

Lies About the Holocaust

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HISTORIANS are always engaged in reinterpreting the past. They do so sometimes on the basis of newly found documentary sources, sometimes by reconsidering the known data from a different political position, or by taking into account a different time span, or by employing a new methodology. Every historical subject has undergone revision as each new generation rewrites the history of the past in the light of its own perspectives and values. But the term "revisionism" has applied specifically to dissident positions which are at variance with mainstream history on several subjects from the Civil War on. Three of these subjects have been politicized beyond the limits of historical truth—World War I, World War II, and the cold war (and there is a new subject, the war in Vietnam, now in the making).

In these three instances, revisionists, more ideological than academic in their approach, have tried to refute the prevailing views as to who was to blame for the outbreak of war. Using—and sometimes abusing—historical data, World War I revisionists have tried to prove that Germany was not to blame, or was less to blame than England. World War II revisionists have traveled the same route, picturing Franklin D. Roosevelt as the arch-villain. Cold-war revisionists have blamed the United States and absolved the Soviet Union for having initiated the cold war.

World War I revisionism was launched late in the 1920's with Sidney B. Fay's *The Origins of the World War*, which gave some historical dignity to what was more often a political and ideological issue. On the Right, conservatives and isolationists blamed England for the war and whitewashed Germany. On the Left, the Communists and their splinter groups attributed the origins of the war to the conspiratorial manipulations of the munitions-makers and the financiers. In Germany itself, the historical debate continued from the end of World War I until long past the end of World War II, but by now it would seem to have been

put to rest by Fritz Fischer's definitive work, *Germany's War Aims in the First World War*.*

As for World War II, the universal revulsion against the Third Reich and the open record of its belligerency did not create a hospitable climate for revisionism. Even in postwar Germany, where diehard Nazis continued to believe in the cause, they nevertheless did not dare to defend the Third Reich openly. The first—and still the only—revisionist work on World War II by a reputable historian was A.J.P. Taylor's mischievous book, *The Origins of the Second World War* (1961).† There Taylor argued that Hitler had not planned a general war, and that the conflict, far from being premeditated, was "a mistake, the result on both sides of diplomatic blunders." Still, though Hitler was like other statesmen of his time in the conduct of his diplomatic affairs, Taylor explicitly declared that he outdid them all "in wicked deeds."

Historians everywhere roundly attacked Taylor for the book's conceptual perversity and its methodological flaws, but his book soon became the banner under which a swarm of Nazi apologists, cranks, and anti-Semites rallied. In twenty years' time, indeed, the allegations advanced by Taylor would come to appear mild and innocuous, for by 1980 one would find it being argued by so-called revisionists not only that Hitler's Germany was not to blame for World War II, but that the murder of six million European Jews by the Nazis had never taken place, that the Holocaust was a hoax invented by the Jews. Most shocking of all, these gross and malicious falsifications, far from being attacked and repudiated, have gained a respectful hearing in academic historical institutions in the United States.

IN THE same year that Taylor's book was published, 1961, a revisionist work appeared in Germany, written by an American, David L. Hoggan. The book had originated as a Harvard doctoral dissertation done in 1948, but it was revised, expanded, and Nazified in the ensuing years. Unable

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*First published in Germany in 1961. The English version appeared in 1967 (Norton).

† See G.F. Hudson, "An Apologia for Adolf Hitler," COMMENTARY, February 1962.

to find an American or a bona-fide German publisher, Hoggan gave his manuscript to a known Nazi publisher.*

Hoggan's dissertation, according to one of his Harvard advisers, had been "no more than a solid, conscientious piece of work, critical of Polish and British policies in 1939, but not beyond what the evidence would tolerate." Thirteen years later, as published, it had turned into an apologia for Nazi Germany in which the English were portrayed as warmongers, the Poles as the real provokers of the war, and Hitler as the angel of peace. (The book also contained a short section on the Jews, arguing that from 1933 to 1938 the Third Reich treated its Jews more generously than Poland had.)

To support his outrageous claims, Hoggan tampered with sources, distorting and misreading those that did not fit his theories and prejudices, glossing over those that conflicted with them, and altogether ignoring those that actually confuted them. Nor, according to the president of the Association of German Historians, did he shrink from forgery.† One noted German historian summed up Hoggan's work as follows: "Rarely have so many inane and unwarranted theses, allegations, and 'conclusions' . . . been crammed into a volume written under the guise of history."

