a tendency to sympathize with rather than condemn those who have aided the Axis."<sup>53</sup>

The Mufti arrived in Cairo in June 1946. On 11 June, Hassan al-Banna, the leader of the Muslim Brotherhood sent a statement to officials of the Arab League:

Al-Ikhwan Al-Muslimin [the Moslem Brotherhood] and all Arabs request the Arab League on which Arab hopes are pinned, to declare that the Mufti is welcome to stay in any Arab country he may choose and that great welcome should be extended to him wherever he goes, as a sign of appreciation for his great services for the glory of Islam and the Arabs.... The hearts of the Arabs palpitated with joy at hearing that the Mufti has succeeded in reaching an Arab country. The news sounded like thunder to the ears of some American, British and Jewish tyrants. The lion is at least free and he will roam the Arabian jungle to clear it of the wolves.... What a hero, what a miracle of a man. We wish to know what the Arab youth, Cabinet Ministers, rich men, and princess of Palestine, Syria, Iraq, Tunis, Morocco., and Tripoli are going to do to be worthy of this hero. *Yes, this hero who challenged an empire and fought Zionism, with the help of Hitler and Germany. Germany and Hitler are gone, but*

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52 "The Near East and the War Crimes Problem": Office of Strategic Services, Research and Analysis Branch, R and A, No. 1090.116, 23 June 1945, Situation Report: Near East, Analysis of Current Intelligence for the Use of OSS," pp. 1–28, in NARA, RG84, Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State, Syria: Damascus Legation, Confidential File, 1945: vols. 1–2, 030-800B, Classified General Records, Entry 3248A, 350/69/5/6-7, Box 4, vol. 2, 711-800B.

53 Ibid., "Summary."

*Amin Al-Husseini will continue the struggle....* God entrusted him with a mission and he must succeed.... The Lord Almighty did not preserve Amin for nothing. There must be a divine purpose behind the preservation of the life of this man, namely the defeat of Zionism. Amin! March on! God is with you! We are behind you! We are willing to sacrifice our necks for the cause. To death! Forward March.<sup>54</sup>

Writing the history of radical Islam must entail the history of the interaction of fascist Italy, Vichy France, and above all, Nazi Germany, with the Moslem fundamentalists and radical Arab nationalists of the wartime years. There is much work to be done on the intellectual, political, and cultural atmosphere of wartime and postwar Cairo for I think it is plausible that it was then and there and in wartime Berlin that an important chapter in the history of radical Islam was written. In 1950, Sayid Qutb, the preeminent intellectual of radical Islam of the 1950s and 1960s and a key inspiration to the founders of al-Qaeda, published an essay entitled “Our Struggle with the Jews.” It combined a close reading of the Qu’ran with reflections on recent history. Ronald Nettler translates a section of that text as follows:

And the Jews did indeed return to evil-doing, so Allah gave to the Muslims power over them. The Muslims then expelled them from the whole of the Arabian Peninsula.... Then the Jews again returned to evil-doing and consequently Allah sent against them others of his servants, until the modern period. Then Allah brought Hitler to rule over them. And once again today the Jews have returned to evil-doing, in the form of “Israel” which made the Arabs, the owners of the Land, taste of sorrows and woe. So let Allah bring down upon the Jews people who will mete out the worst kind of punishment.<sup>55</sup>

As a historian of Europe and Germany, it is not my place to engage in Qu’ranic exegesis. However we all know that Qutb introduced an idea that could not possibly be derived from reading that holy book, namely that Hitler was sent by Allah to rule the Jews. Yet a parallel between Mohammed’s “struggle with the Jews” and that of Hitler was a theme broached in Nazi broadcasts. We do not know if Qutb was listening but we do know that he knew al-Banna and was in the Muslim Brotherhood. There is much work to be done to connect European cultural diffusion to its reception in Cairo and elsewhere in the Middle East. Yet there is much

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<sup>54</sup> “Hassan Al-Banna and the Mufti of Palestine” in “Contents of Secret Bulletin of Al Ikhwan al-Muslimin dated 11 June 1946,” Cairo (July 23, 1946). NARA RG 226 (Office of Strategic Services) Washington Registry SI Intelligence, Field Files, Entry 108A, 190/16/28/3-7, Box 15, Folder 2.

<sup>55</sup> Sayid Qutb, “Our Struggle with the Jews,” translated by Ronald Nettler in Ronald L. Nettler, *Past Trials and Present Tribulations: A Muslim Fundamentalist’s View of the Jews* (Oxford, 1987), 86–87.

evidence now to suggest that the diffusion of Nazi ideology to the Middle East during World War II was one important chapter in the history of the radical Islam that reached full bloom only many decades later.

## Conclusion

Though Nazi Germany failed in its military and propaganda offensives in the Middle East, the conspiracy theories stemming from European radical antisemitism, including the Arabic translations of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, persisted after the war, in particular in the ideologies of radical Islam. In both Europe and in the Middle East, radical antisemitic ideology interpreted World War II as a war fought between international Jewry and the Axis powers. Notwithstanding the Holocaust, in the view of adherents of this ideology, “international Jewry” in the form of the Allied coalition won that war. The defeat of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, and the subsequent full revelation of the extent of the crimes of the Third Reich, discredited Nazism, fascism, and antisemitism in post-1945 Europe. Yet the evidence at our disposal points to the persistence and deepening of antisemitism in the Middle East *before* the founding of the State of Israel in 1948. As I noted at the outset, the Nazi leaders viewed the existence of the anti-Hitler coalition between the Soviet Union and the Western democracies as powerful evidence that an international Jewish conspiracy was, as Joseph Goebbels put it, the “glue” of Allied coalition. In the Middle East, the foundation of Israel, its recognition by the Soviet Union and the United States, followed by the surprising success of the Jews in the war of 1948 all contributed to a distinct Arab and Muslim variant of the conspiracy theories of European antisemitism: Israel was founded and the Jews won the war of 1948 because of the vast international power of the Jews. The success of the Zionist project was attributed to the same vast power that had brought about Allied victory in the war and then Arab defeat in 1948.

The conjuncture between radical Islam and National Socialism in wartime Berlin and its impact on the Arab, Persian, and Muslim societies of the Middle East should be the subject of future research and debate among historians. In wartime Berlin, a meeting of the minds, not a clash of civilizations, took place between radical Islamists and National Socialists as a result of which a connection emerged between two quite different traditions of antipathy to the Jews. Just as Nazism was not strictly a eurocentric story, so the history of radical Islam turns

out to have an important European component.<sup>56</sup> In post-1945 Europe, radical antisemitism, on the whole, ceased to be a major factor in mainstream politics. The conjuncture of National Socialism and militant Islam in wartime Berlin and its diffusion via radio to the Middle East in World War II contributed to the persistence of the longest hatred with new vigor and with a blend of old and new, European, Arab and Muslim tones.

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**56** On this point see Paul Berman, *Terror and Liberalism* (New York, 2003); Mathias Kuentzel, *Jihad and Jew Hatred: Nazism, Islamism and the Roots of 9/11* (New York, 2007); and Bernard Lewis, *Semites and Anti-Semites: An Inquiry into Conflict and Prejudice* (New York, 1986, 1999); Robert S. Wistrich, *Muslim Antisemitism: A Clear and Present Danger* (New York: American Jewish Committee, 2002).



Matthias Küntzel

## Judeophobia and the Denial of the Holocaust in Iran<sup>1</sup>

Never before has a head of state called into question the reality of the Holocaust so vociferously as the President of Iran, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. A provisional high point in his campaign was reached with the conference “Review of the Holocaust: Global Vision,” hosted by the Iranian regime on 11–12 December 2006 in Teheran. More than sixty participants from thirty different countries included the former Ku Klux Klan leader David Duke, the nutty followers of the Jewish Neturei Karta sect, officials of Germany’s neo-Nazi German National Party (NPD), as well as the usual crowd of Holocaust deniers. Fredrick Toben delivered a lecture entitled “The Holocaust—A Murder Weapon,” Robert Faurisson referred to the Shoah as a “fairy tale,” while his colleague Veronika Clarke from the United States explained that “the Jews made money in Auschwitz.” A certain Professor McNalley declared that regarding the Holocaust as a fact is as ludicrous as believing in “magicians and witches,” while the Belgian Leonardo Clerici offered the following explanation in his capacity as a Muslim: “I believe that the value of metaphysics is greater than the value of history.”<sup>2</sup>

Had such a gathering taken place in a pub somewhere in Melbourne, hardly anyone would have paid any attention. The gathering took on historical significance only because it happened by invitation and on the premises of the Iranian foreign ministry: hosted by the government of a country that disposes of the world’s largest oil reserves after Saudi Arabia and the largest natural gas reserves after Russia. In this setting, even the most delusional phantasms did not provoke laughter, but attentive nodding and applause. On the walls, there hung photos of corpses with the caption “myth,” as well as photos of laughing concentration camp survivors with the caption “truth.”

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1 This article was translated from German by John Rosenthal.

2 These quotes are taken from the most comprehensive documentation of the conference to date, translated (into German) and published by the Iran research section of Honestly-Concerned.org, 14 Dec. 2006 under the title “Die staatlich organisierte Teheraner Hasspropagandakonferenz...” <http://www.honestlyconcerned.info/bin/articles.cgi?ID=IR4306&Category=ir&Subcategory=19> . Interview with the conservative Iranian website “Baztab,” 27 Dec. 2006 ([www.baztab.ir/news/56550.php](http://www.baztab.ir/news/56550.php)). Cited from the (German) translation of the Iran Research Section of Honestly Concerned: “Interview mit Mohammad Ali Ramin,” 7 Jan. 2007.

The Teheran deniers conference marked a turning point because for the first time the leadership of a large and important state put Holocaust denial at the center of its foreign policy agenda. The founding conception of the United Nations, created in the 1940s as a response to the massacres of the Second World War, has never been challenged in a more provocative fashion. It is clear that this was precisely the point of the exercise for the Iranian elites. Mohammed Ali Ramin, one of Ahmadinejad's closest advisors who was charged with the preparation of the Holocaust conference, compared this "second historical conference, that took place in Tehran" with the famous Tehran Conference of the World War II Allied Powers in 1943. Just like the first Tehran Conference, so too the second would "change the face of the world," he enthused.

