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Encountering Holocaust Denial

BY LIN COLLETTE

In 1991, college students across the country were confronted with a shocking form of anti-Jewish bigotry: full-page ads in college papers purchased by Bradley Smith, founder of a California organization called the Committee for Open Debate on the Holocaust (CODOH). In the ads, CODOH and its supporters question Holocaust history as presently understood and taught by historians and others. Denial that the Holocaust has been accurately represented is called by critics Holocaust denial or Holocaust revisionism, and by proponents is called Historical revisionism.

The decision whether to run the ads was made by the students running the papers, since most college newspapers are independent of their school's administration. Those papers that chose to run the ad usually defended their decision as respecting First Amendment guarantees; they were uncomfortable with taking any actions that might be construed as suppressing open debate on this or other issues. As writer Carlos Huerta explains in a 1992 article on the issue of Holocaust revisionism on campus, even several newspapers with a large Jewish presence on the staff chose to run the ads. Although they found the ads offensive, these Jewish students tended to see the issue in terms of freedom of expression. *(Huerta: 10)*

Papers that chose not to run the advertisement, on the other hand, did so because they found it offensive, inaccurate, or both. Campus and public reaction to either decision was swift—usually set squarely against the decision to publish. Papers that chose to publish the ads were often vilified by their communities and attacked for being anti-Jewish or ignorant of the actual mandate of the First Amendment. *(Huerta: 10)*

> **"The SS guards took pleasure in telling us that we had no chance of coming out alive, a point they emphasized with particular relish by insisting that after the war the rest of the world would not believe what happened."**
>
> —*SURVIVOR OF DACHAU QUOTED IN TERENCE DESPRES,* THE SURVIVOR: AN ANATOMY OF LIFE IN THE DEATH CAMPS

The traditional response to Holocaust revisionism within much of the institutional Jewish community has been either to ignore it or to expose the neo-Nazi connections of deniers, often wishing to avoid engaging in open debate with them, or even acknowledging their existence for fear of lending revisionists any form of legitimacy. In this case, however, many students felt that in choosing to run the revisionist ads, Holocaust revisionism would be more effectively counterattacked.

Jewish experience has been profoundly shaped and reshaped across the centuries by historical experiences—of salvation above all, but also of destruction. A deep sense of identity and mission, coupled with the genius of historical memory, have preserved not only for Jews but the rest of the world, the root experiences of the Jewish people. The act of denying the Holocaust, however, diminishes not just Jews but the experiences of all people; hence it is important to understand the phenomenon of Holocaust revisionism and the role it plays in promoting not only anti-Jewish bigotry but a cynical conspiratorial analysis that encourages the acceptance of scapegoating and demonization.

Holocaust denial is not new; it has been a fringe activity since World

IN THIS ISSUE

War II. However, a combination of shrewd organizing by Holocaust revisionists and the aging of Holocaust survivors has allowed deniers to begin to enter the Western mainstream. This is particularly alarming since it seems that every possible document and eyewitness account exists to prove the truth of the Holocaust, even if the actual totals of those executed can never be known. Yet Holocaust revisionism seems to be growing in acceptance—at least among some members of the public.

WHAT IS HOLOCAUST REVISIONISM?

Revisionism is a major function of serious historians, whose goal is to seek an accurate record of history wherever they find it. Some historians review and reinterpret the Holocaust and genocide in a manner that is not a subterfuge for attacking Jews. This type of historical analysis, although sometimes controversial, is generally regarded by scholars and critics as the only credible form of revisionism regarding the Holocuast. Essentially this is, at its most basic and benign level, the rewriting or reinterpretation of Holocaust history in a manner that argues: "It happened, but there are still things we need to learn about it." Such scholars usually have little difficulty getting their theories published in books and reputable journals and are frequently cited as reliable sources. Historians such as Lucy Dawidowicz, Charles Maier, Michael Marrus, Arno Mayer, and Christopher Simpson are found in this group.

Within Holocaust revisionism that involves a strain of anti-Jewish bigotry there are three distinct schools of thought. These can be described as: "It happened, but far from the extent to which they say it did;" "It happened, but [other groups] suffered just as much as the Jews;" and "It didn't happen at all."

The first school, when it is taken seriously at all in academia, is considered to be of questionable credibility by most scholars; members of this school go to great lengths to downplay the Holocaust's historical significance or imply that the impact and extent of the Holocaust have been magnified to accomplish particular ends, such as justification of U.S. aid to Israel, or aid to Jewish refugees from the former U.S.S.R. David Irving, author of a number of

The Term Holocaust

The word holocaust comes from the Greek and means consumed by flames or destroyed by fire. According to Arno J. Mayer, the word has a religious significance when used to describe a sacrificial offering wholly consumed by fire in exaltation of God. Paul Bookbinder describes the contemporary political and historical use as synonymous with the destruction of European Jews by the Germans during the Second World War.

Mayer is one of several serious scholars who have studied the use of the term Holocaust and raised issues about the effect of its usage. Mayer and others argue the term has been used by some to suggest that the attempted genocide of European Jews by Nazi Germany and its allies is so horrific as to be beyond human understanding and thus requires a metaphysical or religious interpretation. This tends to exclude a discussion of the secular historic, cultural, social, political, and economic factors that led to the calamity. In addition it may overlook other victims of Nazi terror including the Roma (Gypsies), religious and political dissidents, homosexuals, and persons with disabilities.

Another argument is that the term itself is a euphemism. The Nazi euphemisms included "Final Solution" and "Special Treatment." The term Holocaust clearly shares neither the roots nor intent of the Nazi euphemisms. Still, critics argue it masks the horrible reality of what was a vicious and sadistic campaign to murder all of Europe's Jews for reasons of political ideology using the tools of state power and with at least the tacit approval of a majority of the non-Jewish Germans.

Thus in both arguments the term Holocaust can become a symbol for the event which becomes blurred and lacking in specificity, as well as locked in a fixed historical moment. This absolves individuals from considering their personal responsibility as citizens. By understanding and discussing the specific factors that led to the Nazi plan of mass murder, all people of good will can learn to confront and oppose contemporary and future incidents of group hate ranging from scapegoating to genocide. The implication for U.S. citizens is discussed by Christopher Simpson in books such as "Blowback" and "The Splendid Blond Beast." Simpson argues that U.S. officials were complicit in ignoring the Nazi death camps and the Armenian genocide for reasons of political expediency, recruiting Nazi-collaborationist rocket scientists and intelligence agents, and rehabilitating the histories of post-War German politicians and captains of industry. —*C.B.*

books on World War II, the accuracy of which are consistently challenged, could be considered a member of this school, although he sometimes drifts into the more nasty schools of Holocaust revisionism.

The second school is a relative of the first. While admitting that the Holocaust did in fact occur, members of this school argue that Jews were only one of several groups of victims. This is a cynical use of other victim groups. For example, these researchers will claim that the non-Jewish Poles or Germans were equal victims to the Jews, and often minimize the impact Nazi policies had on European Jews by emphasizing the impact of those policies on other groups. An example of equalizing the victims of the Holocaust is the comments of former President Ronald Reagan when he visited a cemetery in Bitburg, Germany in which SS members, German soldiers, and Jewish victims of the Holocaust are buried. The visit caused a furor; Reagan's explanations "compounded his error" by making "no distinction between the fallen German soldiers and the murdered Jews; indeed, he suggested that both were 'victims of a Nazi oppression whose responsibility was abdicated through the madness of one man, Hitler.'" *(Hartman: 4)*

The third school, the most unconscionable, is the one that has attracted media attention in the past few years. Proponents of this school completely deny that a conscious attempted genocide of Jews occurred. They generally argue that the Holocaust as a policy of genocide was a fabrication by the Jews. Although its advocates deny they are anti-Semitic, much of the material found in this category vilifies Jews and Judaism. Although their materials have no credibility among serious scholars, the credibility of the actual deniers within the general public is somewhat higher, if only because of ignorance.

To be noted is that some neo-Nazis are Hitler proponents who do not deny the Holocaust but openly bemoan the fact that it was not more effective. While grotesque, they are not Holocaust revisionists.

It should also be noted that there is a legitimate and subtle debate over the use of the word holocaust (Sho'ah) to describe the attempted genocide of the Jews. The word is sometimes adopted to describe an instance of mass murder or ethnocide and has been used by the media to describe large scale killing in Cambodia or Bosnia. The term holocaust has also been expropriated by anti-abortion protesters to describe the number of abortions since *Roe v. Wade* in 1973. The debate over the use of the term "holocaust" and a related debate over the exceptionalism of the Holocaust is discussed in a sidebar to this article.

WHO DENIES THE HOLOCAUST?

A November, 1992 survey (now in dispute) conducted by the Roper Organization for the American Jewish Committee found that fully 22% of American adults and 20% of high school students thought it was possible that the Holocaust never happened. Another 12% weren't certain whether it was possible or impossible. *(Siano: 31)* Because the wording of the questions asked in this poll was flawed, however, Roper conducted a second poll for the AJC in March, 1994, using revised questions and a new cohort. Results of the new poll, delivered to the AJC in May, 1994, have not yet been released, but it seems certain that the previous poll overestimated the number of people who think the Holocaust never happened. A January, 1994 Gallup Poll found that a much lower percentage, approximately four percent, of those it surveyed "have real doubts about the Holocaust; the others (19%) are just insecure about their historical knowledge or won't believe anything they have not experienced themselves," says Frank Newport, Editor of the Gallup Poll. *(AP/Top Pollsters: A4)*

Contrary to popular belief, Holocaust denial exists not only on the political right, but also among some individuals characterized as moderate or left, although it is the right that is most prominent in the effort to present "another side" to Holocaust history. Most obvious on the right are the predictable suspects: neo-Nazis, skinheads, and members of the various Ku Klux Klans. The most prominent revisionist organizations are the Institute for Historical Review (IHR) and the Liberty Lobby, publisher of *Spotlight*, a radical right wing newspaper published in Washington, DC. IHR, Liberty Lobby and *Spotlight* magazine will be discussed in greater depth elsewhere in this article.