How had a once "solid, conscientious piece of work" metamorphosed into this rubbish of Nazi apologetics? The credit for the reverse alchemy belongs to the late Harry Elmer Barnes, presumptive doyen of American isolationist historians, guru to fledgling libertarians, and patron saint of neo-Nazi cranks and crackpots in search of academic legitimacy.

HARRY ELMER BARNES (1889-1968) was an American historian and sociologist of wide-ranging interests and knowledge, whose career as a professor and then as a journalist was aborted by his contentiousness and his cavalier disregard not only for accuracy but also for truth. He produced no original scholarly work, but synthesized information from his vast reading in a series of prolix and repetitious works on the history of Western civilization. By his own account, however, the "subject of war responsibility" occupied more of his time than any other theme.

In the 1920's Barnes became a World War I revisionist and was soon possessed by the idea that "vested political and historical interests" were behind the "official" accounts of Germany's responsibility for the outbreak of the war. The rabid energy which this notion provoked in him sustained Barnes as a revisionist into the period of World War II. As early as 1937, already a fanatical Roosevelt-hater, he described himself as a "noninterventionist." His rage against Roosevelt became still more intensified after Pearl Harbor—for which Barnes held Roosevelt responsible—and America's entry into the war in 1941.

Barnes's obsessions with warmongering conspiracies in government and in the historical profession held him in thrall until the end of his life. His writing grew ever more shrill, irresponsible, and irrational. (Finding few outlets to publish his polemical pieces, he felt compelled to have them privately printed.) People who had once held him in regard ceased to pay heed as he grew progressively paranoid, seeing sinister plots and powerful enemies everywhere. He began to write about the "historical blackout," that is, about a conspiracy to prevent him from publicizing his isolationist views. Here is a sample from one of the earlier articles:

It is no exaggeration to say that the American Smearbund, operating through newspaper editors and columnists, "hatchet-men" book reviewers, radio commentators, pressure-group intrigue and espionage, and academic pressures and fears, has accomplished about as much in the way of intimidating honest intellectuals in this country as Hitler, Goebbels, Himmler, the Gestapo, and concentration camps were able to do in Nazi Germany.**

By now a calcified isolationist, Barnes opposed America's involvement in Korea and soon found himself in the company not only of right-wing isolationists, ex-America Firsters, and Nazi apologists, but also of radical libertarians devoted to laissez-faire in the economy, noninterference by the state in domestic affairs, and isolationism (nonintervention) in foreign affairs. In this period Barnes became acquainted with one James J. Martin and wrote an introduction to Martin's oddball history of "individualist anarchism," published by the Libertarian Book Club in New York. It was at this time that Barnes became interested in Hoggan's dissertation and over the years guided him straight into Nazi apologetics.

As the years progressed, Barnes's hold on political reality continued to slip. He had begun his iso-

* *Der erzwungene Krieg: Die Ursachen und Urheber des 2. Weltkriegs* ("The Imposed War: The Origins and Originators of World War II"), translated from the English by M.E. Narjes and H. Grabert (Verlag der Deutschen Hochschul-lehrer-Zeitung, 1961); reviewed by Gerhard L. Weinberg in the *American Historical Review*, 68, 1 (October 1962), pp. 104-105. Weinberg's sharply critical review, noting the publisher's Nazi connections, provoked angry letters from Hoggan and his supporters. Their false assertions eventually elicited letters from several eminent American historians who wished to dissociate themselves from Hoggan's work.

† Helmut Krausnick, director of the Institute for Contemporary History in Munich, raised the charge of forgery in a foreword to Hermann Graml's lengthy critique of Hoggan, published in *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht*, August 1963.

** "Revisionism and the Historical Blackout," which appeared originally as the lead article in *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace* (1953), a massive compendium which Barnes edited and privately financed. The book was filled with isolationist and anti-Roosevelt material.

lationist-revisionist career by whitewashing Kaiser Wilhelm's Germany and ended up by whitewashing Hitler's. In 1962 Barnes already doubted that the Third Reich had committed any atrocities or murder. In a privately printed pamphlet, *Blasting the Historical Blackout*, which praised A.J.P. Taylor's book, if with some reservations (he thought Hoggan's was better), Barnes alluded to what he called the "alleged wartime crimes of Germany": "Even assuming that all the charges ever made against the Nazis by anybody of reasonable sanity and responsibility are true, the Allies do not come off much, if any, better." Then, with the shamelessness of a habitual liar, he charged that the sufferings of the Germans who had been expelled from Czech and Polish border areas after World War II and returned to Germany were "obviously far more hideous and prolonged than those of the Jews said to have been exterminated in great numbers by the Nazis."