But the Tehran deniers conference marks a turning point not only because of its state sponsorship, but also because of its purpose. Up until now, Holocaust deniers wanted to revise the past. Today, Iran wants to shape the future: to prepare the next Holocaust. In his opening speech to the conference, Iranian Foreign Minister Manucher Mottaki left no doubt that the aim was the destruction of Israel: if "the official version of the Holocaust is called into question," Mottaki said, then "the nature and identity of Israel" must also be called into question.<sup>3</sup> By denying the particularity of the Nazi persecution of the Jews, a central motive for the establishment of the State of Israel gets debased. Consideration of Auschwitz is de-legitimized in order to legitimize a second anti-Jewish genocide. If, however, the Holocaust did occur after all, then—per Ahmadinejad's rhetoric—Israel has even less of a reason to be in Palestine, but should be transplanted instead to Europe. One way or another, the result is the same: Israel must vanish.

This was the sole reason for Iran attaching so much importance to the participation of the delegation from the Jewish Neturei Karta sect: i.e., because while Neturei Karta does not deny the Holocaust, it welcomes the destruction of Israel. This objective was the common denominator uniting all the participants in the conference. In his closing speech, Ahmadinejad formulated his aim with unmistakable clarity:

The life-curve of the Zionist regime has begun its descent, and it is now on a downward slope towards its fall.... The Zionist regime will be wiped out, and humanity will be liberated.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Boris Kalnoky, "Iran versammelt die Holocaust-Leugner," *Die Welt*, 12 Dec. 2006.

<sup>4</sup> Yigal Carmon, "The Role of Holocaust Denial in the Ideology and Strategy of the Iranian Regime," Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI) Inquiry and Analysis Series, no. 307, 15 Dec. 2006.

## Holocaust Denial and the Nuclear Program

Just as Hitler sought to “liberate” humanity by murdering the Jews, so Ahmadinejad believes that he can “liberate” humanity through the violent eradication of Israel. The deniers conference as an instrument for propagating this project was intimately linked to the nuclear program as an instrument for realizing it.

The nuclear program is already being celebrated in Iran as otherwise only the 12th Imam has been celebrated before: as a sort of divine apparition that will drive all injustice from the earth. Thus, in April 2006, in a cult-like ceremony, Ahmadinejad unveiled two metal containers in which were to be found Iran’s first independently enriched uranium. Choirs thundered “*Allahu Akbar*” as exotically clad dancers whirled ecstatically around the containers and lifted them heroically toward the sky in the style of Maoist opera.

Five years before, in December 2001, the former Iranian President Hashemi Rafsanjani first boasted that “the use of even one nuclear bomb inside Israel will destroy everything,” whereas the damage to the Islamic world of a potential nuclear retaliatory attack could be limited. “It is not irrational to contemplate such an eventuality,” he said.<sup>5</sup> While the Islamic world could sacrifice hundreds of thousands of “martyrs” in an Israeli riposte without disappearing — thus the logic of Rafsanjani’s calculation — Israel would be relegated to history after the first bomb. It is precisely this suicidal mentality that distinguishes the Iranian nuclear weapons program from the programs of all other countries and that makes it particularly dangerous.

The ideology of martyrdom is the most important heritage that the Ayatollah Khomeini bequeathed to his successors. Life was always regarded by him as valueless and death as the beginning of true life. “The natural world,” Khomeini explained in October 1980, “is the lowest element, the scum of creation.” What is decisive is the beyond: the “divine world that is eternal.”<sup>6</sup> This latter world is accessible to martyrs. Their death is no death, but merely the transition from this world to the world beyond, where they will live on eternally and in splendor. Whether the warrior wins the battle or loses it and dies a martyr, in both cases, his victory is assured: either a mundane victory or a spiritual one.

It is only against the background of these theological convictions that we can comprehend the readiness of Khomeini and some of his followers even to sacri-

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<sup>5</sup> Quoted in MEMRI Special Dispatch Series, no. 324, 3 Jan. 2002.

<sup>6</sup> Cited in Daniel Brumberg, “Khomeini’s Legacy: Islamic Rule and Islamic Social Justice,” in *Spokesmen for the Despised: Fundamental Leaders of the Middle East*, ed. R. Scott Appleby (Chicago, 1997), 56.

fice Iran itself, if necessary, in order to wipe out Israel. In 1980, Khomeini himself summed up this mentality as follows: “We do not worship Iran, we worship Allah. For patriotism is another name for paganism. I say let this land [Iran] burn. I say let this land go up in smoke, provided Islam emerges triumphant in the rest of the world.”<sup>7</sup>

Whereas the majority of Iranians and even a large part of the clerical elite would presumably reject such a scenario, the radical Islamist camp appears precisely to be preparing for it. A recent statement by Mohammad Hassan Rahimian, representative of the Iranian revolutionary guide Ali Khamenei, made this unmistakably clear. On 16 November 2006, Rahimian explained:

The Jew”—not the Zionist, but the Jew!—“is the most obstinate enemy of the devout. And the main war will determine the destiny of mankind.... The reappearance of the twelfth Imam will lead to a war between Israel and the Shia.”<sup>8</sup>

Iran, the first country to make Holocaust denial a matter of foreign policy, is likewise the first openly to threaten another UN member state with annihilation. In light of this objective, however, why would those in power in Tehran call into doubt Hitler’s Holocaust, rather than praising it? After all, in the Arab world, where Ahmadinejad’s campaign has enjoyed the most enthusiastic reception, Hitler is admired and he is admired not for building highways or conquering Paris, but precisely for murdering Jews. Why should Holocaust denial be most widespread in a region where admiration for Hitler remains to this day commonplace? How do Holocaust denial and admiration for Hitler go together? The key to the resolution of this paradox is to be found in the peculiarities of the antisemitic mind-set.

## “Brother Hitler,” “Eichmann, the Martyr”

Holocaust denial is an extreme form of antisemitism. Whoever declares Auschwitz to be a “myth” implicitly portrays the Jews as the enemy of humankind, who for filthy lucre has been duping the rest of humanity for the past sixty years. Whoever talks of the “so-called” Holocaust suggests that over ninety percent

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<sup>7</sup> From *A Selection of the Imam’s Speeches*, vol. 3 (Tehran 1981), 109; quoted in Amir Taheri, *Nest of Spies: America’s Journey to Disaster in Iran* (London, 1988), 269.

<sup>8</sup> *ISNA*, 16 Nov. 2006, <http://isna.ir/Main/NewsViews.aspx?ID=News-825902>, translated and quoted by the Iran research section of *Honestly-Concerned.org*, 17 Nov. 2006.

of the world's media and university professorships are controlled by Jews and thereby cut off from the "real" truth. In this way, precisely that sort of genocidal hatred gets incited that helped prepare the way for the Shoah. Every denial of the Holocaust thus tacitly contains an appeal to repeat it.

In April 2002, an Egyptian columnist for the state-controlled newspaper *Al Akhbar*, Egypt's second-largest daily, wrote:

The entire matter [the Holocaust], as many French and British scientists and researchers have proven, is nothing more than a huge Israeli plot aimed at extorting the German government in particular and the European countries in general. But I, personally and in light of this imaginary tale, complain to Hitler, even saying to him from the bottom of my heart, "If only you had done it, brother, if only it had really happened, so that the world could sigh in relief [without] their evil and sin."<sup>9</sup>

The citation illustrates how the Holocaust can be denied and celebrated at the same time.

Often, however, the enthusiasm for the Shoah is expressed without reservations. In 1961, at a time when the trial of Adolf Eichmann dominated the headlines, this became evident for the first time. The Jordanian *Jerusalem Times* published an "Open Letter to Eichmann," which stated:

By liquidating six millions you have...conferred a real blessing on humanity.... But the brave Eichmann finds solace in the fact that this trial will one day culminate in the liquidation of the remaining six million to avenge your blood.<sup>10</sup>

Arab writers such as Abdallah al-Tall eulogized "the martyr Eichmann," "who fell in the Holy War."<sup>11</sup> In her book *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, Hannah Arendt summarized the mood in the Arab world as follows:

The newspapers in Damascus and Beirut, in Cairo and Jordan did not conceal either their sympathy for Eichmann nor their regret that he "did not finish the job"; a radio broadcast from Cairo on the opening day of the trial even included a little sideswipe at the Germans, reproaching them for the fact that "in the last war, no German plane had ever flown over and bombed a Jewish settlement."<sup>12</sup>

This heartfelt desire to see all Jews exterminated was reiterated in the Egyptian daily *Al-Akhbar* in April 2001 by the columnist Achmad Ragab: "[Give] thanks to

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<sup>9</sup> Quoted in MEMRI, Report no. 375, 3 May 2002.

<sup>10</sup> *Jerusalem Times*, 24 Apr. 1961, quoted in Yehoshafat Harkabi, *Arab Attitudes to Israel* (Jerusalem, 1972), 279.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (Munich, 1986), 81.

Hitler. He took revenge on the Israelis in advance, on behalf of the Palestinians. Our one complaint against him was that his revenge was not complete enough.”<sup>13</sup>

It is obvious that from a logical point of view, such enthusiasm for the Holocaust is incompatible with its denial. Logic, however, is beside the point. Antisemitism builds upon an emotional infrastructure that substitutes for logic and reason an ephemeral combination of mutually exclusive attributions, whose only common denominator is the exterminatory hatred of everything Jewish. Thus all the different and contradictory versions of an anti-Jewish interpretation of the Holocaust can be deployed simultaneously: first, the enthusiastic “Hurrah!” for the millionfold extermination; second, the indignant “proof” that this millionfold extermination is an invention of the Zionists; third, the allegation of a Jewish conspiracy against Germany that Hitler effectively thwarted and punished; fourth, the certainty that the Holocaust was the product of a joint enterprise between the Zionists and Nazis; fifth, the accusation that the very same Zionists exaggerated the murder of the Jews with their “Holocaust industry” for obvious reasons; sixth, the accusation that Israeli actions against the Palestinians represent the “true” Holocaust—and so on and so forth.

We are dealing here with a phantasmagoric parallel universe in which the reality principle is constantly ignored and blatantly contradictory phantasms about Jews all have their place so long as they serve to confirm antisemitic paranoia and hatred: a universe from which the laws of reason have been excluded and all mental energy is harnessed for the cause of antisemitism.

For all its confusion, this universe is characterized by two constants: firstly, by the refusal to come to terms with the facts of the Holocaust as it actually took place; secondly, by the willingness to see in the Holocaust—in however refracted a manner—a source of encouragement and inspiration: a kind of precedent that proves that it is possible to murder Jews by the millions. This is why the exact wording of Ahmadinejad’s Holocaust tirades is not the issue. He is obsessed with the subject because he is fascinated by the possibility of a second Holocaust.

