

Why Holocaust Revisionism?

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The "Holocaust," the alleged murder of some six million Jews by the German Nazis during the Second World War, has in recent years come under increasing fire from the Revisionists, those unconventional historians who challenge orthodox versions of past events. Researchers such as Arthur Butz, Robert Faurisson, David Irving, and Wilhelm Stäglich have become famous (some would say notorious) around the world for their scholarly critique of the claim that Hitler and his followers sought to exterminate European Jewry during the war, killing millions by poison gas and other means.

There are those who would suppress the Revisionists by restricting their freedom of research and expression, and indeed the Revisionists have suffered physical attacks and legal sanctions, even in countries which take pride in being "open societies."

Many more people, however, are not so much hostile to the Revisionists as they are simply puzzled by them. They have questions about Holocaust Revisionism, questions like these: "What motivates these Revisionists? Are they simply Nazis, seeking to rehabilitate the Hitler regime? Even if some of their facts are correct, does it really matter if the number of Jews who died in the war was 'only' a million and a half? Or half a million? Or just one? And even if the Revisionist case against the Holocaust could be proved, what difference does it make what did or didn't happen to some Jews in Europe fifty years ago? Why not stick to issues that are more important—and safer?"

To answer these questions, it is necessary to say something about the origins of modern Historical Revisionism. While conscientious historians have always attempted to "correct" the errors and omissions of their predecessors, modern Revisionism dates from the First World War. That great and terrible war was the first in history to affect people in every

corner of the globe. It brought the great empires of Europe, their colonies in Asia and Africa, and finally the independent nations of the Americas into conflict on an unprecedented scale. Technology developed fearsome new weapons—airplanes, submarines, tanks, machine guns, poison gas—to gain military victories. A different sort of technology—directed at the minds, not the bodies, of men—was raised to new levels of effectiveness.

While both sides—the German-led Alliance and the Franco-British-Russian Entente—lured the political and financial leadership of the neutral nations in secret with bribes and promises, they wooed the masses at home and abroad with propaganda. Each side depicted its own war aims as a mighty crusade for peace and freedom, and those of its enemies as a diabolical grab for world domination.

Even more effective was the so-called “atrocities propaganda,” which attributed every crime imaginable to the enemy. And the undisputed masters of “atrocities propaganda” were in the Allied camp. Their mastery of the propaganda weapon gave the world such images as the Belgian-baby-killing Hun, the crucified Canadian, a corpse factory in which the Germans processed their own dead, and a hundred others which raised Allied and neutral populations to righteous and patriotic frenzy.

Allied propaganda helped lure America into the war, tipping the scales to insure Allied victory. Then, Allied leaders forced the defeated nations, Germany and its allies, to sign humiliating treaties which stripped them of territory and colonies, imposed crushing reparations and virtual disarmament, and, most galling of all, compelled the defeated to accept all responsibility for starting the war.

Soon after that war it had already become evident that much of what the citizens of America and the other powers had been told by their leaders about the causes, the conduct, and the aims of the war was simply not true. In particular, the vast majority of the lurid atrocities attributed to the Germans and their allies were admitted by the politicians and journalists who fabricated them to have been lies.

A group of concerned scholars and laymen in America and other countries, who became known as Revisionists, became determined to establish the historical facts, as opposed to the government and press propaganda, about the war. Within a decade Revisionist historians in America, England, France,

Germany, and Austria were able to demonstrate that the war had *not* been waged to save the world for democracy, and that Germany and its allies did not bear sole guilt for starting the war.

One of Revisionism's founding fathers was the young American historian Harry Elmer Barnes. Barnes would later define Historical Revisionism as "bringing history into accord with the facts." Barnes' study of the facts, as opposed to the propaganda, of the years 1914 to 1918 taught him that, in his words, "Truth is always the first war casualty. The emotional disturbances and distortions in historical writing are greatest in wartime."

The hard facts which Revisionists had established about the First World War, only after a bloodbath which cost ten million lives, inspired Revisionists in America and elsewhere to resist their countries' involvement in wars and interventions at the behest of politicians and bankers. But the rise of international Communism, which gained a firm base in Russia following the First World War, the crisis of capitalism in the worldwide depression of the 1930's, and the emergence of authoritarian, anti-Communist, nationalist regimes in Europe and Japan set the stage for new conflicts.

Unlike the years before 1914, the build-up to the Second World War found not only nations but supra-national ideological movements competing for power in every sphere of human life. Communists, Fascists, Nazis, and Zionists joined the existing nationalists, imperialists, and enthusiasts for "one world" in a no-holds-barred struggle in which, spurred by the world economic crisis, propaganda technicians brought the arts of mass persuasion to unprecedented levels of achievement.

By the outbreak of war in 1939, Germany had already been the object of a furious, international propaganda campaign by the left, led by the Communists, and by the world's Jews. Britain's formidable global propaganda apparatus had shifted into high gear, particularly in anti-interventionist America, where British agents had set up a vast, clandestine propaganda operation with the covert agreement of President Franklin Roosevelt. When Germany and its European allies attacked Stalin's Russia in June 1941, the uneasy truce between the Nazis and the Reds ended, and Moscow's agents around the world began transmitting the Kremlin's version of events to an

often unsuspecting audience in the democracies. Such propaganda influences, combined with President Roosevelt's stealthy policy of entangling America on the side of the Allies, defeated the wise counsels of American Revisionists, prominent in the anti-interventionist camp, and in December 1941 America entered the war through the back door at Pearl Harbor.