Four years later, in 1966, in another rambling and paranoid piece, "Revisionism: A Key to Peace," published in a short-lived libertarian journal, Barnes for all practical purposes denied that Hitler's Germany had committed mass murder. The following sentence is an elaboration of the one I quoted earlier:

Even if one were to accept the most extreme and exaggerated indictment of Hitler and the National Socialists for their activities after 1939 made by anybody fit to remain outside a mental hospital, it is almost alarmingly easy to demonstrate that the atrocities of the Allies in the same period were more numerous as to victims and were carried out for the most part by methods more brutal and painful than alleged extermination in gas ovens.

In those days, even the neo-Nazis in Germany were circumspect in their journal, *Nation Europa* (which also published Barnes's articles), not daring to deny the facts of mass murder altogether but simply minimizing them. Only a certain Paul Rassinier in France was sufficiently divorced from reality to deny that the Third Reich had murdered the Jews.

RASSINIER, once a Communist, then a socialist, had been interned in Buchenwald during the war, and afterward flipfopped into a rabid anti-Semite. In 1949 he published a book claiming the atrocities committed in the Nazi camps had been grossly exaggerated by the survivors. If any Jews had been murdered, Rassinier said, it was the Jewish *kapos* in the camps who had killed them. The book was widely denounced in France. Later Rassinier sued a newspaper editor for having called him a fascist; he was, he insisted, an anarchist. But the Paris court ruled against Rassinier on the ground that his book expressed ideas "identical with those proclaimed by the neo-Nazis."

In 1964 Rassinier wrote another book, *Le Drame des Juifs Européens*, an incoherent assemblage of arguments reshaped from the storehouse of anti-Semitic writings. Rassinier had one new wrinkle: arithmomania. He came up with the weird calculation that precisely 4,416,108 of the six million Jews said to have been murdered were actually alive and that the rest had probably not been killed by the Germans anyway. Around this time Barnes and Rassinier met, the rendezvous having been arranged by Mabel Narjes of Hamburg, co-translator of Hoggan's *Der erzwungene Krieg*.

Rassinier and Barnes obviously had much in common; Barnes undertook to translate Rassinier's book into English,* and also reviewed Rassinier for the American public, or at least for those most likely to be interested—the readers of the *American Mercury*. (Founded as an iconoclastic journal in 1924 by H.L. Mencken, the *American Mercury* deteriorated after Mencken's resignation in 1933 and eventually became just an anti-Semitic rag.) Here is Barnes at his unpitiable worst:

... the courageous author [Rassinier] lays the chief blame for misrepresentation on those whom we must call the swindlers of the crematoria, the Israeli politicians who derive billions of marks from nonexistent, mythical, and imaginary cadavers, whose numbers have been reckoned in an unusually distorted and dishonest manner.†

Rassinier died in 1967 and Barnes a year later, but their fanaticism continued to inspire others in their quest for legitimacy. In 1969, a 119-page book, *The Myth of the Six Million*, by "Anonymous," appeared, with an introduction paying tribute to Barnes as "one of America's greatest historians." The introduction was written pseudonymously by Willis A. Carto, head of Liberty Lobby, the best financed anti-Semitic organization in the United States, which operates out of Washington, D. C. *The Myth of the Six Million* was published by a Liberty Lobby subsidiary, Noontide Press. (*American Mercury* is also part of the interlocking network funded by Liberty Lobby.)

In his introduction, Carto explained that "Anonymous" was a college professor who wished to protect his standing in the academic community by hiding his identity. It appears likely that the author was none other than David L. Hoggan, for in 1969 he sued Noontide Press for damages, claiming authorship of *The Myth of the Six Million*. The litigation dragged on until 1973, when

* *The Drama of the European Jews*, 1975. It was dedicated to "James J. Martin & the late Harry Elmer Barnes: Pioneers in Revisionist History." The publisher was an anti-Semitic outfit in Silver Spring, Maryland; it was distributed also by Liberty Bell Publications, run by a former Nazi working out of Reedy, West Virginia.