Why, then, did Ahmadinejad demonstratively embrace the ultra-Orthodox Jews at the deniers conference? Why did he personally greet every Jew present and say that “Zionism should be strictly separated from the Jewish faith”? Is it perhaps true, as Baham Nirumand, the best-known and influential Iranian exile in Germany, has written, that Ahmadinejad’s call to eliminate Israel and his

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<sup>13</sup> Ragab in *Al-Akhbar*, 20 Apr. 2001. He repeated the remark in *Al-Akhbar*, 25 Apr. 2001 and 27 May 2001. See also Anti-Defamation League, “Holocaust Denial in the Middle East: The Latest Anti-Israel Propaganda Theme” (New York 2001), [http://www.adl.org/holocaust/denial\\_ME/hdme\\_genocide\\_denial.asp](http://www.adl.org/holocaust/denial_ME/hdme_genocide_denial.asp)

Holocaust denial have “little to do” with antisemitism? “In Iran,” Nirumand has written,

there would no basis for this, since Iranian Jews lived here for 2,000 years with persons of other faiths. Even in the Islamic state they are fully accepted as a community of faith and represented in the parliament by elected representatives. Up to now, Ahmadinejad has never criticized Jews as such, but above all the “Zionist occupation power,” Israel.<sup>14</sup>

The following review of the history of the relationship between Iranian Jews and Iranian Shiites will answer this question.

## Najas: The Shiite Dogma of the “Impurity” of the Jews

It is indeed true the Jews and Muslims share a history going back some 2,700 years in Iran. This does not mean, however, that Jews have enjoyed equality under the Shiite rule that began in 1501. On the contrary, in no other Islamic land were Jews so poorly treated and so brutally persecuted as in Persia. Thus Bernard Lewis, the dean of historians of Islam, writes, “Expulsion, forced conversion, and massacre—all three of rare occurrence in the Sunni lands—were features of life in Iran up to the nineteenth century.”<sup>15</sup> In 1830, 400 Jews in Tabriz had their throats slashed. In 1839, all the Jews in Mashad were forced to convert to Islam. In 1910, following rumors of a ritual murder, 6,000 Jews in Shiraz were robbed of all their possessions: twelve were killed and another fifty wounded.<sup>16</sup> “I do not know any more miserable, helpless, and pitiful individual on God’s earth than the *Jahudi* in those countries,” the Orientalist and voyager Arminius Vambery wrote in 1905 following his return from Persia: “The poor Jew is despised, belabored and tortured.... [H]e is the poorest of the poor.”<sup>17</sup>

This inhuman treatment has to do with a particularity of the Shiite image of the Jew that has no counterpart in Sunni Islam. Only the Shiites established a system of “ritual purity,” which bears similarities to the attitude of Hindus toward

14 Baham Nirumand, “Der Verrückte aus Teheran,” *Die Tageszeitung (taz)*, 23 June 2006.

15 Bernard Lewis, *The Jews of Islam* (Princeton, N.J., 1984), 40.

16 David Littmann, “Jews Under Muslim Rule: The Case of Persia,” *Wiener Library Bulletin* 32, n.s. nos. 49/50, ed. Robert S. Wistrich (1979): 4 and 12.

17 Cited from David Menashri, “The Jews of Iran,” in *Antisemitism in Times of Crisis*, eds. Sander L. Gilman and Steven T. Katz (New York, 1991), 354.

the Pariahs or “untouchables.” This system draws on the Zoroastrianism that was the state religion in Persia before Islam.<sup>18</sup> According to it, whoever is not Muslim is *najas* or “impure.” All contact with a *Najas* is considered a sort of poisoning. The paranoid fear of “infection” provoked periodic excesses and led to the development of a particular Shiite code of conduct, which especially affected Jews, since unlike the Armenian Christians and the small Zoroastrian community, the Jewish minority was present throughout the country. Its members had to live in ghettos and were not permitted to go out when it rained or snowed, in order to prevent their “impurity” from spreading and coming into contact with Muslims. For the same reason, they were prohibited from visiting public baths or having any contact with the food and drink of Muslims.<sup>19</sup>

Officially, these rules were abolished when the Pahlavis came to power. But the orthodox clergy continued to insist on them. Thus, in 1962, the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the later Supreme Leader of the Revolution, explicitly propagated the *najas* doctrine in a widely disseminated handbook titled “Clarification of the Problems: a Guide to Muslims in their Daily Life.” He noted:

There are eleven things which make unclean: 1. urine; 2. faeces; 3. sperm; 4. carrion; 5. blood; 6. dog; 7. pig; 8. unbeliever; 9. wine; 10. beer; 11. the sweat of a camel which eats unclean things.

In a gloss on number 8, he adds: “The entire body of the unbeliever is unclean; even his hair and nails and body moistures are unclean.” There is, however, some hope: “When a non-Muslim man or woman is converted to Islam, their body, saliva, nasal secretions, and sweat are ritually clean. If, however, their clothes were in contact with their sweaty body before their conversion, these remain unclean.”<sup>20</sup>

These prescripts demonstrate the exaggerated Manichaeism of Shiite Islam: the complement of the elitist view of the self is an unmitigated image of the absolute enemy. The consciousness of one’s own chosenness is tied to the conviction that the Shiites are the true successors of Mohammed and to the messianic belief in the return of the “Twelfth Imam.” The image of the enemy, on the other hand, has biological connotations and is distinguished by a distinctly physical disgust.

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<sup>18</sup> Founded by the ancient Iranian priest and prophet Zoroaster (630–553 BC), Zoroastrianism interprets world history as a struggle between the “spirit of good” (*Ako Mainyu*) and the “principle of evil” (*Ahriman*). In this dualistic system, *Ahriman* is regarded as “the source of everything that is bad and impure, a murderer and destroyer, and the cause of 9,999 diseases.” See Gerhard J. Bellinger, *Knaurs Grosser Religionsführer* (Munich, 1986), 420.

<sup>19</sup> Lewis, *Jews of Islam*, 33ff, Menashri, “Jews of Iran,” 356.

<sup>20</sup> *Risala-i Tawzih al-Masa’il* (Tehran, 1962), cited in Lewis, *Jews of Islam*, 34.



Nonetheless, there is an enormous difference between this Shiite conception and the Nazi conception, since the option of conversion did not exist in the delirious, racially-structured universe of the National Socialists.

After the Islamic Revolution of 1979, Khomeini did not officially require the application of the *najas* doctrine. Nonetheless, it was discreetly practiced. Thus, for example, Eliz Sanasarian writes of a beverage factory in which the employment of Armenian Christians was prohibited, such that “impure” non-Muslims would not come into contact with the liquids that Muslims would consume or the bottles that contained them.<sup>21</sup> Roya Hakakian recalls that in the mid-1980s, the water fountains and restrooms in her school in Tehran bore signs reading “For Muslims Only.”<sup>22</sup> Asked about non-Muslims in the late 1980s, a Sheik named Murtesa from the religious center of Qum gave the following symptomatic response: “[They] are impure in two important areas. 1) They are physically impure as they don’t keep *taharat* (cleanness).... 2) Since they do not believe in Islam, their breath is *haram* (unclean).... If I had to shake hands with (such) a man...I would then take a shower and wash my entire body as soon as I could get to my hotel room.”<sup>23</sup>

Up till today, Jews living in Iran continue to feel the consequences of the *najas* tradition. Still more massive, however, are the effects of the antisemitic campaigns unleashed by Khomeini in the 1960s that would bring him to power in 1979.

## Khomeini’s Antisemitism

During the reigns of Reza Shah (1925–1941) and of his son Mohammed Reza Shah (1941–1979), Iranian Jews enjoyed political equality, cultural autonomy, and also an increasing level of economic security. Nonetheless, even if unofficial, Judeophobia continued to exist. David Menashri, himself an Iranian Jew who lived through this period, writes: “On many occasions (mainly in small towns, or in the bazaars), they were even threatened, and sometimes insulted and beaten up.

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21 Eliz Sanasarian, cited in Andrew G. Bostom, “The Ayatollahs’ Final Solution?,” *FrontPageMagazine.com*, 5 July 2004 [www.frontpagemag.com/articles/Printable.asp?ID=14071](http://www.frontpagemag.com/articles/Printable.asp?ID=14071)

22 Roya Hakakian, “Reading the Holocaust Cartoons in Tehen,” *New York Times*, 2 Sept. 2006.

23 Tahmoores Sarraf, *Cry of a Nation: The Saga of the Iranian Revolution* (New York, 1990), 111ff.

There were numerous anti-Jewish articles and even more so anti-Jewish remarks and expressions (in speeches, media reports, cartoons, etc.).”<sup>24</sup>

From 1963 onward, Khomeini, the most important opponent of the Shah, recognized the mobilizing power of antisemitism and openly exploited it himself. “I know that you do not want Iran to be under the boot of the Jews,” he cried out to his supporters on 13 April 1963.<sup>25</sup> In the same year, he called the Shah a Jew in disguise and accused him of taking orders from Israel.<sup>26</sup> The response was enormous: Khomeini had found his theme. Khomeini’s biographer Amir Taheri writes:

The Ayatollah was by now convinced that the central political theme of contemporary life was an elaborate and highly complex conspiracy by the Jews—“who controlled everything”—to “emasculate Islam” and dominate the world thanks to the natural wealth of the Muslim nations.<sup>27</sup>

From this point on, hatred of Jews—both in its atavistic Shiite form and in the form of modern antisemitism—would remain a central component of the Islamist ideology of Iran.

When in June 1963 thousands of Khomeini-influenced theology students set off to Tehran for a demonstration and were brutally stopped by the Shah’s security forces, Khomeini channeled all the anger toward foreign Jews:

Israel does not want the Koran to survive in this country.... It is destroying us. It is destroying you and the nation. It wants to take possession of the economy. It wants to demolish our trade and agriculture. It wants to grab the wealth of the country.<sup>28</sup>

After the Six-Day War of 1967, the antisemitic agitation, which did not differentiate between Jews and Israelis, intensified. “[I]t was [the Jews] who first established anti-Islamic propaganda and engaged in various stratagems, and as you can see, this activity continues down to the present,” Khomeini wrote in 1970 in his main

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<sup>24</sup> Menashri, “Jews of Iran,” 359.

<sup>25</sup> Cheryl Benard and Zalmay Khalilzad, *Gott in Teheran: Irans Islamische Republik* (Frankfurt a.M., 1988), 260, n. 26.

<sup>26</sup> Amir Taheri, *The Spirit of Allah: Khomeini & the Islamic Revolution* (New York, 1986), 131ff.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 159.