A nationally known Holocaust revisionist is David Duke, Louisiana state representative and former Klan leader, who ran as the 1988 Presidential candidate of the extreme right-wing Populist Party and as a Republican candidate for President for a brief period in 1991–1992. Although he claims to have put his Klan and neo-Nazi past behind him, as late as 1993 he continued to sell IHR publications through his Louisiana State Assembly office, as well as a tape entitled "The Jewish Question II," in which he questions the Holocaust "myth." In addition, he has been reported by Louisiana Republicans as openly asserting that the Holocaust is a hoax dreamed up by Jewish-controlled Hollywood. *(Rickey: 73–74)*

A current star of the revisionist lobby is Massachusetts resident Fred Leuchter. His lengthy "Leuchter Report" publicized his studies of "alleged gas chambers" at Auschwitz and other camps, and asserted that no execution chambers existed there. *[Kaplan: 4]* These theories claiming the impossibility of mass gassings

were central to his testimony as an "expert witness" at the 1988 trial of Ernst Zundel, a German-Canadian revisionist and neo-Nazi, on trial for violating Canadian laws against publishing and distributing hate propaganda. Although Leuchter does not possess the engineering credentials with which he is often publicly credited, his report quickly became a best-seller on the far right. *[ADL: 8]*

Leuchter's Report has been discredited by Jean-Claude Pressac, a French writer who himself was a Holocaust revisionist at one time. In his most recent book, *The Auschwitz Crematoria: The Machinery of Mass Slaughter*, Pressac uses documents from recently opened KGB archives to supplement those on file at the Auschwitz Museum archives to illustrate exactly how Nazi extermination techniques worked.

Another segment of the extreme right that continues to claim that the Holocaust is a myth is the Christian Identity movement, which claims that contemporary Jews are not related to the original tribes of Israel, but rather impostors descended from the historic Khazars, a now-dispersed people whose leaders adopted Judaism as a religious belief hundreds of years ago. Identity theology maintains that contemporary Khazar-descended Jews concocted the Holocaust in an effort to cement their reputation as God's Chosen, while Identity Christians are the real descendants of the tribes of Israel and thus the real Chosen People, not contemporary Jews. IHR and Liberty Lobby publications are distributed through many Identity Christian ministries, book houses, and publications, and members of the movement have approvingly discussed the Holocaust denial movement in their periodicals.

In recent years, some segments of the African-American community have also come to question the Holocaust's relative importance in history, arguing that the genocidal aspects of slavery and the Middle Passage affected more lives and that genocidal policies in the form of racism still continue today. While this debate can be handled with seriousness and sensitivity, and arguments can be made that slavery was a form of "Black genocide," some proponents use the debate as a cover for anti-Jewish bigotry. This is the case with the most prominent proponents, the Nation of Islam, headed by Minister Louis Farrakhan. Farrakhan himself has been accused of fostering anti-Jewish bigotry through his speeches and by refusing to completely condemn the anti-Jewish rhetoric of his spokespersons, par-

ticularly Khallid Abdul Muhammed, who has been giving incendiary speeches at various colleges around the country.

Although, Farrakhan has been called a "problem for a broad range of American blacks who rightly fear that his anti-Semitic rhetoric erodes the moral authority of his appeals against racism," a 1994 *Time*/CNN poll of 504 African-Americans found that 62% of those familiar with him said that he was good for the Black community and that 63% believed that he spoke the truth. Only a fifth of those questioned considered him anti-Semitic. *(Henry/Pride: 21, 22)*

Because other aspects of the Nation's message strongly appeal to the African-American community, such as an emphasis on self-reliance, cultural pride, and personal responsibility, many Blacks are prepared to look past Farrakhan's other, more controversial stands on Jewish relationships with Blacks, and racism against whites. For Jews, however, it is harder, if not impossible, to overlook those stands. Further, many aspects of Farrakhan's political ideology are so authoritarian, repressive to women and homophobic that they are perceived as threatening to groups other than Jews.

Four Jewish groups, withdrew their sponsorship of the Parliament of the World's Religions held in Chicago in September 1993, when it was learned that Farrakhan had been invited to speak. *(Christianity Today: 43)* In response to an October 1992 Farrakhan visit to Atlanta, Georgia, the ADL said, "The fact that the Nation of Islam does some good in the Black community is not a rationale for forgiving its scapegoating of Jews and Judaism." *(Christian Century/Farrakhan: 993)*

Farrakhan, of course, is not the only Black leader to have exhibited anti-Jewish tendencies. A number of rap musicians have also been condemned for including anti-Jewish lyrics in their works. In addition, several Black scholars specializing in Afrocentric studies have sparked comment because their books and articles allege disproportionate Jewish complicity in slavery. One of the most recent incidents involved a book written by Wellesley College professor Tony Martin that chronicles a campaign of alleged persecution against him by Jews at Wellesley. The book was condemned by the school's president in a letter mailed to faculty, alumni, and students. *(Magner: A15, A17)*

A prominent journalist and media personality who has openly questioned and belittled the extent of the Holocaust is Patrick Buchanan, 1992 Republican Presidential candidate. *(Wieseltier: 43)* Buchanan is known to have "mocked the feelings of Holocaust survivors as 'group fantasies of martyrdom and heroics'" and has questioned the capability of the Treblinka concentration camp to have engaged in mass gassings of inmates. *[New Republic: 9]*

Buchanan also appeared to go out of his way to anger Jews by arguing "the innocence of accused and convicted Nazi executioners." He has also "suggested that in any case the hunt for old, enfeebled men was of dubious moral value." *(Henry: 80)* For his unwavering support of John Demjanjuk, whose 1988 war crimes conviction was overturned on appeal by the Israeli Supreme Court, Buchanan (as well as Ohio Congressman James Traficant) were praised and embraced in an editorial in the *Journal of Historical Review*, published by the Institute for Historical Review. *(Weber: 3)* During the months leading up to the Persian Gulf War, Buchanan repeatedly referred to war hawks as being in Israel's "amen corner."

Buchanan's friends and colleagues find it difficult to believe he could be a "card-carrying anti-Semite" and, indeed, Buchanan has characterized anti-Semitism as a singular "disease of the heart" in his newspaper column. The problem, his friends say, is his "preference for journalistic swagger over editorial precision." Mel Elfin, writing in *U.S. News and World Report*, commented that in calling Congress "Israeli-oc-

Exceptionalism

The Holocaust is often cited as the most extreme case of rapacious evil in the history of genocidal mass murder. Three reasons it is often seen as the worst case are:

1. the percentage of the body of people targeted who were actually killed,

2. the fact that the ideology that drove the murder *required* the elimination of that body of people, and

3. the systematic mobilization of a bureaucratic structure to carry out the killing.

Other groups who have been the target of mass slaughter (Armenians and the Roma or Gypsy people), mass murder and enslavement (Africans and African-Americans), mass displacement and deadly persecution (Native Americans and the Roma people), or policies of ethnic cleansing (Bosnian Croats and Muslims), to name but a few examples, ask why the Holocaust should be singled out as *the* example. To do so is sometimes called 'exceptionalism' or "uniqueness" because inherent in giving the murder of the Jews in Europe in the 20th Century a proper name (The Holocaust) is the implication that it is uniquely horrific. —*J.H.*

cupied territory" and advising that the U.S. not "cave in to 'Jewish' pressures," Buchanan displayed a "callous ignorance" of Nazi-style demagoguery. Elfin concludes: "If [Buchanan] really believes anti-Semitism is a 'disease of the heart,' he would be well-advised to avoid providing aid and comfort to those who still consider the Holocaust a myth and for whom group hatred has become a way of life." *(Elfin: 83)*

THE INSTITUTE FOR HISTORICAL REVIEW

The chief organization promoting Holocaust denial is the Institute for Historical Review, a California organization founded in 1978 by Willis Carto, who also founded the extreme right-wing Liberty Lobby. IHR styles itself in fundraising letters as a "voice for historical truth" and a "champion of historical knowledge" because "we have the knowledge, and because we have the determination to see the truth prevail."

IHR was particularly gleeful over the acquittal of John Demjanjuk by the Israeli Supreme Court in the summer of 1993, claiming that the case is an important vindication of the cause of Holocaust revisionism. Revisionists felt they had been confirmed in their decades-long insistence that eyewitness testimony—even of Jewish Holocaust survivors—must be regarded with the greatest skepticism. *(Weber: 3)*

As part of its efforts to gain a mainstream following, IHR publishes the *Journal of Historical Review*, once a quarterly but now bimonthly. Previously geared to an academic audience, the *Journal*'s format changed in 1992 from a 5x8 inch library-sized format to a more glossy, 8 1/2x11 format, using more photographs and a less turgid editorial style. The *Journal* is now intended to appeal to all "intelligent" readers, and now carries articles on ancient history, culture, art, religion, philosophy, and social issues, as well as its old standby themes of racial issues and World War II history.

An important IHR function is to hold annual private conferences, usually in California, at which the elite of the Holocaust revisionist community are invited to present their "research." Guests are usually *Journal* subscribers and IHR donors. The 1990 conference featured a coup: one of the presenters was John Toland, author of several respected and authoritative books on World War II history who is not considered to be a revisionist along the lines of the IHR. *(ADL: 7)*

IHR first came to public attention in 1980, when it offered a $50,000 reward to anyone who could conclusively prove that Jews had been gassed at Auschwitz. Mel Mermelstein, a survivor, accepted the challenge and submitted voluminous proof, including his own personal testimony. When the evidence was ignored by IHR, Mermelstein sued IHR for the reward. *(Lindsey: A11)*

During the trial, Mermelstein used the same evidence that had been submitted to IHR. The suit was finally settled in Mermelstein's favor in July 1985, with IHR ordered by the Los Angeles Superior Court to pay the $50,000 reward plus an additional $40,000 for pain and suffering caused to Mermelstein. *(Oliver: 1)* According to a member of the staff of the Auschwitz Study Foundation, founded by Mermelstein in Huntington Beach, California, IHR did, in fact, pay the judgment.