† "Zionist Fraud," reprinted in an appendix to *The Myth of the Six Million*, about which more below.

the plaintiff withdrew his complaint. (Perhaps Carto settled out of court.) In 1974 a new edition of *The Myth of the Six Million* appeared, still authored by "Anonymous."

The Myth of the Six Million undertook to disprove all the evidence of the murder of the European Jews and to discredit all eyewitness testimony, including that of Rudolf Hoess, SS commandant at Auschwitz, and Kurt Gerstein, the SS officer who delivered the poison gas to Belzec and Treblinka. The author of *The Myth of the Six Million* did much the same thing that the author of *Der erzwungene Krieg* had done: distorting and faking some sources, suppressing others, and inventing still others. One example will suffice, as it is an item that turns up repeatedly in anti-Semitic tracts.

Benedikt Kautsky, an Austrian socialist, had been interned in Buchenwald and was later a slave laborer in Auschwitz. In his memoirs, *Teufel und Verdammte*, Kautsky wrote:

I should now like briefly to refer to the gas chambers. Though I did not see them myself, they have been described to me by so many trustworthy people that I have no hesitation in reproducing their testimony.

The neo-Nazis cite Kautsky, with the appropriate bibliographical references including the correct page number, but falsify the passage so that he appears to corroborate their claim that there were no gas chambers.

We may not think much of Hoggan's anonymous scribbling, but the booklet was well received in his circles. In England a pamphlet, *Did the Six Million Really Die?*, which drew heavily upon *The Myth of the Six Million*, was put forward as a historical work, published by a so-called Historical Review Press in Surrey; the author was advertised as one Richard E. Harwood, "a specialist in political and diplomatic aspects of the Second World War" who was "with the University of London." Actually he was Richard Verrall, editor of *Spearhead* magazine, unofficial organ of the National Front, an English racist group.

By now the neo-Nazis had regularly begun to exploit terms like "historical review" and "revisionism" in an effort to get attention in respectable circles. In New York a splinter group of the pro-Nazi German-American National Congress hit on the idea of a Revisionist Press to publish pseudoscholarly materials. They concealed their identity behind a post-office box number first in Brooklyn, then in Rochelle Park, New Jersey. In 1973 this Revisionist Press reprinted as a small book Barnes's paranoid essay, "Revisionism: A Key to Peace," from which I quoted earlier.

THE neo-Nazi bid for academic reputation took a great leap forward when word got around that a professor at North-

western University named Arthur R. Butz had published a book called *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century*, the hoax being the "Holocaust legend." Butz's book, published in 1976 by the Historical Review Press in Surrey—Harwood/Verrall's publisher—confidently argued that the Jews of Europe had not been "exterminated and that there was no German attempt to exterminate them." Butz—an associate professor of electrical engineering and computer sciences—was convinced that all the Jews said to have been murdered were still alive and he undertook to prove it, his expertise in computers no doubt standing him in good stead.

In his review of the assorted neo-Nazi writings on this subject, Butz gave good grades only to Rassinier, though he did not find him entirely accurate or reliable. Butz dismissed *The Myth of the Six Million* as "terrible," but considered Harwood's *Did the Six Million Really Die?* "quite good" (perhaps because the two authors shared the same publisher). As examples of "leading extermination mythologists," Butz lumped together Gerald Reitlinger (*The Final Solution*), Raul Hilberg (*The Destruction of the European Jews*), and me (*The War Against the Jews*).

The news of Butz's extracurricular career as an anti-Semitic scholar percolated from England back to Northwestern, and finally an account in the *New York Times* in late January 1977 raised Butz to national notoriety. His presence at Northwestern embarrassed the university, especially as its Jewish contributors threatened to withhold their financial support. The faculty, for its part, held firmly to the principle of academic freedom and the right of tenure. (Nowadays teaching at a university appears to be widely considered a fundamental civil right, like free speech or the right to bear arms.)