<sup>28</sup> Henner Fürtig, “Die Bedeutung der iranischen Revolution von 1979 als Ausgangspunkt für eine antijüdisch orientierte Islamisierung,” *Jahrbuch für Antisemitismusforschung*, vol. 12 (Berlin, 2003), 77.

work *Islamic Government*.<sup>29</sup> “[T]he Jews...wish to establish Jewish domination throughout the world,” he continued, “Since they are a cunning and resourceful group of people, I fear that...they may one day achieve their goal.”<sup>30</sup> In September 1977, he declared finally: “The Jews have grasped the world with both hands and are devouring it with an insatiable appetite, they are devouring America and have now turned their attention to Iran and still they are not satisfied.”<sup>31</sup>

Two years later, Khomeini was the unchallenged leader of the Iranian revolution. His antisemitic tirades found favor with the opponents of the Shah, both Leftists and Islamists. Khomeini’s antisemitism ran along the same lines as the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, which were republished in Persian in the summer of 1978 and widely disseminated in order to serve as a weapon against the Shah, Israel, and the Jews.<sup>32</sup>

During the revolutionary period, between September 1977 and February 1979, the situation of Jews in Iran was highly precarious. David Menashri cites the threats circulated by the National Front of Young Iranian Muslims in 1978:

O bloodthirsty people, who suck the blood of each one of us Muslims.... Now your golden dreams have come to an end. You are hereby warned that you must leave the country as soon as possible, otherwise we shall massacre all the Jews from the youngest to the oldest. Every age needs its Hitler to take care of the people of deceit and eradicate the offspring of the Jews from the earth, so that our brothers in religion in the Arab countries will live in peace.<sup>33</sup>

Khomeini did not mince words either, as Meir Litvak shows: “Pointing to the ‘most noble messenger’ as his model, he reminds his readers that when the Jewish tribe of Banu Qurayza, who were a troublesome group, ‘caused corruption among the Muslims,’ the Prophet eliminated them.”<sup>34</sup>

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29 Ayatollah Rouhollah Mousavi Khomeini, *Islamic Government: Governance of the Jurist* (Tehran: Institute for the Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini’s Works, International Affairs Division), 7. Page references are to the PDF version made available by the Iran Chamber Society at [http://www.iranchamber.com/history/rkhomeini/ayatollah\\_khomeini.php](http://www.iranchamber.com/history/rkhomeini/ayatollah_khomeini.php).

30 Ibid., 79.

31 Kauthar—*An Anthology of the Speeches of Imam Khomeini (s.a.) 1962–1978* (Tehran: Institute for the Compilation and Publication of the Works of Imam Khomeini, International Affairs Division, vol. 1, 1995), 370.

32 Orly Rahimiyan-Tsadik of Ben-Gurion University, is doing extensive research on the Persian copies of the *Protocols* published from the 1940s to the present time.

33 Cited in Menashri, “Jews of Iran,” 360.

34 Meir Litvak, “The Islamic Republic of Iran and the Holocaust: Anti-Semitism and Anti-Zionism,” *Journal of Israeli History* 25, no. 1 (Mar. 2006): 271.

After the victory of the revolution in 1979, such rhetoric was toned down. Khomeini could ignore neither the signs of submission given by the Jewish community nor the precept of tolerance laid down in the Koran. In May 1979, he declared: “We distinguish between Jews and Zionists. Zionism has nothing to do with religion.”<sup>35</sup> From then on, Jews (like the Armenian Christians and Zoroastrians) were treated as wards of a traditional Islamic state—*Dhimmis*—according to the “principles of Islamic justice.” According to Article 14 of the Iranian constitution, “this principle is applied to everyone who does not participate in activities or conspiracies directed against Islam or the Islamic Republic of Iran.” In order to discourage such “conspiracies,” several Jewish leaders, including the former chair of the Jewish community, Habib Alqanayan, were sentenced to death and executed. The sole reason given was that they had ties to Israel and Zionism.

## The Jews in Iran

From among the approximately 100,000 Jews who lived in Iran under the Shah, some 25,000 remained in Iran after Khomeini took power. The majority (around 15,000) live in Tehran; the rest, in Isfahan, Shiraz, and Hamedan. They thereby represent the largest Jewish community in any Muslim country. Jews were permitted to move out of their residential quarters and to some degree enter the Iranian mainstream. They are free to observe their religious traditions, relatively undisturbed, in over 100 synagogues across the country. At the same time, Jews in Iran are made clearly to feel their subordinate *Dhimmi* status. Thus, for example, they are excluded from “sensitive” senior posts in the military and judiciary. Jewish schools are required to have Muslim principals. They are forced to remain open on the Sabbath and Hebrew lessons are not permitted outside prayer time. Prayer books are printed in Farsi instead of Hebrew, as a means of controlling what is studied.<sup>36</sup>

Again and again, the Iranian media and leadership attack Jews in general. They cite the anti-Jewish passages from the Sunna and the Koran, and they equate the alleged behavior of Israel with that of the Jewish tribes of Medina in the time

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<sup>35</sup> Menashri, “Jews of Iran,” 363.

<sup>36</sup> Rachel Silverman, “It’s not the best place for Jews, but Iran’s home to a sizeable community,” *Jewish Telegraph Agency* (JTA), 4 June 2006; Ewen MacAskill, Simon Tisdall, and Robert Tait, “Iran’s Jews learn to live with Ahmadinejad,” *The Guardian*, 27 June 2006.

of the Prophet.<sup>37</sup> It is suggested that there is a contemporary “Jewish threat” to Iran as well. The example of the Grand Ayatollah Noori Hamadani, for whom the redemption of Muslims is tied to victory over “the Jews,” is instructive. “One should explain in the clearest terms the danger the Jews pose to the [Iranian] people and to the Muslims,” Noori Hamadani insisted in April 2005: “One should fight the Jews and vanquish them so that the conditions for the advent of the Hidden Imam [the Shiite Messiah] be met.” At the same, he praised Mohammed’s anti-Jewish massacre in 627 as a “step towards strengthening Islam, in order to crush the bastion of the global arrogance, and...to eradicate this cancerous tumor.”<sup>38</sup>

Tolerance of the Jewish community in Iran is combined with the massive dissemination of antisemitic literature. Thus, in 1984, the newspaper *Imam*, published by the Iranian embassy in London, reprinted excerpts from the *Protocols*.<sup>39</sup> Somewhat later, the periodical *Eslami* serialized the *Protocols* under the title “The Smell of Blood: Jewish Conspiracies.”

Just two years ago, in 2005, at the Iranian stand at the Frankfurt Book Fair, I was readily able to purchase an English edition of the *Protocols* published by the Islamic Propagation Organization of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Other antisemitic literature was also available, such as Henry Ford’s *The International Jew*, and Mohammad Taqi Taqipour’s screed, *Tale of the “Chosen People” and the Legend of “Historical Right.”* The cover illustration on the latter volume had caught my eye: a red Star of David superimposed over a grey skull and a yellow map of the world.<sup>40</sup> Obviously, even after the death of Khomeini in 1989, the worldwide dissemination of antisemitism by Iran did not come to an end.

David Menashri is undoubtedly justified when he takes such propaganda as an indication of the regime’s real attitude toward Jews and points to the provisional nature and fragility of the tolerance that is, for the moment, still accorded to the Iranian Jewish community.<sup>41</sup> By virtue of the mixture of incitement and restraint practiced by the Iranian regime, the Jewish community has been kept in a permanent state of uncertainty since 1979 and this uncertainty has only increased

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37 Menashri, “Jews of Iran,” 365f.

38 Litvak, “Islamic Republic of Iran and the Holocaust,” 272; and MEMRI, Special Dispatch Series, no. 897, 22 Apr. 2005. In 627, all the men (comprising some 600–900 individuals) in the last remaining Jewish tribe in Medina were killed by decapitation and all the women and children were sold into slavery.

39 Robert Wistrich, *Der antisemitische Wahn* (Munich, 1987), 320f.

40 See <http://www.trans-int.com/news/archives/60-The-Protocols-of-the-Elders-of-Zion-at-the.html>

41 Menashri, “Jews of Iran,” 364.

since the election of Ahmadinejad. Whereas, on the one hand, the Iranian President cites the presence of a Jewish community for the media as proof of his lack of prejudice, at the same time he lets one of his closest advisors, Mohammed Ali Ramin, threaten Iranian Jews by invoking the *najas* doctrine. Thus, in June 2006, Ramin said: “Jews are a dirty people. That is why one has accused them throughout history of being responsible for the spread of deadly diseases and plagues.”<sup>42</sup>

It is hardly any wonder, then, that the leaders of the Iranian Jewish community outdo themselves in offering gestures of subservience toward the regime. When, in June 1999, thirteen Iranian Jews were arrested for allegedly spying on behalf of Israel, the Jewish community found itself constrained to praise the Iranian government. “The Islamic Republic of Iran has demonstrated to the world,” it declared in a statement, “that it has treated the Jewish community...well; ...the arrest and charges against a number of Iranian Jews has nothing to do with their religion.”<sup>43</sup> The community’s statements from 2006 were similarly abject. Thus it congratulated the regime on the progress made in the Iranian nuclear program; it celebrated the martyrs of the war against Iraq; it expressed solidarity with the “Lebanese resistance” in its fight against Israel and it called on Jews the world over to condemn the “Israeli attacks” and an Israeli policy that “tramples upon the humane tenets of the Jewish tradition.”<sup>44</sup>

Today, the Jewish community serves Ahmadinejad not only as an alibi in his power game, but also increasingly as a deterrent: in the event of an Israeli attack on Iranian nuclear facilities, the community would find itself held hostage and vulnerable to acts of reprisal. Irrespective of the latitude that Ahmadinejad has for the time being left the Iranian Jews, his rhetoric is steeped in an antisemitism that is unprecedented for a head of state after the Second World War.

## Ahmadinejad’s Antisemitism

What thoughts crossed the mind of the Iranian President as he embraced the Jews of the Neturei Karta sect at the deniers conference in Tehran? Was his first thought “so nice of you to help me!”? Or did he think rather “You idiots! You’ll soon be next!”? We do not know. And we do not know either whether he had a thorough shower after the meeting.

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<sup>42</sup> Ynet, 8 June 2006, cited from *Newsletter der israelischen Botschaft in Berlin*, 8 June 2006.

<sup>43</sup> Andrew G. Bostom, “The Ayatollahs’ Final Solution?,” *FrontPageMagazine.com*, 5 July 2004.