In 1986 Mermelstein also won a $5.25 million default judgment against former IHR Editorial Advisory Committee member Ditlieb Felderer, a Swedish revisionist who had used his "Jewish Information Bulletin" to personally attack and libel Mermelstein. *(Galante: 10)* In retaliation for both suits, IHR and Liberty Lobby sued Mermelstein in 1986 for libel, but dropped the charges in February 1988. Mermelstein filed yet another lawsuit in October 1988, in response to the Liberty Lobby/IHR suit, charging malicious prosecution on the part of IHR. Although that suit was dismissed in September 1991, Mermelstein filed an appeal in August 1992, with no results to date. *(ADL: 33-34)*

IHR has often been mistaken for other, more credible organizations such as the London-based Institute for Historical Research, whose ideology is far from that of IHR. Organizations with little knowledge of IHR's work have sometimes been hoodwinked into selling ad space or mailing lists to IHR. For example, IHR was able to get a "Call for Papers" published in the newsletter of the American Historical Association in 1993, which caused an uproar when IHR's mission was revealed. As a result, the AHA decided to donate the money paid for the ad to the Simon Wiesenthal Center. *(AHA:10)*

In 1980, IHR bought part of the membership list of the Organization of American Historians in order to send every OAH member a sample issue of the *Journal of Historical Review*, which ultimately caused the OAH to make its policies concerning purchase of its mailing list more restrictive. Ten years later, in 1991, the OAH agreed to publish an IHR "Call for Papers" in its newsletter, a move that enraged many members. OAH editors justified their decision by citing the First Amendment, and stood by it. *(Lipstadt: 206)*

IHR presents a public face that avoids overt anti-Jewish bigotry. However, its fundraising letters, mailed to "supporters of truth in history," reveal its directors' prejudices quite clearly, as shown in a quote from a March 1992 letter:

"The powerful interest groups opposed to historical awareness will not stand idly by while the suppressed facts of 20th century history

The Great Chomsky Debate

Noam Chomsky, a linguist and professor at MIT (and leading U.S. dissident) was the focus of an international storm of controversy after a document he wrote defending free speech was used as a preface to a book by Holocaust revisionist Robert Faurisson and published by The Old Mole (La Vieille Taupe), a formerly leftist anarchist group that had veered into promoting anti-Jewish conspiracy theories. Faurisson's book described his travails after he wrote in 1978 and 1979 that there was no proof of Nazi homicidal gas chambers.

Two sets of attacks on Chomsky seem unfair on their face: those that equate Chomsky's criticism elsewhere of Israeli and U.S. policies with anti-Jewish bigotry or totalitarian sympathies, and those that presume Chomsky's defense of free speech rights for Faurisson means Chomsky embraces Faurisson's ideas.

Chomsky did not set out to write a preface for Faurisson's book. Chomsky wrote a commentary in response to criticisms of his signing a 1980 petition that, absent some quibbling over wording (such as describing Faurisson as respected), is a straightforward defense of Faurisson's rights to free speech and academic inquiry. Chomsky has repeatedly said this was his only intent. The publisher, however, told Faurisson and others that Chomsky's text would appear as the preface. Chomsky at first questioned the unilateral decision (prophetically fearing a controversy that would misrepresent his actions and views) and then decided to stand on the principle of freedom of expression. The book's cover says "Preceded by an opinion of Noam Chomsky," but the title page reads "Preface by Noam Chomsky."

Although the bulk of published attacks on Chomsky are based on lapses of logic, misinformation, political vendetta, or guilt by association, there remain two criticisms of Chomsky's actions that merit attention.

First, Chomsky's name on the book's cover creates the appearance of an impropriety. Chomsky argues persuasively that he is intellectually and linguistically innocent, but this avoids the question of whether or not he has a moral obligation to explicitly condemn the views of Faurisson and Holocaust revisionism given the impression of his imprimatur. Chomsky appears to dismiss the idea that Faurisson and Holocaust revisionism have any effect outside a tiny handful of marginal characters. He also notes that as a matter of principle, defenders of a dissident's civil liberties often refuse to take a public position on the views of the dissident. Chomsky argues accurately that elsewhere in his vast body of published work are clear indications that he views the Holocaust as an horrific event and opposes Holocaust revisionism, but many readers who see the Faurisson book with Chomsky's name on the cover will not take the time to discover this, and will most likely assume otherwise.

Second, Chomsky's written description of Faurisson as an "apolitical liberal" is clearly based on anecdote, misrepresentation, or lack of full knowledge. Chomsky is reluctant to revisit his original description of Faurisson. At the time of Chomsky's defense of his free speech, Faurisson had already been published in the Institute for Historical Review's (IHR) English language *Journal of Historical Review*, and served on its editorial advisory committee. Faurisson now cracks jokes about Jews and gas chambers at IHR conferences, and Chomsky's erstwhile friends at the Old Mole have burrowed blindly toward promoting anti-Jewish conspiracy theories. Even if one argues that Chomsky's misplaced loyalty to acquaintances at the Old Mole or supporters of Faurisson was based on lack of knowledge, Chomsky's description of Faurisson was, at the time it was written, inaccurate and misleading.

A crisp Chomsky paragraph could easily erase these two complaints. On balance, however, while he can be chided for having been gullible and aloof, there is no evidence that Chomsky is an anti-Semite, Holocaust revisionist, or an intentional apologist for these points of view. —*C.B.*

continue to gain an ever widening audience. With millions of dollars at their disposal, for every dollar we spend to correct the historical record, they'll spend a thousand more building Holocaust museums and memorials, agitating for school indoctrination programs, backing Hillel groups on college campuses, and funding their vast web of professional snoops, censors, slanderers and media manipulators." *(IHR, March 1992: 4)* This text embodies a conspiratorial impression of Jewish power and control that reflects a major strain of historic anti-Jewish prejudice.

IHR claims that its founding goal was to follow in the footsteps of Harry Elmer Barnes, once a well-known and respected World War I historian and revisionist whose obsession with conspiracy theories led him to virulent anti-Jewish bigotry and support for Nazi policies during World War II and to a later belief that the Holocaust was a hoax. In a "fact sheet," the IHR claims to shed light on suppressed information about key chapters of history, especially twentieth century history, that have special relevance today. It goes on to firmly support the First Amendment right of free speech. *(Facts, Oct. 1992)* In fact, as aptly stated by Deborah Lipstadt, IHR's actual goal was "to move denial from the lunatic fringe of racial and anti-Semitic extremism to the realm of academic respectability. The IHR was designed to win scholarly acceptance for deniers." *(Lipstadt: 142)*

Mermelstein's victories have been major defeats for IHR's cause. Nevertheless, IHR has managed to survive since paying out a $90,000 settlement to Mermelstein, as well as ever-increasing attorneys' fees. There is some evidence of cost-cutting, however—most notable in the *Journal of Historical Review* which lost much of its bulk in 1992. There also are rumors that the IHR is losing donors.

Another major setback was a firebombing attack in 1984 that destroyed most of IHR's files and office equipment at its Torrance, California warehouse and office, and prevented it from publishing the *Journal* for several years. Because it had been experiencing some harassment from several alleged members of the Jewish Defense League, IHR's leaders accused the JDL of the arson, but no evidence was found linking the JDL to the attack.

In October 1993, Willis Carto was forced out of The Institute for Historical Review in an apparent dispute over funding and ideology. Carto has filed suit in Los Angeles Superior Court to resume control of IHR.

LIBERTY LOBBY/ NOONTIDE PRESS

Often those who get involved with IHR are unaware of its historic connection to Liberty Lobby, a connection which IHR itself is slow to reveal, presumably for the sake of its credibility. Indeed, only Liberty Lobby publicizes the connection, often publishing Holocaust revisionism in *Spotlight* and even devoting entire issues of that newspaper to the "Holocaust hoax." In addition, Noontide Press, a Carto/Liberty Lobby outfit, has been run in previous years by Tom Marcellus, current director of IHR. Fundraising letters for IHR have been printed on Noontide Press stationery; both organizations are usually based in the same California cities. If IHR moves, so does Noontide.

A legal connection has also been established. An appeal filed by Liberty Lobby, IHR, and the League for the Survival of Freedom, in an effort to present themselves as separate entities, was dismissed by the United States Court of Appeals in 1988. The appeal was part of Carto's attempt to sue the *Wall Street Journal* for calling him an anti-Semite. As Judge Robert Bork (soon to become famous in the failed attempt by the Reagan/Bush administration to elevate him to the Supreme Court) stated in his opinion, the tactic was designed merely to disassociate the three groups from each other, in order to save their individual reputations. *(Ibid: 153)* In addition, it probably was done as a financial move, to ensure that suits filed against one would not affect the other two, so that at least one group would survive should there be a legal defeat, as there was in the Mermelstein lawsuit.

Liberty Lobby's central role in promoting Holocaust revisionism dates to the 1960's, although associates such as Francis Yockey dabbled in this area in the early 1950's. Its involvement seems to have begun with its publication of *The Myth of the Six Million*, a book which "has become a staple item in the Liberty Library and in the wares of various racist-paramilitarist groups." *(Mintz: 121)* In the 1960's it published discussions of Zionism and the Jews in *Spotlight* whenever possible, and on occasion it attacked the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith (ADL). While some criticisms of ADL deserve debate—such as whether or not its close relationship to law enforcement and intelligence agencies has led it to violate the privacy rights of dissidents, or if its high-profile attacks on Black anti-Jewish bigots are disproportionate—the Liberty Lobby critique of ADL falls into the classic pattern of conspiracy theories regarding Jewish power.