To demonstrate that Northwestern did not approve of Butz's views, the university administration prompted its history department to organize a series of lectures which would confirm that six million European Jews had indeed been murdered. These lectures, delivered by three Jews and a philo-Semite, were published in a booklet, *The Dimensions of the Holocaust* (1977), and distributed to show that the university stood foursquare on the side of honor and decency. As one of the four lecturers at Northwestern, I argued in private with some members of the faculty and the administration that the university's response was inadequate, for it seemed to me that they regarded the affair merely as an unfortunate incident affecting Jewish sensibilities. In fact, in their public statements the university's president and provost had treated the Butz scandal as a Jewish family sorrow, "a contemptible insult to the dead and the bereaved." No one at this great center of learning seemed to regard Butz's absurdities as an offense against historical truth, a matter supposedly of

concern to an intellectual and academic community.

That same year, 1977, *Hitler's War* by David Irving came out.* Irving, an English journalist with strong German sympathies and a record of disregard for verity or verification, argued in this book that the murder of the European Jews—whose historicity he did not deny—was Himmler's doing, and that Hitler was in fact innocent of those terrible deeds. Because Irving did not dispute the historical reality that the Jews were murdered, his work found no acceptance in the anti-Semitic canon.

Butz was the one who became a celebrity, even lecturing before an audience brought together by remnant supporters of the late Grand Mufti of Jerusalem (a Nazi collaborator). His book has been distributed in the United States by Carto's Noontide Press and by practically every other enterprising anti-Semitic group. One of Butz's "academic" sponsors has been Dr. Austin J. App, who used to teach English at LaSalle College in Philadelphia and claims to have been associated with Barnes. App's Nazi sympathies and anti-Semitic activities date back to the early 1940's; a prolific pamphleteer, he himself is the author of a 39-page effusion, *The Six Million Swindle*, which he has peddled along with the collected works of Butz, Harwood, and Hoggan.

In Germany, Udo Walendy, a Nazi in good standing from the old days, translated Butz (*Der Jahrhundert Betrug*) and published his version through a "revisionist" press which he operates. Walendy has his own wrinkle: he claims that the photographs of barely living camp inmates or of dead and rotted cadavers are "fake atrocity photographs."

France has had its equivalent of Butz in the person of Robert Faurisson, who until last year was an associate professor of French literature at the University of Lyon-2. In 1978 Faurisson began to write articles asserting that the "alleged gas chambers and the alleged genocide are one and the same lie . . . which is largely of Zionist origin." Furthermore, said Faurisson, "the participants in this lie . . . distort the purpose and nature of revisionist research." Faurisson's articles created such a furor that the university suspended him, a development which prompted all sorts of "civil libertarians" to come to his defense. Among them was Jean-Gabriel Cohn-Bendit, brother of Danny the Red of the 1968 Paris student riots. Cohn-Bendit, according to Faurisson, wrote to express his support: "Let's fight to destroy those gas chambers which are shown to tourists in the camps where one knows now there hadn't been any at all."† From this country, Noam Chomsky outdid even himself to sign an appeal in defense of Faurisson's civil rights.**

In Australia Butz's book had a profound and unhinging effect on John Bennett, a Melbourne

lawyer, for many years secretary of the regional Council for Civil Liberties. Converted by Butz, Bennett distributed about 200 copies of the book and thousands of copies of Faurisson's articles to persons in Australian public life. Early in 1979, Bennett began to speak of the murder of the European Jews as "a gigantic lie" created by "Zionist Holocaust propaganda" to make people support Israel. Several of his sensational letters-to-the-editor were published in leading Australian papers. The subsequent uproar soon brought about his dismissal from the Council for Civil Liberties. In the wake of this unfortunate episode, the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany, working together with Melbourne's Jewish community, mounted an exhibit on the Holocaust intended to remind those who had forgotten, or to inform those who never knew, that the Third Reich had undertaken to destroy the European Jews and by 1945 had indeed succeeded.

MEANWHILE, back in the United States, the Revisionist Press in Brooklyn had published a small book called *The Revisionist Historians and German War Guilt*. Its author was Warren B. Morris, Jr., holder of a doctorate from Oklahoma State University for an undistinguished dissertation on a minor 19th-century German diplomat.