<sup>44</sup> See the homepage of the “Tehran Jewish Committee,” [www.iranjewish.com](http://www.iranjewish.com)

Ahmadinejad is not a racist Social Darwinist, who, like Hitler, wants to eliminate every last trace of “Jewish blood.” He does not attack “the Jews,” but rather “the Zionists.” He says, “Two thousand Zionists want to rule the world.”<sup>45</sup> He says, “The Zionists” have for sixty years now blackmailed “all western governments.”<sup>46</sup> “The Zionists have imposed themselves on a substantial portion of the banking, financial, cultural and media sectors.”<sup>47</sup> “The Zionists” fabricated the Danish Muhammad cartoons. “The Zionists” are responsible for the destruction of the dome of the Golden Mosque in Iraq.<sup>48</sup> But he invests the word “Zionist” with exactly the same sense as that with which Hitler once invested the word “Jew”: namely, that of being the incarnation of all evil. Even if the regime tolerates the Jewish community of Tehran, whoever makes Jews responsible for all the ills of the world—whether as “Judases” or “Zionists”—is clearly driven by antisemitism of a genocidal nature. Demonization of Jews, Holocaust denial, and the will to eliminate Israel—these are the three elements of an ideological constellation that collapses as soon as one of the elements is removed.

The morbid phantasms of Ahmadinejad and his supporters are impervious to reality. Consider, for example, the case of the Iranian historian who on Iranian television touted his “discovery” that in 1883 French Jews murdered 150 Christian children in the suburbs of Paris, to use their blood in the baking of matzah bread. The actual revelation, however, was not supposed to be the alleged murder, but rather the fact that while the memory of the murder had lived on in the souls of Europeans, “the incident is, regrettably, never mentioned—due to the growing influence of the Zionist lobby in Europe—or, more precisely, the influence of the Jews.”<sup>49</sup> Could there be any clearer proof of how helpless Europe is in the face of the Zionists and their media empires?

Circular reasoning such as the foregoing is not susceptible of refutation. The louder the liberal West protests against Iran’s Holocaust denial or threats to destroy Israel, the clearer for Ahmadinejad is the proof of Zionist domination. In a conversation with the editors of the German news weekly *Spiegel*, the Iranian President reacted as follows to the remark that Israel’s right to exist is not questioned by the magazine: “I am glad that you are honest people and say that

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45 Hooman Majd, “Mahmoud and Me,” *New York Observer*, 2 Oct. 2006.

46 MEMRI, Special Dispatch Series, no. 1091, 14 Feb. 2006.

47 From “Letter to the Noble Americans,” available at <http://edition.cnn.com/2006/WORLD/meast/11/29/ahmadinejad.letter/>

48 *WorldNetDaily*, 11 Feb. 2006.

49 “Iranian TV Blood Libel: Jewish Rabbis killed Hundreds of European Children to use Their Blood for Passover Holiday,” MEMRI, Special Dispatch Series, no. 1053, 22 Dec. 2005.

you are required to support the Zionists.”<sup>50</sup> Only when we too finally realize that the Holocaust is a Jewish lie, only when we too want to annihilate Israel, only then would Ahmadinejad be convinced that we are academically credible and politically free. It is this maddening circularity that characterizes contemporary Iranian Holocaust denial and that makes the revolutionary mission of the Iranian leadership so dangerous.

## Holocaust Denial as Liberation Struggle

Whoever denies the Holocaust kills the victims a second time. To destroy the memory of the victims completes the work of their extermination. This has nothing to do with freedom of opinion in the sense of human rights protections: Article 17 of the European Human Rights Convention lays down that there is no right to undermine the rights and freedoms that the convention is meant to protect.<sup>51</sup> And Holocaust denial has absolutely nothing to do with science: there is no other crime in history that has been so precisely described by perpetrators, victims, and external observers. Whereas serious research on the Holocaust tests and, if necessary, modifies previous findings on the basis of established facts, Holocaust deniers only acknowledge those facts that fit their antisemitic worldview.

The novelty of Ahmadinejad consists in his fusing Holocaust denial with the historical claim of Shiite Islam to be the religion of the politically dispossessed. Ahmadinejad is the first to celebrate the intellectual and moral crime of Holocaust denial in adopting the stance of a freedom fighter. Until now, Holocaust denial has been a marginal addition to the traditional antisemitic arsenal, serving the struggle to reduce alleged Jewish influence. Integrating antisemitism into his discourse of global populism, Ahmadinejad has inserted it within the context of freedom versus enslavement. “They are allowed to study anything except for the Holocaust myth,” Ahmadinejad said of Europeans in February 2006: “Are these

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50 “Wir sind entschlossen,” Interview with Mahmud Ahmadinejad, *Spiegel* 22/2006, 29 May 2006.

51 Article 17 of the European Convention on Human Rights reads: “Nothing in this Convention may be interpreted as implying for any State, group or person any right to engage in any activity or perform any act aimed at the destruction on any of the rights and freedoms set forth herein.”



not medieval methods?... On the face of it, the technology has changed, but the culture and the way of thinking remain medieval.”<sup>52</sup>

In this way, Ahmadinejad has managed to make Holocaust denial a mark of progressiveness and to place the Tehran conference under the sign of “freedom of thought.” “It would be good for Mr. Blair to participate in the Holocaust seminar in Tehran,” the spokesperson for the Iranian Foreign Ministry, Hamid Reza Asefi, explained, since at the conference Blair would be able to “say the kind of things he cannot say in London.”<sup>53</sup> But who was it that suppressed the free speech of the British premier? In this connection as well, Ahmadinejad had a ready answer: “The pillaging Zionist regime has managed, for 60 years, to extort all Western governments on the basis of this myth [of the Holocaust].... They are hostages in the hands of the Zionists.”<sup>54</sup>

Since December 2005, the Iranian President has placed the denial of the Holocaust at the center of his agitation. During this time, the Iranian regime has spared no effort to establish the “exposure” of the “Holocaust Myth” as a new historiographical paradigm. Thus the “lie about the Holocaust” has become a regular topic of televised Friday sermons.<sup>55</sup> Talk shows on public television feature a parade of historians who mock the “fairy tale about the gas chambers.” The Iranian state press agency has developed into a platform for Holocaust deniers from all over the world.

The “Holocaust International Cartoon Contest” announced by the Iranian newspaper *Hamshahri* in February 2006 revealed the new style of Iranian Holocaust denial: creative, modern, unrestrained, and self-assertive. *Hamshahri* has the largest circulation of any paper in Iran and it is publicly owned by the city of Tehran. “Whether or not there was a Holocaust, that is up to the cartoonists to decide,” Achmed Kasemi, one of the organizers of the contest, said.<sup>56</sup> The newspaper received over 1000 submissions from 62 countries. In fall 2006, a selection of 200 cartoons was exhibited in the Palestine Museum in Tehran. This will undoubtedly have been the first internationally publicized exhibition of antisemitic art since 1945. The exhibit was opened by Saffar Harandi, the Iranian Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance. The ambassador of Lebanon and the

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52 MEMRI, Special Dispatch Series, no. 1091, 14 Feb. 2006 <http://memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=archives&Area=sd&ID=SP109106>

53 “Iran Sends Blair Invitation to Holocaust Conference,” Deutsche Welle, 18 Jan. 2006.

54 MEMRI, Special Dispatch Series, no. 1091, 14 Feb. 2006 <http://memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=archives&Area=sd&ID=SP109106>

55 MEMRI, Special Report, no. 39, 5 Jan. 2006 <http://memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=archives&Area=sr&ID=SR3906>

56 Matthias Küntzel, “Die zweite Spaltung der Welt,” *Internationale Politik* (Apr. 2006): 75.

representative of the Palestinian territories figured among the foreign dignitaries present.<sup>57</sup> The first prize of \$12,000 went to a cartoon by a Moroccan that drew parallels between Israel's controversial security barrier and Auschwitz. The second and third prizes went to cartoons that present the Holocaust as a crude fabrication. The former depicts a stage backdrop that has been knocked over and that is meant to represent a gas chamber and crematorium: "Who knocked that down?" one Jew asks; "Faurisson," replies another. The latter shows two grinning soldiers above a freshly dug mass grave in which they are placing not real corpses, but merely paper cut-outs. There appear, then, not to have been real victims.<sup>58</sup>

Up to 2006, we associated Holocaust denial with the self-styled "expert" opinions of individual cranks in various countries or with the small disparate band of neo-Nazis. Ostracized by society as obscurantists, the Holocaust deniers had to struggle for every millimeter of respectability they could muster. Now, Ahmadinejad has reversed the customary roles: it is not the Holocaust denier who has to justify himself—but the non-denier. It is not the denier who must struggle for his freedom; it is rather the non-deniers—like Tony Blair, for example—who are not free. Such inversions suggest that Iranian Holocaust deniers are after more than just disseminating anti-Israeli propaganda. For them, the rewriting of history is an inherent part of a global Islamist mission.

## "Historical War"

In his first speech on the guiding principles of his politics, Ahmadinejad made this clear. "We are in the process of an historical war,... and this war has been going on for hundreds of years," he declared in October 2005. This is a war, then, that has nothing to do originally with the Middle East conflict and that will be far from over even when Israel has been eliminated. He continued: "We have to understand the depth of the disgrace of the enemy, until our holy hatred expands continuously and strikes like a wave."<sup>59</sup> This "holy hatred" is boundless and unconditional. It will not be mitigated by any form of Jewish or non-Jewish conduct—other than subordination under the Sharia or Koran.

In his letter to George W. Bush, the Iranian President described the objective of his mission: "Those with insights can already hear the sounds of the shattering

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<sup>57</sup> Baham Nirumand, "Holocaust-Ausstellung in Teheran," *Tageszeitung (taz)*, 16 Aug. 2006.

<sup>58</sup> See <http://www.irancartoon.com/120/holocaust>

<sup>59</sup> Quoted in MEMRI, Special Dispatch Series, no. 1013, 28 Oct. 2005.

and fall of the ideology and thoughts of the liberal democratic systems.” We are also told in this letter just how he thinks the liberal democracies will be shattered. Even here, if albeit in slightly diluted form, the ideology of martyrdom—*you love life, we love death*—is propagated: “A bad ending belongs only to those who have chosen the life of this world.... A good land and eternal paradise belong to those servants who fear His majesty and do not follow their lascivious selves.”