In later years, Liberty Lobby published at least two problematic tracts on the Middle East, one written by author Issa Nakleh (who has been a featured speaker at IHR conferences) expounding theories such as "Zionist intrigue as a factor in America's 1917 intervention," "dispute of the Holocaust statistic of six million Jewish victims," and "a conception of East European Jews as

Khazars rather than Palestinian semites." *(Mintz: 116)*

The Liberty Lobby's intention to support Holocaust revisionism became clearer in the early 1970's when it began to distribute *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century*, by Northwestern University professor Arthur Butz. Since then, it has often used *Spotlight* to promote the IHR, to rail against Jewish groups, and protest the opening of the United States Holocaust Museum.

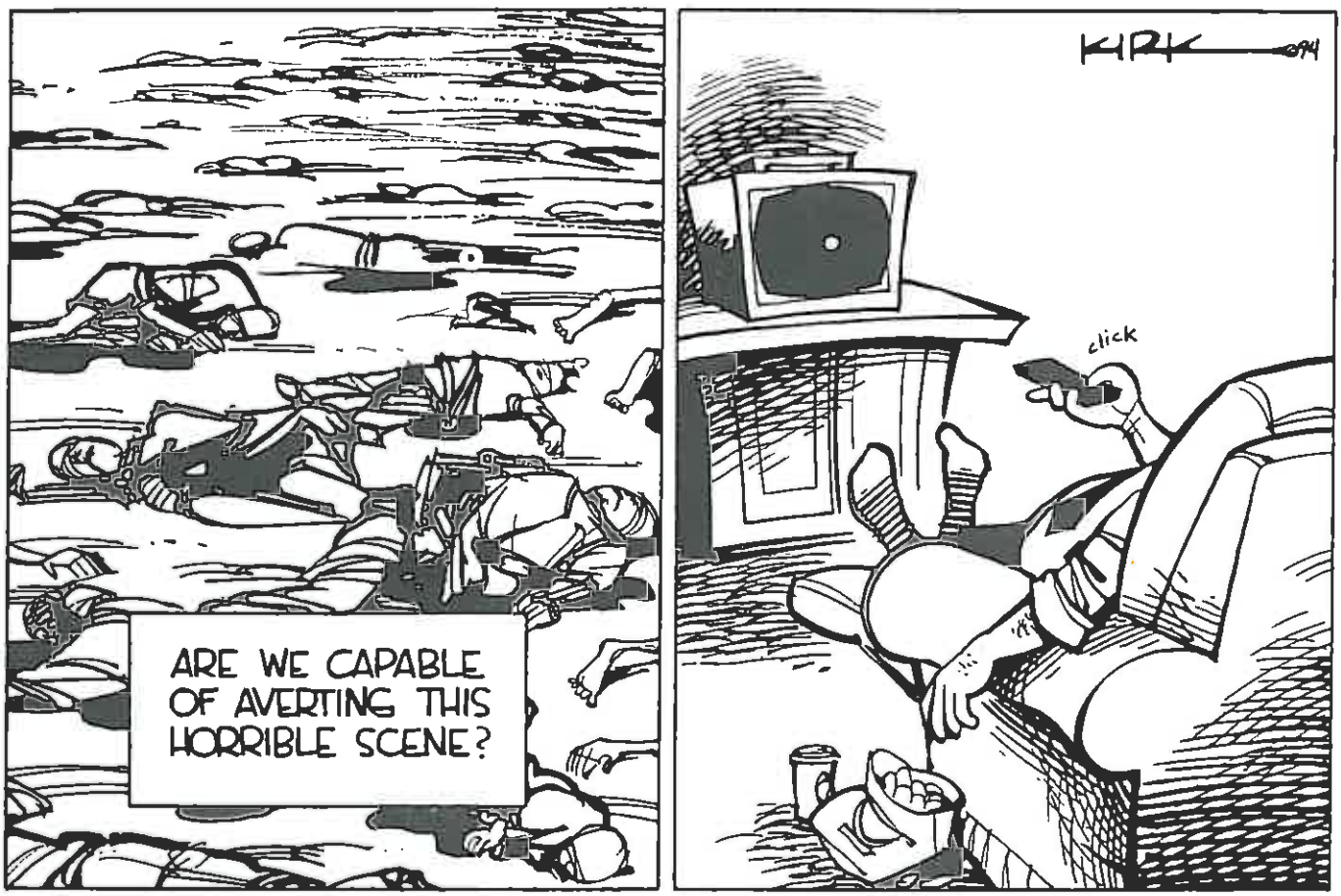
After Carto's ouster from IHR, he immediately began to plan a new revisionist publication, to be published in October, 1994. Called *The Barnes Report* after revisionist historian and longtime Carto friend Harry Elmer Barnes, the journal is clearly intended as a challenge to *The Journal of Historical Review*. In an advertising blurb in the August 29, 1994 issue of *Spotlight*, *Spotlight* Senior Editor Vince Ryan claims that *The Barnes Review* will be an incorruptible source *you know you can trust.*

CODOH

Another Holocaust revisionist organization is the Committee for Open Debate on the Holocaust (CODOH). Its efforts to place full-page newspaper ads in college newspapers (most recently *The Good 5¢ Cigar*, the student newspaper of the University of Rhode Island in Kingston, Rhode Island) has garnered extensive news coverage. Essentially a one-man operation, CODOH is run by Bradley Smith, a Korean War veteran and high school graduate who, as a bookseller, was prosecuted and convicted in the 1960's of disseminating obscene material because he sold Henry Miller's *Tropic of Cancer*. At the time, he portrayed himself as a fervent believer in freedom of speech and expression, and it is that philosophy, he says, which prompts him to fight so hard for the cause of Holocaust revisionism.

Smith claims to have believed in the Holocaust "myth" until 1979, when someone gave him a copy of an article from the French newspaper *Le Monde*, written by French Holocaust revisionist Robert Faurisson. The article so impressed him that he underwent a "conversion," and has since self-published the first two parts of his autobiography, *Confessions of a Holocaust Revisionist*. He has also been working with the IHR as its spokesman and media director. *(Huerta: 10)*

Smith founded CODOH in 1987 along with Mark Weber, who is now the editor of IHR's *Journal of Historical Review*. In an effort to promote his beliefs, he has appeared on well over 300 radio and television talk shows and began the college advertising effort. According to Smith,



Anti-Semitism in a Word

The Semites historically were a group of peoples from what is now the Middle East which included Jews, Babylonians, Assyrians, Aramaeans, Canaanites, and Phoenicians. The Semitic languages are a branch from the Afro-Asiatic stock including Hebrew, Aramaic, Arabic, and Ethiopic. Today the Semitic peoples encompass many Jews and Arabs.

Anti-Semitism as a term originated as a Victorian euphemism that incorrectly linked all Jews as one race. In popular contemporary usage, anti-Semitism is generally understood to mean prejudice or discrimination against Jews or Jewish institutions, and among most human relations specialists, includes theories that ascribe to Jews a sinister historic plan to secretly control the world by manipulating banks and other financial institutions. Persons who are prejudiced against Jews usually base their views on religious, racial, or conspiratorial grounds.

Is anti-Semitism a form of racism? That gets tricky. Because of the Diaspora and the spread of Judaism, modern Jews are divided into European, African, and Asian ancestry. The very category of race itself is problematic. During turn of the century immigration, Jews in the U.S. were widely considered a race. In Nazi Germany Jews were legally defined as a race. These ideas shaped the objective conditions for Jewish people.

Today many anti-Jewish bigots either claim Jews are a single race, and discriminate against Jews on the basis of this projected racism, or consider the white race as superior and under attack from the racial or deracinated Jews. Arguably, then, this is a form of racism, at least when viewed from the perspective of the victimizer. A side issue are those bigots who claim that all modern Jews are actually descended racially from the ancient Khazars, some of whom apparently converted to Judaism. Adherents of Christian Identity, for example, see Jews as a race that traces back to the Biblical Cain who slew Abel, and who spawned a people that has forged a deal with Satan.

Some critics object to the term anti-Semitism simply because it is a euphemism, or because it re-enforces the inaccurate idea that all Jews are linked by a biological racial connection.

A practical consideration is that in an age when there is bigotry against both Jews and Arabs, the term anti-Semitism becomes even more confused and problematic. For those whoinsist on both brevity and precision, the terms Judeophobia, Arabaphobia, and anti-Islamicism have emerged as being both respectful and accurate. While phrases such as Arab bashing, anti-Jewish prejudice, or religious bigotry against Muslims may be wordy and awkward, they convey the meaning in an accessible manner.

Sometimes the charge of anti-Semitism is used to isolate political critics of Israeli government policies or U.S. support for Israel. In 1990 the American Jewish Committee went so far as to publish a pamphlet titled, "Anti-Zionism: The Sophisticated Anti-Semitism."