The idea for *The Revisionist Historians and German War Guilt*, Morris acknowledged in his preface, came from the Revisionist Press itself and Morris expressed his appreciation also to Austin J. App, author of *The Six Million Swindle*. Morris set himself the task of determining who was right—the "revisionists" or the "traditionalists"—on such matters as the destruction of the European Jews, aspects of Hitler's foreign policy, and the legitimacy of the Nuremberg trials. On the Jews his "revisionists" were Butz, Rassinier, App, and Harwood. (Hoggan was his "revisionist" on Hitler's foreign policy.) The "traditionalists" included Reitlinger, Hilberg, and me. Morris noticed that we were all Jewish, but thought it "only natural" for Jews "to have been in the forefront of Holocaust studies" because "they or their relatives suffered under Nazi persecution of the Jews."

After weighing the findings of Butz and company and comparing them with those of the "traditionalists," Morris reluctantly concluded that "Rassinier, Butz, App, Harwood, and other revisionists have failed to discredit the traditional accounts of the Nazi efforts to exterminate the

* Reviewed in COMMENTARY, September 1977.

† Faurisson, in his "Right of Reply," *Le Monde*, March 29, 1979.

** In a letter to me, September 18, 1980, Chomsky expressed complete agnosticism on the subject of whether or not Faurisson's views were "horrendous," saying that he was not sufficiently involved in the issue to pursue or evaluate it.

Jews." *Ipse dixit*. Yet Morris still rendered their due to the Revisionist Press and his friend Dr. App. Even if the "revisionists" had failed "to prove their most important arguments," he wrote, "by forcing historians to reconsider their evaluation of Nazi policy toward the Jews," they have "indeed done a very valuable service to scholarship."

In one of the more astonishing episodes of the story being unfolded here, the June 1980 issue of the *American Historical Review*, the journal of the American Historical Association, the preeminent professional organization of American historians, published a respectful review of Morris's book.* How this sly attempt to give academic legitimacy to the outpourings of a variety of neo-Nazis and anti-Semites came to be offered for review in the first place, and how it came to be assigned for review two years after its publication, is a bit of a mystery. One might have thought that a knowledgeable book-review editor would promptly have seen its worthlessness and that a competent historian would have disdained to review it. (The book is a 141-page reproduction of a sloppy typescript, priced at \$44.95.) As to the review itself, it was "agnostic" and impartial to the point of vacancy.

As the ranks of the pseudoscholars swelled, Willis Carto hit on the idea of creating an Institute of Historical Review, using the resources of Liberty Lobby and its network. In 1979 this Institute convoked a "Revisionist Convention" on the Northrup College campus in Los Angeles. Papers were read by Butz, Faurisson, App, and Walendy, arguing that there had been no Holocaust and no gas chambers; that all the camp photographs had been faked; that the Jews (alas) were still alive. The assemblage also heard speeches by Carto, John Bennett (who came all the way from Melbourne), and Devin Garrity, president of the right-wing publishing house, Devin-Adair.

The convention was dedicated to the memory of Harry Elmer Barnes; its opening speaker was none other than James J. Martin, Barnes's protege from the 1950's. In 1964 Martin had produced a two-volume, 1337-page compendium, published by Devin-Adair, which charged that between 1931 and 1941 American liberals had undergone a conspiratorial changeover from peace advocacy to war advocacy. (A reviewer summed up this "goulash of quotation, summary, and editorial comment" as "a scholarly disaster.") Now Martin has inherited Barnes's laurels and has been installed in the neo-Nazi pantheon as the "dean of historical revisionist scholars." He is the director of Ralph Myles Publishers, a firm which publishes revisionist books, some more fascist than academic. He also operates in the more rarefied atmosphere of the libertarians, where Right and Left sometimes bed together even if they don't always see eye to eye. Cato Institute, a libertarian outfit based in San

Francisco, subsidized by the Koch Foundation (which supports the Libertarian party), recently published a collection of Barnes's more paranoid essays with a foreword by Martin.†

At the 1979 revisionist convention, Carto announced that in 1980 the Institute of Historical Review would launch a quarterly, *Journal of Historical Review*. It was delivered as promised, with a lead article by Butz and other pieces by Faurisson, App, Walendy, and their ilk. A second issue followed, with similar contents, and a second convention was held last August at Pomona College, Claremont, California, this one dedicated to Rassinier's memory. Mabel Narjes, Hoggan's translator, who had brought Barnes and Rassinier together many years before, was flown over from Hamburg to speak about that historic encounter. Martin read a paper summarizing his forthcoming book on genocide, the publication of which one can await only with anxiety.