In the Shiite version of Islamism, we are confronted with an opponent who combats the achievements of modernity as Satan’s deed, who denounces the system of international relations that was created after 1945 as a “Jewish-Christian conspiracy,” and who therefore wishes to overturn the accepted historiography of this system. At the start of the deniers conference, Foreign Minister Mottaki explained that the problem is that the “wording of historical occurrences and their analysis [are written from] the perspective of the West.”<sup>60</sup> As against this “Western” historiography, Islamism seeks to create a new historical “truth,” in which the Holocaust is declared a myth, while the Twelfth Imam is deemed to be real. Whereas the delusional system of Holocaust denial is elevated to the norm, any divergence from the latter is denounced as a symptom of “Jewish domination.”

Even as he is conducting his religious war, Ahmadinejad also plays the role of a global populist. His speeches are addressed to all the world’s “oppressed.” He cultivates good relations with Fidel Castro and Hugo Chávez and ingratiates himself to the Western Left by employing anti-American rhetoric. His use of the word “Zionist” is particularly relevant in this connection as well. It is the Trojan horse under cover of which he makes his antisemitism respectable: allowing him to be all at once antisemite and Holocaust denier, on the one hand, and spokesman of the so-called “oppressed nations,” on the other.

This is why the Iranian leadership vehemently denies the charges of antisemitism, as well as all sympathy for Nazism. Islam, Mottaki explained in his opening address, “stands in clear contradiction to racist and Nazi ideology.” “I say to you unequivocally,” he continued, “that Judeophobia is a western phenomenon that only concerns western States. There has never been such a thing in the Islamic states.”<sup>61</sup> Ahmadinejad’s highly publicized embrace of the Jews present at the deniers conference—who were later even accorded a special audience with the President—was meant to support this claim and to demonstrate to the world that

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**60** Iran Research of Honestly-Concerned.org, “Die staatlich organisierte Teheraner Hasspropagandakonferenz...,” <http://www.honestlyconcerned.info/bin/articles.cgi?ID=IR4306&Category=ir&Subcategory=19>

**61** Honestly Concerned, Iran Research section.

while Iran fights Zionism as a political movement, it respects Jews as representatives of a religion. The pictures of anti-Israel Jews with their broad-brimmed hats amicably exchanging business cards with the equally anti-Israel Muslim clergy were beamed around the world: pictures of brotherhood and harmony that create the impression that it is indeed first in a “world without Zionism” that perpetual peace will break out. In keeping with this image, four weeks after the deniers conference, Ahmadinejad was greeted by Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez, who praised him as a “fighter for just causes, a revolutionary and a brother,” and then warmly received by yet another icon of the Left, Nicaragua’s president Daniel Ortega.<sup>62</sup>

Although Holocaust denial is not a popular theme for the Iranian population and has drawn criticism even from within the ranks of the Mullah’s regime,<sup>63</sup> Ahmadinejad and his allies persist in their campaign. There were plans to make the cartoon contest and exhibition yearly events. “We will continue until the destruction of Israel,” the curator of the 2006 version of the exhibit insisted.<sup>64</sup> This appears also to be the motto of the organizer of the deniers conference, Mohammad Ali Ramin. Thus in January 2007, he explained:

The participants in the Holocaust conference have created the “World Foundation for Holocaust Research” and I will be the director of this foundation. The headquarters of the foundation is for the moment in Tehran. If, however, at some point the European governments—Germany, for example—are prepared to guarantee the freedom of opinion of independent researchers, we will move the headquarters from Tehran to Berlin.<sup>65</sup>

Iranian historians have already made queries in Poland as to whether they might undertake certain “calculations” in Auschwitz. In this case, however, their request fell on deaf ears. It “goes beyond every imaginable norm to call into question this matter, to discuss it, or to negotiate about it,” then Polish Foreign Minister Stefan Meller remarked.<sup>66</sup>

It should go without saying that a country that makes such madness—which goes beyond every imaginable norm—into government policy has placed itself outside of the community known as the “United Nations.” It is regrettable that for the moment no other state has joined Israel in demanding the temporary

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<sup>62</sup> *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 15 Jan. 2007.

<sup>63</sup> Criticism of Tehran Holocaust Denial Conference in Arab and Iranian Media, in MEMRI Special Dispatch Series, no. 1425, 16 Jan. 2007.

<sup>64</sup> “Iran: Moroccan Wins Holocaust Cartoon Contest,” *New York Times*, 2 Nov. 2006.

<sup>65</sup> Honestly Concerned, Iran Research section, Interview with Mohammad Ali Ramin, 7 Jan. 2007.

<sup>66</sup> Spiegel-Online, 17 Feb. 2006.

suspension of Iran's UN membership. It is particularly noteworthy that Germany in particular continues to maintain perfectly normal relations with Ahmadinejad's Iran. So long as the international community fails to react in an appropriate manner, Tehran will continue to turn the tables on it. Thus on 8 January 2007, the Iranian government filed a complaint with the UN Human Rights Council against those who do *not* deny the Holocaust. "History cannot be rewritten as it pleases the Israeli regime," Alireza Moayera, Iran's representative to the Council, wrote in his letter to its president, Luis Alfonso de Alba: "It cannot be manipulated and hand-picked selectively and it cannot be reformatted based on the political agenda or historical ambitions of this regime."



Robert Solomon Wistrich

## Negationism, Antisemitism, and Anti-Zionism

Already in 1971, the French philosopher, Vladimir Jankélévitch, had predicted the increasingly ominous connection between Israel, antisemitism, and the Shoah, which has come to haunt the contemporary European mind. He remarked on the extraordinary shadow which the Holocaust had cast over the events of the Second World War and modernity as a whole—a kind of invisible cloud of remorse. This was the “shameful secret” (“ce secret honteux”) behind the apparent “bonne conscience contemporaine”—the hidden anxiety which seized so many Europeans at their belated realization of the enormity of the crime in which they were so deeply implicated.

How then could one be freed from such a terrible incubus? Jankélévitch suggested that “anti-Zionism” was likely to provide the providential and unexpected opportunity for much-needed relief: for it offered the freedom, the right, and perhaps even the duty to be “antisemitic” in the name of democracy!<sup>1</sup> Anti-Zionism would become the new “justifiable” and democratized antisemitism of the future, finally placed within the reach of Mr. and Mrs. Everyman. And what if the Jews themselves were no better than Nazis? Why, that would be just wonderful. One would no longer have to feel sorry for them—after all, “they would have deserved their fate.” What better alibi could there be for forgetting the unspeakable crime or diluting European responsibilities and thinking about happier things?

Today, of course, such observations come more naturally and may even seem self-evident, though they were much less clear at the time. At least some of the new European Judeophobia functions psychologically as a kind of over-compensation mechanism for discharging latent and often unavowed guilt feelings about the Jews. In fact, by branding Israel as a Nazi State, one is killing two birds with one stone. One may point the finger at the erstwhile victims who are no better than “we, Europeans” (in fact they are worse, since they did not try to learn from their history); and one is free to express in a “politically correct” anti-Zionist language those sentiments which are no longer respectable among educated people—namely dislike of Jews. The Star of David is thereby visually metamorphosed into the swastika, the victims mutate into perpetrators and

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<sup>1</sup> Vladimir Jankélévitch, *L'Imprescriptible: pardonner dans l'honneur et la dignité* (Paris, 1996; 1st ed. 1971), 188.

Jews (or others) who defend the “Nazi” State of Israel can expect to be vilified as “racists,” “fascists,” and “ethnic cleansers.” Indeed, in many European countries, it is becoming increasingly difficult to even discuss the Shoah without balancing it by appropriate references to Palestine, intended to offset the horrors of Nazi Germany with those of the Palestinian *naqba* (catastrophe) since 1948.<sup>2</sup>

For several decades now, the Shoah has ceased to be a taboo subject. On the contrary, it is at the heart of contemporary Western consciousness—a subject of constant interdisciplinary research and media interest—integral to the culture, pedagogy, and politics of the new Europe.<sup>3</sup> Yet this preoccupation (which has at times assumed an obsessive quality) also has its perverse side effects. The most obvious perversion is of course, straightforward Holocaust denial. I mean the surreal claim that there was no “extermination” of the Jews, that there were no gas chambers, that the Jews and/or Zionists (with some help from the Western Allies or the Communists) simply *invented* the “hoax of the century.” As Alain Finkielkraut once put it, the classical antisemites screamed: “À mort les Juifs” (Death to the Jews) but the Holocaust deniers added something new—“Les Juifs ne sont pas morts” (the Jews did not die).<sup>4</sup> This was and is a *double* assassination. It begins with the genocidal antisemitism that produced the mass murder of European Jewry and is followed by the denial that the six million were even here, on our planet, that they ever existed. To quote Per Ahlmark: “First the antisemites take Jewish lives; a few decades later they take their deaths from them too.”<sup>5</sup>

Holocaust denial in its purest sense is precisely this sickening effort of the Jew-haters to destroy memory. Beyond that, by accusing Jews and/or Zionists of “inventing” the Shoah to extract billions of dollars and blackmail postwar Germany or the West, it has added a peculiarly vile conspiracy theory to the arsenal of millennial antisemitism and transformed the victims into superlatively cunning and fraudulent perpetrators. The main purpose of this monstrous perversion has been “to clear Nazism from its criminal stigma and rehabilitate antisemitism.”<sup>6</sup> Hence this type of denial is primarily an expression of neo-Nazi,

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2 A good illustration of this syndrome is Belgium; see Joël Kotek, *La Belgique et ses Juifs: De l'antijudaïsme comme code culturel, à l'antisionisme comme religion civique* (Les Études du Crif, no. 4, June 2004).

3 See *Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust* (Proceedings of the Conference on Education, Remembrance and Research in Stockholm, 26–28 Jan. 2000).

4 Alain Finkielkraut, *L'avenir d'une négation: Reflexions sur la question du génocide* (Paris, 1982).

5 Per Ahlmark, quoted in the workshop on “Facing Denial in Society and Education,” *Stockholm International Forum*, 235.

6 Ibid.



far-right and so-called “revisionist” politics in Europe, North America, and other parts of the world. Let me quote Irwin Cotler on this classic Orwellian cover-up of a true international conspiracy:

[T]he Holocaust denial movement whitewashes the crimes of the Nazis, as it excoriates the crimes of the Jews. It not only holds that the Holocaust was a hoax, but maligns the Jew for fabricating the hoax.<sup>7</sup>

Nowhere has this imposture been more transparent and widespread than among militant Muslims. For example, the present leader of Iran, the Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, brazenly condemns the “exaggerated statistics on Jewish killings” and emphasizes the close relations between the Zionists and the German Nazis.<sup>8</sup> The Lebanese Hezbollah, like its Iranian paymasters, sees the “Auschwitz lie” as an integral part of its general delegitimization of Israel and use of antisemitic discourse. Its spiritual leader, the late Sheikh Fadlallah, never tired of referring to the six million victims as a “pure fiction,” a mark of Zionist cunning and rapacity; and a testament to the ability of Jews to squeeze the West and manipulate its guilt feelings, as a result of their stranglehold over the capitalist economy and mass media.<sup>9</sup> This media control allegedly permits Israel to persecute all those—like the French Holocaust denier Roger Garaudy—who dare to challenge its founding myths.<sup>10</sup> Islam and the Palestinians are naturally regarded as the prime victims of the “Zionist” hoax.