According to writer Matthew N. Lyons, "False claims that anti-Zionism equals anti-Semitism, and that hostility to Jews is rampant on the left help obscure the vastly greater danger of anti-Semitism on the Right. Religious anti-Semitism finds broad appeal, espoused by reactionary Christian (and to a lesser extent Muslim) groups, while the neo-Nazi movement's racial anti-Semitism offers the biggest immediate danger of organized anti-Jewish violence." Lyons argues that Israeli Law codifies racial exclusivism because it places Jews in a privileged status over all other peoples, and that Zionism is not the answer for confronting anti-Jewish bigotry. At the same time, Lyons concedes that "some left anti-Zionists have acted and spoken in anti-Semitic ways or shown insensitivity to Jewish concerns." Lyons argues that anti-Semitism can be intentionally or unintentionally promoted (depending on the context) in discussions that:

- Equate all Jews with Zionism, or blame all Israelis for the actions of the Israeli government.
- Dismiss all talk of Jewish culture or anti-Semitism as racist or distracting.
- Trivialize the Nazi genocide of Jews and others, or equating Israeli rule with Nazism.
- Exaggerate the power of a "Jewish lobby" or "international Zionist conspiracy."
- Label Zionism a form of white supremacy when half of the

Israeli people are "Oriental" Jews, many of whom are people of color.

■ Reject as reactionary any sympathy with Israeli Jews who are victims of Palestinian violence.

Sometimes anti-Semitism takes a coded form; for instance early racists referred slyly to the inferior race of Phoenicians. Liberty Lobby, in an effort to buttress their hyperbolic claim, of Jewish power and influence, uses terms like "dual loyalist" or "Secret Team" when referring to political strategists or government officials who are Jews or supporters of close ties to Israel. Far right organizer Bo Gritz warns of the sinister power of the Jewish families who he claims control the Federal Reserve.

Lyndon LaRouche mops up several historic ploys used by anti-Semites such as claiming a Rabbinical conspiracy that began in Babylon, or warning of the global Masonic conspiracy. The Muslim World League publishes the book "Freemasonry" that warns that Jews use Freemasons to extend secret control over religion and society, a theory that has been popular for decades on the far right. Conspiracy theories alleging global, ages-old Masonic plots are paranoid, but they are not automatically anti-Semitic. Both Pat Robertson and the John Birch Society warn of plots by Freemasons, which is one reason they are accused of at least being insensitive to historic anti-Semitism. The Birch Society, at least, is on record as officially rejecting an anti-Jewish interpretation of their conspiracy theory.

accounts of the Holocaust are akin to the stories found in the *National Enquirer* and other supermarket tabloids. *(Hentoff: 12)*

Smith's demeanor as a calm, kindly elderly gentleman helps to sell his message. He is a far cry from the stereotypical alienated fanatic that one typically associates with anti-Jewish and neo-Nazi beliefs. Unfortunately, his opponents often become emotionally overwrought when confronting Smith's confident lies, and can seem more fanatical than he does.

INTERNATIONAL REVISIONISM

Revisionist groups also exist in other countries, notably the Historical Review Press in Great Britain. There are also many individuals who have devoted their lives and careers to attacking the "myth" of the Holocaust. Some of the more famous include the British popular historian David Irving, Canadian high school teachers James Keegstra and Malcolm Ross, right-wing publisher Ernst Zundel, and French university professors Robert Faurisson and Bernard Notin. Both Keegstra and Faurisson have lost their teaching positions because of their beliefs, while Ross still teaches English and mathematics in a Moncton, New Brunswick high school, despite challenges by opponents. *(Corelli: 15)*

Zundel has been tried twice on the same charges in Canada, for publishing "false news" through the printing and distribution of revisionist books and tracts such as *Did Six Million Really Die?* He was convicted both times, but each time his conviction was dismissed by the Canadian Supreme Court, most recently in August, 1992, on the grounds that the law against spreading false news was too vague and might be used to limit legitimate forms of speech. *(Lipstadt/Denying: 220)*

Two years after the verdict against Zundel was overturned, he is still publishing his revisionist literature. One of the newest offerings is a 567-page condensation of evidence presented at his trials. In addition, he has begun a satellite television program as well as short-wave radio broadcasts in English and German, with the latter aimed at his ever-increasing right-wing audience in Germany. Although Zundel is reportedly under investigation by Canadian authorities, no admissible evidence of "hate crimes" has been found. A member of the Ontario Provincial Police commented in a 1993 interview that "Mr. Zundel is very knowledgeable about what he can say." *(Nemeth: 56)*

Keegstra, a former history and shop teacher as well as Mayor of Eckville, Alberta, lost both jobs after a long struggle by opponents to oust him. Parents, disturbed by the anti-Jewish tone of their children's notes from Keegstra's classes, objected and sought to have him dismissed. They eventually succeeded, but encountered a great deal of opposition from his supporters, who ran the gamut from fellow teachers coming to the aid of one of their own to right-wing ideologues whose views were akin to Keegstra's.

Keegstra, like Zundel, was tried twice on charges related to spreading hatred and violating the "false news" law. Although an earlier conviction was overturned by the Canadian Supreme Court in 1991, after the second trial in July, 1992 Keegstra was convicted of "promoting hatred by teaching his high school students that Jews have conspired to gain control of the world." *(AP: 3)*

According to a 1985 article in the Jewish monthly *Midstream*, the frightening aspect of the entire affair was not so much that it happened, but that Keegstra poisoned the minds of his students for 14 years, that he induced them to hate Jews, that this did not bother the high school principal, who said that

Keegstra was a "good teacher," and that he would be "happy to see Keegstra reinstated." It did not stop one of his antagonists from thinking she could work with him "trying to make Eckville a decent place to live," and it failed to disturb the equanimity of the school superintendent, who found Keegstra "most convincing" at the hearing where it was decided to keep him on for another year. *(Gardner: 8)*

That his teachings had somehow been able to muscle aside the standard history found in mass media and school curriculum on the Holocaust and World War II was also alarming to Jigs Gardner, author of the *Midstream* article. But for Holocaust revisionists and revisionist sympathizers, mainstream media and Hollywood productions are run by special interest groups (usually meaning Jews) and therefore programming is controlled to convey only the message these groups want the public to hear. *(Lipstadt/ Denying: 37-38).*

Finally, the neo-fascist cult leader Lyndon LaRouche has questioned the Holocaust by claiming that most Jews died of disease and overwork, a stock-in-trade argument of Holocaust revisionists. Followers of LaRouche and Farrakhan have been making joint appearances in recent months.

These are only a few of the many deniers who have received public attention recently. Unfortunately, their message is sparking increased "debate" over the Holocaust, and the numbers of their supporters seem to be increasing.

WHY HOLOCAUST DENIAL?

Moderate Holocaust denial/revisionism generally takes the form of "wanting to hear both sides of the story," or questioning the extent of the Holocaust, in the spirit of not wanting to believe something on the scale of the Holocaust could happen. Carlos Huerta believes that the reason for this may be simply that people want to be tolerant, even of the most crackpot opinions. Such individuals, he says:

". . . have a sense of American fair play and have difficulty in understanding what they perceive as personal, slanderous attacks against revisionists. They ask the obviously simple question that if revisionism is so wrong and absurd, why not simply expose it as such and end the issue." *(Huerta:11).*

As mentioned earlier, however, a number of Holocaust scholars and Jews have declined to debate Holocaust deniers/revisionists, based on their fear that to do so would indicate that Holocaust denial is an acceptable theory. Deborah Lipstadt, a noted author and historian specializing in the Holocaust, explains:

"The existence of the Holocaust [is] not a matter for debate. I would analyze and illustrate who they were and what they tried to do, but I would not appear with them. To do so would give them a legitimacy and a stature they in no way deserve. It would elevate their antisemitic ideology—which is what Holocaust denial is—to the level of responsible historiography—which it is not." *(Lipstadt/Denying: 1)*

Lipstadt cites the case of a television program on which she refused to appear but viewed at a later date:

"When the show aired, in April 1992, deniers were given the bulk of the time to speak their piece. Then Holocaust survivors were brought on to try to "refute" their comments. Before the commercial break the host, Montel Williams, urged viewers to stay tuned, so that they could learn whether the "Holocaust is a myth or is it truth." *(Ibid: 2)*

Unfortunately, the refusals of experts and survivors to confront the revisionists, while understandable, may allow Holocaust denial a virtually unchallenged forum. This is especially true in the case of call-in talk shows, which pit deniers (who are ironically well-prepared and well-read in standard Holocaust history) against well-meaning opponents who may not be well-versed in the subject, but know, through whatever means—experience or reading—the truth of the Holocaust. Such programs can become an exercise in emotionalism, with callers and even talk show hosts losing their tempers as they attempt to confront the deniers with the facts about the Holocaust.

It is not surprising that Holocaust deniers are taking full advantage of most Americans' tolerance for eccentrics. Brian Siano, in a column in *The Humanist*, comments:

"With nearly any subject we learn about in school, we retain only the broad outlines. Relatively few of us understand the Holocaust in intimate, working detail. Most people know of Hitler, camps, gas, maybe the number ***six million***, and the vague understanding that the United States put a stop to it. It's not hard to imagine such a person; lots of them graduate high school every year.

Now imagine someone coming up to this person and saying, 'That Holocaust stuff is just silly, unscientific nonsense. Have you ever wondered how the Nazis could possibly gas so many people to death? Especially when the gas they used was only an insecticide?'" *(Siano:31)*

Often, in our zeal to hear both sides of an issue, we are eager to question established truths, sometimes *in toto*. Americans have a fascination with conspiracy theories and so are often willing to entertain even the most crackpot theories in the belief that everyone deserves a fair hearing. On the other hand, we are often too willing to believe "authorities" who claim to be experts on one thing or another and to take what they say as the certified truth. These contradictory behaviors work in the revisionists' favor.