DOES any of this matter? Would any sensible and decent person be taken in by the absurd and malicious lie that Hitler's Germany never murdered six million Jews? Who would believe the monstrous falsehood that there were no gas chambers at Auschwitz? As it turns out, these are not just rhetorical questions.

While I was writing this article, a man associated with the Larry King radio show, a national network talk program, called to ask if I would debate with Faurisson. When I replied indignantly that Faurisson should not be provided with a platform for his monomania, the man mildly inquired why I was against discussing "controversial" matters on the radio. I in turn asked *him* if he thought the murder of the European Jews was a "controversial" matter. Had it not been established to his satisfaction as a historical fact? "I don't know," he answered. "I wasn't around at the time. I'm only thirty years old."

Perhaps it is not so hard after all to befuddle the ignorant, especially on Jewish matters, to which they are, at best, indifferent. Yet would Americans give a respectful hearing to someone who insisted that slavery had never existed in the United States, that blacks invented the story in order to get preferential treatment and federal aid, or that blacks had actually owned all the plantations? Somehow one doubts it.

Nor is it only the ignorant and the ill-informed who are involved here. The established academic and historical institutions of the United States, who should be the first to safeguard the truth of the past as it happened, have instead given respectful consideration to the most blatant falsifica-

* The review was written by Birdsall Scrymser Vialt, of Winthrop College.

† *Revisionism: A Key to Peace and Other Essays*, Cato Paper No. 12, 1980.

tions of the recent past. The mindless review of Morris's tract in the *American Historical Review* is just one egregious example. Another is the response of the Organization of American Historians (OAH) to the *Journal of Historical Review*, the new quarterly of the "revisionists."

In the spring of 1980, each of the 12,000 members of the OAH received a complimentary copy of the inaugural issue of the *Journal*. A half-minute perusal should have sufficed to show that it was nothing more than a potpourri of anti-Semitic propaganda camouflaged to look like a learned journal. Some OAH members, in fact, protested the sale of the OAH membership list to neo-Nazis; others felt that, in the interests of intellectual freedom, the mailing list should be available to all. The OAH executive secretary responded to this division of opinion with irreproachable objectivity; he proposed to provide his Executive Board with "an analysis of the *JHR* as a historical publication," which analysis to "be developed by well-qualified historians," who would "focus on the credentials of the contributors and the use of evidence." Then, well-armed with a well-grounded analysis of this rubbish by well-qualified historians, the OAH's Executive Board would duly report to its members.*

Report what, is not quite clear. Perhaps that the neo-Nazis did not have proper academic credentials, or that they failed to use primary sources? Again one wonders: would the OAH have reacted the same way to a pseudoscholarly journal pushing KKK propaganda?

One turns with relief to the French historians. At the time of the Faurisson affair, thirty-four of France's leading historians issued a declaration attesting to the historical truth of the Holocaust and protesting the Nazi attempt to erase the past.† The concluding paragraph of the declaration

could well serve as a guide to American historians:

Everyone is free to interpret a phenomenon like the Hitlerite genocide according to his own philosophy. Everyone is free to compare it with other enterprises of murder committed earlier, at the same time, later. Everyone is free to offer such or such kind of explanation; everyone is free, to the limit, to imagine or to dream that these monstrous deeds did not take place. Unfortunately they did take place and no one can deny their existence without committing an outrage on the truth. It is not necessary to ask how *technically* such mass murder was possible. It was technically possible, seeing that it took place. That is the required point of departure of every historical inquiry on this subject. This truth it behooves us to remember in simple terms: there is not and there cannot be a debate about the existence of the gas chambers.

ABOUT fifty years ago the great Dutch historian Johan Huizinga remarked that the critical historical faculty required three elements: "Common sense, practice, and above all a historical sense, a high form of that discrimination by which a connoisseur knows a true work of art from a false one." Huizinga believed that a higher level of historical discrimination now prevailed among educated persons than had in the past, and that trained historians had acquired greater sophistication in using historical evidence. Consequently, he concluded, "only the untrained are inclined now to accept flagrantly false versions." On the record presented here, his optimism about the historical profession was premature.

* "Journal of Historical Review," *OAH Newsletter*, 8, 1 (July 1980), pp. 14-15.

† The full text of the declaration, with a list of all its signatories, appeared in *Le Monde*, February 21, 1979.