The former Mufti of Jerusalem, Sheikh Ikrima Sabri, like not a few Palestinian clerics and intellectuals, eagerly seized on Holocaust denial to assert that the Zionists used this issue “to blackmail the Germans financially” and protect Israel.<sup>11</sup> The dark shadow of Shylock is never far from such “revisionist” discourse. As one Palestinian professor at the Islamic University in Gaza City put it a decade ago,

<sup>7</sup> See the comments of Irwin Cotler on this phenomenon, in *ibid.*, 242.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in *Jerusalem Post*, 25 Apr. 2001.

<sup>9</sup> Esther Webman, “Die Rhetorik der Hisbollah: die Weiterführung eines antisemitischen Diskurses,” *Jahrbuch für Antisemitismusforschung*, no. 12 (Berlin, 2003): 47–49.

<sup>10</sup> Goetz Nordbruch, *The Socio-Historical Background of Holocaust Denial in Arab Countries. Reactions to Roger Garaudy's The Founding Myths of Israeli Politics*, ACTA series, no. 17 (Jerusalem: Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2001).

<sup>11</sup> Interview, *New York Times*, 26 Mar. 2000.

[T]he Jews view it [the Holocaust] as a profitable activity so they inflate the number of victims all the time.... As you know, when it comes to economics and investments, the Jews have been very experienced even since the days of *The Merchant of Venice*.<sup>12</sup>

At the same time, while slandering Jews and denying the reality of the Holocaust, some Arab and Muslim commentators have come to stress that Israel—the so-called “heir of Holocaust victims”—has committed far worse crimes than those of the Nazis. At the UN-sponsored Durban Conference of 2001, the decision was even implemented publicly to trivialize the Holocaust by denying its uniqueness and turning it into one of “many holocausts”—ultimately far less important than the Palestinian tragedy.

The growing centrality of Holocaust denial in contemporary Arab discourse was already revealed ten years ago by the Arab forum on historical revisionism that took place in Amman on May 13, 2001—replacing the aborted conference scheduled for Beirut two months earlier.<sup>13</sup> At this gathering of Arab journalists and members of professional associations opposed to “normalization” with Israel, speakers enthusiastically praised the French “revisionists” Roger Garaudy and Robert Faurisson.<sup>14</sup> They also argued that Zionism was much worse than Nazism, denounced the handful of Arab intellectuals who were critical of Holocaust denial and insisted that “revisionism” was not a reactionary ideology at all but a well-documented research project.<sup>15</sup>

The case of Roger Garaudy was particularly significant. As a prominent left-wing French intellectual (originally Catholic, then Stalinist) converted to Islam, he became a culture hero in the Arab world after his trial and conviction in a Paris

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<sup>12</sup> *Holocaust Denial in the Middle East. The Latest Anti-Israel Propaganda Themes* (New York: Anti-Defamation League, 2001), 12.

<sup>13</sup> The driving force behind that aborted conference was Swiss Holocaust denier, Jürgen Graf, founder of The Truth and Justice Association; it was co-sponsored by the California-based Institute of Historical Review—the leading “revisionist” organization in the world. Among those originally scheduled to speak were French deniers Garaudy and Robert Faurisson, and the German neo-Nazi ideologue, Horst Mahler. Lebanese President Rafiq Hariri (murdered by Hezbollah operatives in 2005) cancelled the Conference under intense prodding from the U.S. State Department and an open letter of protest by 14 Arab intellectuals. However, after severe criticism for having conceded too much to the “Zionist” narrative of the Shoah, several of these intellectuals retracted, including Edward Said and Mahmud Darwish.

<sup>14</sup> *Free Arab Voice Online (FAV)* 15, 28 Apr., 22 May 2001; *Jordan Times Online*, 15 May 2001.

<sup>15</sup> Ibrahim Alloush, “Why is the ‘Holocaust’ Important to Palestinians, Arabs and Muslims?” *FAV*, 28 Apr. 2001; and the interview in the California-based *Journal of Historical Review* (May/June 2001).

court in 1998 for antisemitic incitement and *négalionisme*.<sup>16</sup> Garaudy's completely unoriginal thesis that there was no Nazi extermination policy or gas chambers, his charge that Zionists had collaborated with the Nazis, and that Israel fabricated the Holocaust to justify its occupation of Arab lands, has proven to be a source of deep satisfaction for many Arab intellectuals.<sup>17</sup>

If such "revisionist" charlatans as Henri Rocques, Wilhelm Stäglich, and Gerd Honsik can be regarded as respectable historians in the Arab world, it is small wonder, that *The Founding Myths of Israeli Politics* struck such a responsive chord among Muslims. Among Garaudy's most fervent advocates was former Iranian President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, the same cleric who proclaimed on "Jerusalem Day" 2001 in Teheran that "one atomic bomb would wipe out Israel without a trace."<sup>18</sup> It is, of all-too-revealing of this radical Islamist mind-set that the real Nazi Holocaust should be so vehemently denied by those determined to repeat it.

A discussion eleven years ago on Al-Jazeera TV (15 May 2001) revealed just how widespread such genocidal passions had become.<sup>19</sup> During the debate, Hayat Atiya, the female translator of Garaudy into Arabic, shouted before the cameras (while brandishing the photograph of an Arab child accidentally killed during the intifada):

Here is the Holocaust.... There is no Jewish Holocaust! There is only one Holocaust, that of the Palestinians!<sup>20</sup>

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**16** Nordbruch, *Socio-Historical Background*, 3–5, 9–13, 27; for details of the affair in France, see Valérie Igounet, *Histoire du Négationisme en France* (Paris, 2000), 472–83.

**17** The Arab reaction to Garaudy was overwhelmingly favorable. None of those who protested on his behalf questioned his claim that the Holocaust was a Zionist invention. His supporters included Sheikh Muhammad Al-Tantawi of Al-Azhar University, Rafiq Hariri, former prime minister of Lebanon, Egyptian Nobel Laureate Nadjib Mahfouz, and the famous Arab political commentator Muhammad Hassanin Haikal. The Arab Lawyers Federation and Palestinian Writers Association also wrote protest letters in his favor. For the contrast between the French and Arab reaction, see Mouna Naim, "Critiqué, jugé, sanctionné pour ses thèses en France, l'ancien théoricien du PC, Roger Garaudy, est décoré et louangé dans les pays arabes," *Le Monde*, 1 Mar. 1998.

**18** *Holocaust Denial in the Middle East*, 8–9.

**19** See *Memri*, no. 225, 6 June 2001, for the details; Raphaël Israeli, "L'antisémitisme travesti en antisionisme," *Revue d'histoire de la Shoah*, *Le monde juif*, no. 180, special issue on "Antisémitisme et Négationnisme dans le monde Arabo-Musulman: La Dérive." (Jan.–June 2004): 109–71.

**20** Israeli, *ibid.*, 151.

Among the statements appearing on the Al-Jazeera website and announced before the end of the debate was one to the effect that

nothing will dissuade the sons of Zion, whom our God described as descendants of apes and pigs, except a real Holocaust which would exterminate them in a single blow....<sup>21</sup>

At the end of this so-called “debate,” it emerged from an internet survey conducted by the channel that 85% of Arab spectators watching this program believed that Zionism was indeed worse than Nazism.

Arab Holocaust denial, unlike its Western counterparts, is undoubtedly mainstream. In Egyptian government-subsidized newspapers like *Al-Akhbar*, deniers regularly treat the Holocaust as a “swindle,” already proven by French and British “revisionists” (such as David Irving), while regretting that Hitler did not succeed in carrying it through to completion.<sup>22</sup> The deniers endlessly manipulate figures to pretend that there were less than a million Jewish victims all told; that the Jews were a fifth column in Germany, that they were traitors and spies who had in any case to be eliminated; that the Zionists originally inspired Hitler’s racism while deliberately stoking up antisemitism (as stated in the doctoral dissertation of Palestinian leader Abu Mazen).<sup>23</sup> Such a bewildering tissue of contradictions reveals a seemingly boundless abyss of hatred.<sup>24</sup>

This culture of hatred has carried over into European countries with large Muslim populations, such as France (and to a growing extent Belgium, Holland, Sweden, and Great Britain) where Holocaust denial or relativization fuses all too easily with pro-Palestine, anti-Zionism, and anti-Americanism.<sup>25</sup> The situation in French public schools emerged as especially alarming after 2000, with pupils from the Maghreb often rejecting any attempt to teach them about the Shoah. The subject was negatively identified by the young *Maghrébins* with the established order, with the “Zionist enemy” and the political self-interest of the Jewish community. In this immigrant milieu, far from having a beneficial pedagogical effect,

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> *Al-Akhbar* (Egypt), 29 Apr. 2002; Memri, special report no. 375, 2 May 2002; no. 231, 20 June 2001.

<sup>23</sup> Abu Mazen’s doctoral thesis was defended in Moscow in 1982 and published in Arabic two years later in Amman under the title *The Secret Ties between the Nazis and the Leadership of the Zionist Movement*; on Abu Mazen’s “moderation,” see Israeli, “L’antisémitisme travesti en antisionisme,” 165–68.

<sup>24</sup> See the column by Rifaat Sayed Ahmed in *Al-Lewaa al-Islami* (Islamic banner) branding the Holocaust as a Zionist lie to justify the founding of Israel; *Jerusalem Post*, 5 Aug. 2004, 6.