The increasing numbers of those

who engage in Holocaust denial is perhaps emblematic of our own lack of memory of our past, and our preference for dealing with present and future, rather than the past. As Geoffrey Hartman reflects:

"As events 'pass into history,' and they seem to do so more quickly than ever, are they forgotten by all except specialists? 'Passing into history' would then be an euphemism for oblivion, though not obliteration. That something is retrievable in the archives of a library may even help us to tolerate the speedy displacement of one news item by another. The storage capacity of the human memory is, after all, very limited. But what of the collective memory, with its days of celebration and lamentation, and the duty to keep alive a community's heritage?" *(Hartman: 1)*

This desire to let the unpleasant past slip away has contributed to controversy in Germany where the *Historikerstreit*, or "Historians' Debate" over the meaning of Germany's Nazi past has prompted bitter dissension among that country's scholars. The process of *vergangenheitsbewaltigung*, or "mastering the past" is a difficult one, forcing scholars to face the evil caused by the Nazis before and during World War II. Unfortunately, such questioning of the past has given rise to a new form of revisionism, in which many Germans are asking why their country should be held solely responsible for what happened fifty years ago and, indeed, why Germans today should be held responsible for "the sins of the fathers."

The debate in Germany has been prompted by an increase in commemorations of Hitler's seizure of power and of defeat in World War II as anniversaries reached the forty- and fifty-year mark. Charles Maier, in his book exploring the *Historikerstreit*, *The Unmasterable Past*, says that although the current historical debate focuses on objections raised by conservative politicians and scholars concerning Germany's level of blame for the Holocaust, "the right did not open Pandora's box alone." *(Maier: 7)* Rather, as Jurgen Habermas, a prominent social philosopher, comments in Maier's book, ". . . the memories [are accumulating] of those who for decades could not speak about their suffering," and must be spoken. *(Maier: 7)* In other words, Holocaust survivors are increasingly talking about their ordeal, forcing us to confront what they endured.

Such confrontations have often prompted those who have little or no interest in world events to question why the Jews seem obsessed with the Holocaust. Says Geoffrey Hartman, "Many think they already know about the Holocaust, and that it has received too much attention. But their attitude is a sign that they have no direct memory of the events and learn about them mainly from ceremonies and the media." *(Hartman: 3)* Further, he says, "Life is characterized by a contradictory effort: to remember and to forget, to respect the past and to acknowledge the future." *(Hartman: 2)*

What is troubling to all of those who have suffered through the Holocaust, but particularly to Jews, who were the prime targets, is the "careless or calculated rewriting of history" that "prevents many of them from laying their own ghosts to rest." *(Gelman: 24)* But, most Jews are determined to keep memory alive, in spite of comments such as those made by Reagan at the Bitburg cemetery, comments that treated the young WWII German conscripts as if their suffering were equal to that of the victims of the Holocaust. Jews "saw the remark as only underscoring the tendency of history to blur the reality of their suffering—an inclination that is also visible in revisionist histories that have held the Jews partly to blame for their own slaughter." *(Gelman: 24)*

The experience of the Massachusetts public education group, Facing History and Ourselves (FHO), is an example of this tendency. In 1986, FHO applied for grants from a special program of the Department of Education, the National Diffusion Network, to support its work educating high school students and adults about the forces that can lead to genocide, using the Holocaust and Armenian genocide as examples. Its grant applications were reviewed by a special panel and rejected on the grounds that "[T]he project itself lacks balance; will former Nazis, etc. be allowed to speak?" After several other attempts, the organization was finally awarded a four-year grant in October 1990. *(Baker: 9)*

HOLOCAUST REVISIONISM AND ANTI-JEWISH BIGOTRY

It is possible that Jewish efforts to understand and study the Holocaust are suffering from a backlash effect, similar to the backlash against feminism or even the Black civil rights movement. It takes the form of an attack against ideas that are described as being "pushed down one's throat," and perhaps many of those who resent frequent reminders of the Holocaust, but who are not active revisionists, are simply viewing the demands of Holocaust victims as "going too far" and "dwelling too much on the past." *(Neuhaus: 38)*

The deniers play on a desire to avoid that which is unpleasant, and to forget the past and concentrate on the present. Holocaust denial also plays on conscious and unconscious anti-Jewish belief structures. Anti-Jewish sentiment and social prejudice has been a consistent presence in America and other parts of the world, fostered by negative images of Jews in popular culture which often are underestimated by historians. *(Curtis: 20)*.

Although overt prejudice and discrimination against Jews has de-

clined, a covert form still survives, and so may be an important factor in fueling a tendency and/or desire to forget the facts of the Holocaust. Some may reason that the Jews (and other "undesirables") got their "just deserts" for perceived crimes committed against humanity, such as the murder of Christ or other alleged offenses, including support for socialism or Communism or usury. This was in fact the attitude of many while the Holocaust was occurring, and it still is given voice by members of the extreme right. *(Lipstadt/Beyond Belief: 44–45)* Indeed, Bradley Smith has been quoted as saying "if God does love the anti-Semites, it might have something to do with way He feels about how some of you guys (Jews) behave." *(Hentoff: 12)*

But one doesn't have to be right-wing to believe anti-Jewish conspiracy theories or hold prejudiced views about Jews. As events unfolded during the course of the Keegstra affair, the unconscious prejudice of many Canadians came to the surface. This was usually embodied in the tendency for Christian communities to "denounce the anti-Semitic teachings of a self-proclaimed devout Christian" but to shy away from providing "outspoken moral leadership" on the question of prejudice against Jews. *(Bercuson: xii)*

Post-World War II America frowns on the open display of prejudice against Jews, although polls done in the 1980's indicated that one-third of all Americans believed that "Jews have too much power in the business world; 20 percent that they have too much power in the United States," opinions which echo the classic beliefs of most bigots. Vice President Spiro Agnew once complained that the Jews controlled the banks and the media. In addition, there is still a perception that all or most Jews put the interests of Israel and American Jewry ahead of those of the United States, illustrated by the comment of Senator Ernest Hollings, who once referred in debate to Senator Howard Metzenbaum (D-Ohio) as "the Senator from B'nai B'rith." *(Curtis: 22)*

In its annual audit of anti-Semitic incidents, the ADL reported that the total number of incidents in 1993 (1,867) is the second highest in the audit's 15-year history, and an eight percent increase over the 1992 total of 1,730. Acts of a personal nature—harassment, threats, or assaults—increased by 23%, while vandalism against properties declined by eight percent. According to the ADL, "this trend would seem to dovetail with the sense of many observers across the nation that confrontational, "in-your-face" acts of violence, intimidation, and incivility, have been growing and spreading in recent years." *(ADL/Audit: 1)*

The audit, however, is but an annual account of overt acts of anti-Jewish bigotry or hostility, not a measure of actual prejudice present in the U.S. today. Other observers say that, although the figures uncovered by the 1993 audit are alarming, they should be taken in perspective. J.J. Goldberg, writing for the *New Republic*, argues that in reality:

"[Anti-Semitism] is on the decline. Discrimination in housing, jobs, and schooling, once endemic, has all but disappeared. State-sponsored anti-Semitism, long a defining fact of European life, is virtually unknown here. Hostility toward Jews, measured in public opinion polls, has been declining steadily for two generations. Events that seemed sure to provoke broad anti-Semitism, from the Arab oil boycott to the arrests of Israeli spy Jonathan Pollard and Wall Street cheat Ivan Boesky, came and went without a blip." *(Goldberg: 22)*

The only increase, Goldberg claims, has been in incidents.

While a disturbing number of Americans may not believe or be sure that the Holocaust did happen, 83 percent of adults and 81 percent of students felt that "the main lesson to be learned from the Holocaust is that firm steps must be taken to protect the rights of minorities." Of note is that 60 percent of adults and 53 percent of high school students agreed that the Holocaust "makes clear the need for the state of Israel as a place of refuge for Jews in times of persecution." *(Editors: 481)*

While the extent and effects of anti-Jewish prejudice in the U.S. is a matter of ongoing debate, the ability of Holocaust revisionists to unleash or create anti-Jewish prejudice seems amply demonstrated.

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE ABOUT HOLOCAUST DENIAL?

There is no consensus at the moment on how to respond to Holocaust revisionism. Those who see the deniers as virulent anti-Jewish bigots anxious to gain a respectable foothold for their distorted interpretations of history cannot agree whether the deniers should have the same First Amendment protections to which others are entitled. Recently, the German government has taken the position that Holocaust denial is forbidden speech. It presented a broad package of bills to combat right-wing violence that includes harsher jail terms for right-wing thugs and punishment for those who deny the Holocaust happened. *(AP/Germany: A9)*

Two Rutgers faculty members who published an op-ed piece in the *New York Times* argue against publishing deniers' material in student newspapers:

"[The Editors'] decision to print its ad is based on principle: an aversion to censorship or a belief that hate material should be aired and publicly refuted. Surely their right to publish such ads should not be questioned. They alone must decide what good purpose, if any, is served by printing ads that are intentionally hurtful and obviously false. (Yet) the

ads should be rejected." *(Oshinsky/Curtis: A27)*

Their assertion later in the essay that "if the Holocaust is not a fact, then nothing is a fact" is well taken. Yet, while they defend the students' right to make their own decision about what should or should not be published, they strongly advise that the ads be rejected. There have been similar discussions in other venues, even on computer bulletin boards and the Internet.

One Internet computer node site based in British Columbia is host to the "Holocaust" and "Fascism" electronic mailing lists and the "Holocaust FAQ's," a text file repository of several sets of "Frequently Asked Questions," (FAQ's) about the Holocaust, Holocaust Denial, and the Carto/Liberty Lobby empire.

In early 1993, the "Holocaust" list moderator, Ken McVay, sparked a discussion of this same issue by mentioning that he had been asked to post articles from *Spotlight* that denied the Holocaust, but with refutation, and asked for input from bulletin board subscribers. A number of subscribers vehemently opposed the idea, arguing that it would be a travesty for the list to become another means of distributing revisionist propaganda. Others, including McVay, understood the concerns but focused on the education issue, as does the following posting by David Mandl:

"We're talking not about helping to spread these documents, but about refuting the wild claims of the "revisionists" whenever necessary. It's been the subject of some debate whether 'we' should just ignore them, thus denying them valuable exposure, or address these claims and expose their lies; I've wavered on this question myself. But I think this group is here to confront these 'people' head-on and deal with their texts. Do you just stuff your garbage in a closet and ignore it, pretending that the fairy garbageman will take it away some day?" *(Mandl: 1)*

Eventually the discussion ended with the posting of the disputed article from *Spotlight*, with commentary by a subscriber.