<sup>25</sup> Pierre-André Taguieff, *Rising from the Muck: The New Anti-Semitism in Europe* (Chicago, 2004), 97–100.

the very mention of the Holocaust has seemed to elicit violence and threats to exterminate or burn the Jews. The importance given to the subject, if anything, “confirmed” the widespread Muslim belief in a Jewish conspiracy or Jewish control of the Western media. European and French sensitivity to the Shoah is frequently linked by young Muslims to “Jewish money” and the power of the Zionist lobby. Hence the paradox that antisemitism has risen to unprecedented levels in France, Britain, and Europe as a whole (particularly among Muslims but not exclusively by any means) at a time when the Shoah has never been so widely recognized and integrated into cultural consciousness. Surely this fact should inspire greater prudence and soul-searching among those who believe that Holocaust education, in and of itself, can dam up the rising antisemitic wave. On the contrary, I would argue, there is ample evidence that it is currently serving as a potentially dangerous boomerang against Israel and Diaspora Jewry.

If this is increasingly true in the school classroom, it is even more painfully evident at the level of public discourse that invokes the Holocaust for political ends. No doubt some of this malaise has its roots in the earlier postwar years, and in the case of Eastern Europe, it reflects transparent communist manipulations of the national memory.<sup>26</sup> All serious debate on the truth of the war years was delayed in the former Soviet bloc until the 1990s. But in the West, Holocaust education and growing interest in the Shoah have been a reality for a considerable period of time. There is no convincing evidence, however, that educating young people about the Shoah will prevent attacks on Jews; or lead to a better world, let alone reduce racism and antisemitism.<sup>27</sup>

Most dangerous for the future is not only the outright denial of the Holocaust but its relativization and banalization through false analogies, especially with the policies of the Jewish State. Increasingly, we see the bitter fruit of this syndrome across Europe, as well as on other continents. Examples of the “Nazi-Zionist” amalgam abound on the internet, television, radio, in the press and the arts. The instances I will mention are only the tip of a huge iceberg. In April 2002, the pro-Government Center Left Greek publication, *Eleftherotypia*, featured a caricature of a Nazi soldier, labeled with a Star of David, threatening an Arab, dressed up like a Jewish concentration camp prisoner. The headline read “Holocaust II” and the caption said:

The War machine of Sharon is attempting to carry out a new Holocaust, a new genocide.<sup>28</sup>

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**26** See Manfred Gerstenfeld, *Europe's Crumbling Myths. The Post-Holocaust Origins of Today's Anti-Semitism* (Jerusalem, 2003), 10–92.

**27** *Ibid.*, 45.

**28** *Eleftherotypia*, 1 Apr. 2002.

Such caricatures are frequent in Greece. In Italy, the well-known journalist of the liberal daily *La Stampa*, Barbara Spinelli, wrote in October 2001, that

there are those, in Israel itself, who suspect that the people of Israel, in order to regenerate itself, wish to attract new pain from future days, while dreaming of a sort of second holocaust.<sup>29</sup>

In Spain, the leader of the left-wing *Izquierda Unida*, Caspar Llamazares, a confirmed Israel-baiter, declared that his party was fed up with the six million Jews killed during the Holocaust. He ostentatiously announced that his comrades would no longer participate in any homage to their memory.<sup>30</sup>

The deceased Portuguese Nobel Prize winner, José Saramago, for his part compared Ramallah to Auschwitz while on a visit to Israel several years ago. Writing in the Spanish daily *El País* he subsequently described Israelis as

educated and trained in the idea that any suffering that has been inflicted, or is being inflicted, or will be inflicted on everyone else, especially the Palestinians, will always be inferior to that which they themselves suffered in the Holocaust. The Jews endlessly scratch their own wound to keep it bleeding, to make it incurable, and they show it to the world as if it were a banner.<sup>31</sup>

In Belgium, a Catholic writer from a prominent family, Simon-Pierre Nothomb, also visited the West Bank and was instantly reminded of Poland during the darkest years of the war; he advised his readers that, when crossing the Gaza Strip, they should think above all of the Warsaw Ghetto. Typically, he asked, how such a talented people like the Jews which had suffered so many atrocities in its history, could accept

that its government and army inflict today on others, who are not responsible for it, that which they themselves suffered.<sup>32</sup>

In France, even the august *Le Monde* could not resist the temptation in May 2002 to publish a caricature showing the destruction of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising as identical to Jenin after the Israeli military operation. For many French intellec-

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<sup>29</sup> Barbara Spinelli, "Ebraismo senza mea culpa," *La Stampa*, 31 Oct. 2001.

<sup>30</sup> He was sharply criticized in *Libertad Digital* (30 Apr. 2003) for insulting the Jewish people by spitting on the Holocaust; see Gustavo D. Perednik, "Naïve Spanish Judeophobia," *Jewish Political Studies Review*, 15, nos. 3–4 (Fall 2003): 87–110.

<sup>31</sup> Quoted in Phyllis Chesler, *The New Antisemitism* (San Francisco, 2003), 119.

<sup>32</sup> Simon-Pierre Nothomb, "L'ordre va-t-il régner à Gaza," *Le Soir*, 18 Dec. 2001; for the original French text, see Joël Kotek, *La Belgique et ses Juifs*, 27–28.

tuals, especially of the “progressive” persuasion, it goes without saying that the Shoah has to be ritually invoked when denouncing Israel’s allegedly “racist” policies. Hidden behind this obsessive analogy is a barely concealed need to undermine the singularity of the Holocaust and call the Jews to account.<sup>33</sup>

In Germany, this preoccupation has been present for several decades, featuring in a long series of debates about antisemitism and the burden of Holocaust memory on postwar German society.<sup>34</sup> After the Moelleman and Walser Affairs (post-2000), there was the notorious effort to invert the roles of Jews and Germans made by the Christian Democrat MP, Martin Hohmann. In October 2003 he announced that the Jews, too, were a *Tätervolk* (a nation of perpetrators) no better than the Nazis themselves.<sup>35</sup> In this context, it is worth remembering the cynical observation, made over sixty years ago: “The Germans will never forgive the Jews for Auschwitz.”<sup>36</sup>

Even in Sweden, a country in the forefront of Holocaust education, there have also been deep ambivalences when it comes to Israel. Swedish Foreign Minister Laila Freivalds saw fit to castigate Israelis, accusing them of behaving like Nazis towards the Palestinians before and after an unofficial visit to Yad Vashem in June 2004. If Israeli Jews are assumed to resemble “Nazis,” even at the higher levels of European diplomacy, then one can only conclude that Holocaust education has failed miserably, even among a part of Europe’s educated elites.<sup>37</sup>

Much the same could be said about Great Britain, where Holocaust education in the past ten years made considerable progress, almost in tandem with Israel-bashing and the emergence of a new form of Judeophobia. Thus the Irish poet and Oxford University professor, Tom Paulin, angrily linked the Israel Defence Forces with the SS, the most brutal of Hitler’s executioners—and continued to be host of a BBC arts program.<sup>38</sup> Prominent journalists like A. N. Wilson, Brian Sewell, and Richard Ingrams have also made similarly despicable comparisons with very little opposition. As elsewhere in Western Europe, it is no longer possi-

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33 Guy Konopnicki, *La Faute des Juifs* (Paris, 2002), 137–38.

34 Alvin H. Rosenfeld, “Feeling Alone, Again.” *The Growing Unease among Germany’s Jews* (New York: American Jewish Committee, International Perspectives, 49, 2002).

35 Richard Herzinger, “Der Fall Hohmann. Raunen, Angst und Hass,” *Die Zeit*, 47/2003, 13 Nov. 2003.

36 Henryk Broder, *Der ewige Antisemit* (Frankfurt a.M., 1987). The remark was originally made by an Israeli psychologist, Zvi Rex, many years earlier.

37 Ilya Mayer, “Whither the White Buses?” *Jerusalem Post*, 18 June 2004.

38 Quoted in Winston Pickett, “Nasty or Nazi? The Use of Antisemitic Topoi by the Left-Liberal Media,” in *A New Antisemitism? Debating Judeophobia in 21st-Century Britain*, edited by Paul Iganski and Barry Kosmin (London 2003), 155–57.

ble to discuss the Arab-Israeli conflict without invoking the spectre and vocabulary of Auschwitz—only this time it is Jews who are depicted as the perpetrators of genocidal crimes.<sup>39</sup> Thus, the notion that the “Zionist State” is a mirror image of Nazism or else a racist “apartheid” state is unabashedly mainstream at many British universities.<sup>40</sup> So, too, illustrations that could have been lifted from *Der Stürmer* have surfaced at times in respectable British newspapers and periodicals, like *The Independent* or the *New Statesman*.

This is not, of course, the crassly antisemitic Holocaust denial of the Arab world, of the neo-Nazis, or radical right-wing extremists in Europe and America. Such Holocaust “inversion” which has reopened so many unhealed wounds, originates in a “post-national” Europe that outwardly, at least, repudiates the Nazi legacy, deploring all forms of racist antisemitism, warmongering, empire, and power politics.<sup>41</sup> For this new Europe which has become so fervently anti-Israel, the Holocaust is the direct antithesis of its pluralist, democratic credo currently rooted in the civic religion of human rights. The contemporary European “consensus” attacks Zionism in the name of universal humanity and the rights of the “Other,” which by some strange twist of history, appears to have become exclusively Muslim and Palestinian. If, however, the Palestinian “other” is assumed to be the *absolute victim* of injustice, then Israel, too, must logically be the *absolute perpetrator*, the ultimate configuration of evil—literally a “Nazified” State.

This is a much more subtle form of lying about the Holocaust. It has no resemblance to the visions of blackshirted skinheads in jackboots yelling “Sieg Heil!” The future of antisemitism does not belong to them but to militant Muslim immigrants and their “progressive” allies who have constructed a Manichean universe where Jews who defend Israel find themselves beyond the pale. Indeed, “Zionists” have been demonized and turned into “enemies of humanity,” the embodiment of racism, the lackeys of a criminal State. The painful truth is that antisemitism is back despite decades of Holocaust education, interfaith dialogue, memorials, films, and university courses; despite the Stockholm Conference of 27 January 2000, and the creation of national Holocaust Memorial Days across the civilized world.<sup>42</sup> The antisemitic sickness has returned to haunt us and we have as yet no

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39 Alvin H. Rosenfeld, *Anti-Zionism in Great Britain and Beyond. A “Respectable” Anti-Semitism?* (New York: American Jewish Committee, 2004).

40 Ibid., 17.

41 Alain Finkelkraut, “In the Name of the Other: Reflections on the Coming Antisemitism,” *Azure*, no. 18 (Autumn 2004): 21–33.

42 See Robert S. Wistrich, *A Lethal Obsession. Anti-Semitism from Antiquity to the Global Jihad* (New York, 2010).



obvious antidote, except the stubborn if problematic hope that eventually truth, honesty and rationality will prevail over the would-be falsifiers of history.



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