Allowing deniers space and time to present their views may indeed be the lesser evil. If such material is suppressed, it takes on the appeal of suppressed "information," which becomes more desirable the more it is suppressed. The public cannot help but wonder what is so dangerous about the prohibited material and so try to obtain it any way possible.

It seems, then, that a major challenge posed by Holocaust revisionists lies in determining the most effective response to them. Neither ignoring their existence nor suppressing their speech will make them go away. A middle course, acknowledging and allowing the publication of their theories and swift, calm, and thorough refutation, seems a stronger strategy in confronting revisionist distortions. As expressed by the student editors at Rutgers—how can one fight a devil one cannot see? How, indeed.

Lin Collette is a doctoral candidate in Religious Studies at The Union Institute in Cincinnati, Ohio. She is writing her dissertation on media depictions of right-wing Christian groups. Write or call for footnotes for this article.

Eye Lashes

THE RIGHT LOOKS AT THE WORLD

Cal Thomas is a long-standing activist in the Religious Right. He recently penned a column urging that churches, synagogues and religious institutions take over the welfare system. "Because these institutions would also deal with the hearts and souls of men and women, they could reach root causes of poverty," which Thomas sees is a lack of personal responsibility. "If government is always there to bail out people who have children out of wedlock, if there is no disincentive (like hunger) for doing for one's self, then large numbers of people will feel no need to get themselves together and behave responsibly."

—Conservative Chronicle
June 29, 1994

Samuel Francis is the prototypic authoritarian racial nationalist. Francis writes columns where he extols using Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony to enforce right-wing orthodoxy as a defense against attempts to "wipe out traditional white, American, Christian and Western culture." Francis blames this assault on multiculturalism which he sees as triumphant "where immigrants have imported alien cultures." The solution? "Americans who want to conserve their civilization need to get rid of elites who want to wreck it, but they also need to kick out the vagrant savages who have wandered across the border, now claim our country as their own and impose their cultures upon us. If there are any Americans left in San Jose, they might start taking back their country by taking back their own city...You don't find statues to Quetzalcoatl in Vermont."

—Conservative Chronicle
June 29, 1994

The Chosen People in the Promised Land

Frederic Copple Jaher
A Scapegoat in the New Wilderness: The Origins and Rise of Anti-Semitism in America
Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1994
249 Pages, with extensive footnotes and index.

Leonard Dinnerstein
Anti-Semitism in America
Oxford University Press, New York, 1994
250 Pages, with extensive footnotes and an index.

It can be frustrating to warn the public of growing U.S. anti-Semitism when the reply (often from Jewish advocacy organizations as well as non-Jewish groups) is that Jews are doing well in the U.S. Never better, in fact. In *Scapegoat in the New Wilderness* Frederic Jaher addresses that frustration with a helpful and timely explanation: throughout U.S. history both tolerance and defamation toward Jews have co-existed. Jaher illustrates America's history of ambivalence about its Jewish citizens with historical examples, tracing the most fundamental cause of anti- Jewish sentiment to Christianity—its doctrine and its preachers.

In reviewing 17th, 18th and 19th century manifestations of American anti-Semitism in a search for the roots of modern day anti-Semitism, Jaher first presents the more favorable life that Jews enjoyed in the colonial period and the new republic when compared with anti-Semitism in Europe. From the earliest days of Puritan domination, Jews were spared the persecution and exclusion they suffered in Europe. Jews were "insulted but not assaulted." They enjoyed almost all the privileges of full citizenship and considerable freedom of religious practice. Though their numbers were minuscule (in 1840 there were only 15,000 Jews in the U.S.), they were not repressed. During early U.S. history, it was Blacks, Indians, and Catholics who received the most serious and relentless repression.

With the Civil War, anti-Semitism began to gain strength, rising to a peak during WWII. During the Civil War, both North and South blamed the Jews as either agents of the enemy or profiteers of the war. Later in the 19th Century, Know Nothing nativism fed the Christian sense that Jews were the killers of Christ. This theological hostility intertwined with the secular image of Jews as tribalistic and without strong nationalistic loyalties to create a smear that reached its height during WWII.

During this period anti-Semitism "assumed its modern contours, if not its subsequent intensity and scope." Secular magazines regularly reviled Jews, and popular material, such as Mother Goose and the McGuffey Readers taught children that America was a Christian country that devalued Judaism and Jews. Yet at the same time, Jews made some gains in rights and access to privilege, illustrating Jaher's point that benign and forbidding circumstances have co-existed for Jews throughout U.S. history.

Jaher's elegant and complex analysis, combining conventional historical and social science research with analysis of metaphor and myth, stands in contrast with Leonard Dinnerstein's more pedestrian approach in *Anti-Semitism in America*. Dinnerstein also emphasizes that America is perceived by most citizens to be a Christian country, and that distrust and marginalization of Jews is hence doctrinally built into the American character. Dinnerstein quotes Barbara Smith, African-American writer and paragon of open-minded tolerance, who makes this point when she says "I am anti-Semitic...I have swallowed anti-Semitism by living here, whether I wanted to or not."

Dinnerstein's book, though less thoughtful and multi-dimensional than Jaher's, is also useful and timely. It meets the need for a thorough account of anti-Semitic incidents in the United States, and makes an attempt to analyze the causes and significance of these incidents by reviewing explanations from sociology and psychology.

Dinnerstein's weakness is that he seems to come to this historical narrative with a bias; he is convinced that the recitation of anti-Jewish incidents doesn't add up to much. Dinnerstein's conviction that anti-Semitism is on the decline in the United States creates blind spots that are puzzling to the reader. He scrupulously narrates every incident of anti-Semitism, admits that it is intransigent, then dismisses the notion that it is anything to worry about. It is in the dismissal that he does his work the greatest harm.

An example is his chapter on African American anti-Semitism. Relying almost exclusively on the words of Minister Louis Farrakhan and members of the Nation of Islam, he compiles evidence of a disturbing level of anti-Semitism in the African-American community. It would seem that an honest account of this topic would have to look at both how widespread anti-Semitism is throughout the Black community, and at the existence and extent of racism within the Jewish community. Dinnerstein does little of either, apparently accepting the image so often presented in the media of

Farrakhan as spokesman for the larger community. He then concludes that "Existing anti-Jewish attitudes among African Americans seem resistant to change." He reviews social, political, and economic explanations for African-American hostility to Jews, explanations that point to the tragedy of "horizontal blame."

But we are then reassured that African-American leaders like Cornel West, Jesse Jackson, and Henry Louis Gates have taken on this explicit anti-Semitism. Though all three have been eloquent on the subject, this is hardly grounds for dismissing the anti-Semitic message of Minister Louis Farrakhan and its popularity among his followers. Dinnerstein's rather shallow assessment of anti-Semitism in the African-American community (primarily a recitation of incidents) leads directly to his simplistic conclusion that anti-Semitism in the Black community stems from a "powerless" segment. The very complex relationship of Louis Farrakhan to the larger African-American community, and the role of anti-Semitism in his recruiting and organizing efforts deserve a more complex analysis than they receive here.

Dinnerstein concludes that "Today antisemitism in the United States is neither virulent nor growing. It is not a powerful social or political force. Moreover, prejudicial comments are now beyond the bounds of respectable discourse and existing societal restraints prevent any overt antisemitic content except among small groups of disturbed adolescents, extremists, and powerless African Americans." Based on this assertion, he several times seems to blame "anxious Jews" for their (irrational) concern about contemporary anti-Semitism.

Dinnerstein fails to give appropriate attention to several important sources of contemporary anti-Semitism. First, he does not take far right anti-Semites (neo-Nazis, Skinheads, some Klan members, and Identity Christians) seriously, but instead dismissed them as a marginal element without influence. More important, he misses the opportunity to discuss the contemporary politicization of Christian fundamentalists and evangelicals. As was true of much of the mainstream Jewish community in the 1980's, Dinnerstein does not fully appreciate the contemporary surge of Christian fundamentalist and evangelical theology as a threat to Jews. Crucial questions are not asked, such as: What does the rise of the Christian Right mean for Jews? Is it a matter of little concern or is the Christian agenda inherently threatening to Jews as well as others? Does the fact that religious right activists usually support Israel mean that they are not anti-Semitic? And, equally important, what does Christian fundamentalist intolerance mean for human rights in general?

This is not to say that Dinnerstein's book doesn't provide a valuable service, and that it isn't an impressive feat of research. As John Hingham, sociologist of religion, says on the jacket "No other historian of the subject has done anything approaching this monumental narrative synthesis of previous scholarship in many different disciplines, melded with original research in impressive depth." But Dinnerstein's relentless optimism is an example of a certain amount of denial that sometimes characterizes mainstream Jewish advocacy organizations, making them lag behind in their appreciation of the reality and potential of anti-Semitism in the U.S. When Christianity has been identified as the dominant source of anti-Semitism in modern history, and the United States is in the midst of a major conservative Christian revitalization, "anxious Jews" and researchers who study anti-Semitic extremists and take them seriously deserve more than to be ignored and dismissed. Frederic Jaher's elegant argument that prosperity for Jews and powerful anti-Semitism can co-exist is a grounding insight for those concerned with contemporary anti-Semitism in the United States.

—Jean Hardisty

The Public Eye

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Best wishes and good luck to Richard Levy, who has left PRA to take a position at Salem State College in Salem, Massachusetts.

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BOOKS RECEIVED

A Selected, Annotated List

Katz, Steven T.

The Holocaust in Historical Context: Volume I

New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.
581 pages, with extensive footnotes, bibliography (96 pages) and index.

In this first volume of an extraordinary work of scholarship, Katz sets out to document the uniqueness of the Holocaust, arguing that it is the only true instance of genocide because only Nazism contained an ideological imperative that called for the killing of *every* Jew. In this volume, Katz defines his terms, outlines his argument and methodology, and reviews instances of mass death in the classical period and the medieval and early modern eras. The projected three volumes will be an invaluable resource for those studying mass murder, collective violence, ethnocide, and genocide.

Hockenos, Paul

Free to Hate

New York, NY: Routledge, 1993.
332 pages, footnotes and index.

Hockenos has found just the right mix of anecdote and analysis to bring us both the word on the street and a coherent historical perspective. His greatest achievement in this work is to show that extreme ethno-nationalism, anti-Semitism (even without Jews), Holocaust denial and the glorification of the leaders who collaborated with the Nazis are not only being promoted by isolated bands of thugs, but are latent in what he calls the "political culture" of Eastern Europe. Ethnic nationalism and all of its trappings now constitute the political center, not the extreme. Paul Hockenos seems to have been everywhere and talked to everyone and his intimate knowledge of the people and recent history of this region allow him to speak definitively about issues that the mainstream press has avoided or simply ignored. This book is a must read for anyone who is interested in seeing how hatred can polarize nations and erode the political stability of half a continent.

Schmidt, Michael, trans. Daniel Horch

The New Reich

New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1993.
257 pages, no footnotes or index.

This book is the expanded version of the author's documentary film on neo-Nazis in Germany, *"Warheit macht frei" (Truth Will Make You Free)*. Schmidt's book, copious in detail and full of intensely visual description, reads like a film. The book is divided into small scenes, each recounting the author's experience at a meeting or event of one neo-Nazi group or another. In the two years Schmidt spent working on this project he built a unique rapport with the subjects of his film. This rapport allowed him to travel where others have not, and know the characters of the neo-Nazi movement better than most. As we read the book we also get to know these characters well and, through Schmidt, they express their terrible commitment to rebuilding the Reich. While this book stands on its own as an expose, *The New Reich* does not escape the fate of a book wanting to be a film. The reader often becomes confused as Schmidt jumps from one scene to the next and the evidence that he has recorded threatens to become lost in descriptive details. *The New Reich* should be viewed as an archive of film footage, perhaps more accessible in a book than as a hopelessly long film. Still, the book lacks an index, a glaring omission in such a valuable, if cluttered, trove of evidence.

Hoff, Joan

Nixon Reconsidered

New York: Basic Books, 1994.
475 pages including footnotes.

This revisionist work argues that Nixon was an 'aprincipled' politician, so reviled by liberals and the media that they were unable to perceive his progressive policies on domestic issues such as civil rights, Native American issues, women's issues, welfare, health etc. Consequently, Nixon's domestic policies and restructuring of the government are ignored while his less substantive foreign policy accomplishments continue to be heralded. However, Hoff goes so far in cleaning up Nixon's image that her interpretation of other data becomes suspect. Nonetheless, her provocative conclusion argues that by treating Nixon's abuses of power as a personal aberration, rather than as symptomatic of the system, Watergate demonstrated the weakness, rather than the strength, of the American system. Simultaneously, she argues, it set the stage for undermining the 'progressive conservatism' that Nixon represented, thus creating the space for the fundamentalism and neoconservatism of the 1980's, which further undermine a "dying political system," and for the future abuses of executive power by Reagan, North, Casey, Bush *et. al.*

Frum, David

Dead Right

New York: Basic Books, 1994.
230 pages, footnotes, index.

This nasty little tract finds the biggest enemies of the right to be none other than the neoconservatives who have abandoned the essence of conservatism: downsizing the government and eliminating its redistributive functions. As pure *laissez-faire* capitalist advocacy, it is archtypical, complete with its call for abolition of social security, Medicare and its absolute disdain for poverty as a political issue. As a sectarian diatribe, it delights in pinpointing the inconsistencies and weaknesses of what it calls the three neocon factions: the optimists (Kemp), the moralists (Bennett) and the nationalists (Buchanan) while dismissing the importance of the religious right out of hand. But for all its unpleasantness, it can serve as an introduction to the right and its internal inconsistencies, if one can stomach the racist and misogynist overtones.

HIGH–TECH HATE

Just as bigots have utilized emerging media technologies such as cable television access channels and satellite distributed radio programs, hate and Holocaust revisionism have gone online with computer bulletin boards and networks. The Ku Klux Klan and Aryan Nations were the first to set up computer bulletin board systems (BBS's) in the mid 1980's. Computer users with a modem could call a phone number and be tied to a single computer with hundreds of text files extolling white supremacy, neo-Nazi ideology, and anti-Jewish bigotry. To counter electronic hate speech, PRA analyst, Chip Berlet and a group of volunteers set up the first anti-racist BBS promoting democracy and pluralism in 1985. Co-sponsored by PRA, it is still running and can be reached by computer by calling (617) 221-5815 (settings: 8,N,1 @ 14,400bps or slower).

Holocaust revisionism and other forms of bigotry percolate through several online systems both commercial and non-commercial. The major computer network globally is the Internet, a virtual electronic community linked by thousands of computer sites that in turn provide access to the network to hundreds of thousands of computer users using everything from terminals tied to main frames on large campuses to portable laptops plugged into hotel phone data sockets. The vast majority of Internet users reject bigotry, and regularly attempt to force the revisionists to confine their offensive postings to a specific conference [alt.revisionism], set up to isolate them while still allowing free speech. In [alt.revisionism] you can find noted Holocaust revisionists such as Bradley R. Smith, [bradleyrs@aol.com], and Ross Vicksell, [codfish@netcom.com]. Dan Gannon, [dgannon@banished.com], one of the most prolific and shrill of the revisionists, appears to limit his activism to the online community. Holocaust revisionism, along with other forms of bigotry as well as broader fascist appeals, appear regularly in the Internet conference [alt.conspiracy]. A standout in this forum is Glenda Stocks who runs the Searchnet network. Stocks peddles the classic anti-Jewish conspiracy theory that today's Jews are all descended from the Khazars.

A number of persons regularly attempt to debunk the Holocaust revisionists on the Internet, including Danny Keren, [dzk@cs.brown.edu] and Barry Shein [bzs@world.std.com]. But special recognition is due Ken McVay, [kmcvay@oneb.bc.ca], the most persistent and pursuasive critic of Holocaust revisionism on the Internet. McVay maintains an archive of text files on the Holocaust and fascism, and can give you instructions on how to access his files.

The following list was compiled with help from the Center for Democratic Renewal.

A Bulletin Board System is a free-standing computer system tied to one or more phone lines through an interface device called a modem that allows persons to direct dial access through their modem and view and download a collection of text files and exchange messages.

Cyber Space Minutemen
(312) 275-6362
KKK, National Alliance, white racist text.

Transponder BBS
(412) 775-6205
Specializes in white racist National Alliance materials (SYSOP: Vance)

Banished CPU
(503) 232-6566
Anti-Jewish & Holocaust denial. (SYSOP: Maynard)

New Age BBS
(303) 288-6890
Mixture of natural foods, new age, & articles from the quasi-Nazi Spotlight newspaper.

Gay Agenda Resistance
(503) 292-3305
(SYSOP: Metal)

Searchnet
(508) 586-6977
(617) 961-4865
Odd mix of anti-Jewish conspiracism and New Age UFO mania packaged as pro-patriot anti-government network. Run by Glenda Stocks.

Lincoln BBS
(703) 777-5987
(SYSOP: John Covici)
LaRouche material.

Activist BBS
(510) 532-6248
Every known conspiracy theory.

Along with the Public Eye BBS mentioned above, PRA also co-sponsors a file site on the Peacenet network. The conference is called [public.eye] and messages to it can be sent to [cberlet@igc.apc.org]. PRA also posts material to the Peacenet conference [gen.right] where material from the Center for Democratic Renewal and People Against Racist Terror is also posted.

For information on the international PEACENET system, call (415) 923-0900 [voice], or write PEACENET, 3228 Sacramento St., San Francisco, CA 94115.

THE PUBLIC EYE Resources

The May 1994 issue of *The Freedom Writer* has a special report on anti-Semitism's prevalence within the Christian Right. To obtain a copy, send $3.00 to The Institute for First Amendment Studies. P.O. Box 589, Great Barrington, MA 02130.

Hitler's Apologists: The Anti-Semitic Propaganda of Holocaust "Revisionism" is a good primer on the subject published in 1993 by the Anti-Defamation League, 823 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017.

An excellent resource book for high school students developed by Facing History and Ourselves challenges young people to do just that. Entitled, *Facing History and Ourselves: Holocaust and Human Behavior,* it is now available from the FHO National Foundation, 16 Hurd Road, Brookline, MA 02146. Telephone (617) 232-1595.

The current issue of *Skeptic*, an aptly named intellectual journal that debunks pseudoscience, pseudohistory and metaphysical claims, has a number of excellent articles on Holocaust revisionism in Volume 2, No. 4. For information write, Skeptics Society, 2761 N. Marengo Ave., Altadena, CA 91001. Phone/Fax (818) 794-3119.

The original Holocaust survey done by the Roper Organization at the behest of the American Jewish Committee still contains useful information, even though they are conducting another one that will use clearer and more precise questions. To receive a copy, or information on the upcoming survey, write The American Jewish Committee, Institute of Human Relations, 165 East 56 Street, New York, NY 10022-2746.

For the most extensive collection on the Holocaust available in the U.S., contact the Simon Wiesenthal Center, 9760 W. Pico Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90035. Tel (310) 553-9036, Fax -8007.

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