Although officials among the Western Allies, mindful of the cynicism which had followed the exploded atrocity lies after the First World War, at first tried to steer clear of more lurid and improbable accusations, as the Axis triumphed on all fronts Allied propagandists began to abandon their scruples. Meanwhile, Jewish and Communist sources had opened up a drumfire of allegations against the Germans, blasting them for every conceivable crime. By the summer of 1942 Jewish spokesmen were demanding that Allied leaders condemn the Germans for annihilating a million Jews and plotting the extermination of millions more. Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin's condemnation was forthcoming by December 1942; for the remainder of the war Jewish and Allied propagandists spread fantastic tales of Jews murdered by scores of methods, as diabolical as they were improbable: they were reported to have been steamed, baked, electrocuted, gassed, eaten away by quicklime, starved, shot, buried alive, mauled by wild beasts, subjected to sadistic experiments, and deliberately injected with lethal chemicals or germs. According to the propaganda, not even their remains were inviolable: their skins made into lampshades or riding breeches, their hair stuffed into mattresses or used to make slippers, their gold dental fillings swelling the Reich's coffers, and what was left over turned into soap or fertilizer.

Even during the war, as Exterminationist writers have lately emphasized, there was widespread disbelief of the extermination claims among Americans and Britons, not to mention the peoples of the Axis nations. Allied policy-makers—Jewish, Communist, or Western democratic—mindful of the aftermath of the “war to end all wars,” took steps to insure that the war-time propaganda would not be so easily discredited. Following the Second World War, they arranged for a series of trials devised to “prove” all of their atrocity claims as well as to convict and punish their enemies. Germany, and Japan as well, were occupied by the victors. The occupying powers wrote new constitutions, picked out new ruling elites, and imposed

new modes of thought and methods of education so that the Germans and Japanese would absorb and internalize the propaganda of their conquerors.

Like most critical-minded citizens, Revisionist scholars and publicists had believed that eventually the exaggerations and fabrications surrounding Germany's treatment of the Jews would be swept away after the war, as propaganda and the passions it stoked were replaced by dispassionate gathering and analysis of the facts. They failed to reckon, however, with the rise of Israel and Zionism as a focus of allegiance for the world's Jews. The Zionists regarded the alleged extermination attempt—and the seemingly miraculous rise of a Jewish state and nation which followed it—as the central myth of a reborn Israel. Jews seized on the Holocaust story as a means of rendering criticism taboo and support almost automatic for Israel and the Diaspora. Opponents of Israel were routinely compared to Hitler, while an endless and ubiquitous media Shoah business promoted Holocaust items and themes, from Anne Frank's alleged diary to the latest docudrama, gradually raised the wartime extermination legend to an unassailable sacred cow. The Holocaust propaganda became a tool to generate billions, first as reparations or aid, now as virtual tribute, from West Germany and America. The enemies of German nationalism, from the Soviet Union with its newly consolidated satellite empire in Eastern Europe to leftists and jingoists in Western Europe, not to mention British "balance of power" enthusiasts and the would-be Caesars of an American imperium: all these forces had an interest in maintaining the Holocaust story as a barrier to free investigation of not merely the Jewish experience, but to any objective re-examination of the key historical questions of the Second World War.

Nevertheless, despite what Harry Elmer Barnes' called "the historical blackout," a small cohort of open-minded and intrepid writers in Europe and America began to challenge publicly the supposed magnitude of Jewish losses in Europe, and to examine critically the evidence for a German program to annihilate European Jewry. The Revisionists who called for skepticism toward Holocaust claims, and began the hard work of bringing "history into accord with the facts" on this thorny issue, pointed out that the Holocaust was bad history. Paul Rassinier, the French pacifist and socialist who was himself interned in Buchenwald for his part in the French resistance, exposed the lies and exaggerations of his fellow survivors,

who blithely testified to the existence of an imaginary gas chamber. Early Revisionists, like Harvard-educated historian David Hoggan and German-American Professor Austin App, focussed on the disparities between the documented National Socialist Jewish policy and the postwar oral accounts of "survivors," the "confessions of German prisoners in Allied custody, and the self-serving testimony of witnesses for the prosecution. These and other Revisionist pioneers exposed the rickety statistical foundations of the figure of six million Jewish dead, paving the way for a efflorescence of critical Revisionist scholarship which began in the 1970's and flourishes today. The coming of age of Holocaust Revisionism is best symbolized by the founding of the Institute for Historical Review in California in 1978, enabling the publication of the key findings of such contemporary Revisionist scholars of the Holocaust as Arthur Butz, Robert Faurisson, Wilhelm Stglich, Ditlieb Felderer, Walter Sanning, Henri Roques, Fritz Berg, Mark Weber, Carlo Mattogno, and many others.

It should be emphasized that men and women who have dedicated themselves to determining and spreading the truth about the Holocaust are anything but Nazis or unconditional apologists for Germany's National Socialist regime. In fact, Holocaust Revisionists neither subscribe to nor represent a fixed ideology. Politically, Revisionists have come not only from the ranks of the political right, but also from the left, and even from the ranks of the anti-statist libertarians and anarchists. They run the gamut from fundamentalist Christians to militant atheists (and yes, like Joseph G. Burg and Bezalel Chaim, there are Jewish Revisionists of the Holocaust). Harry Elmer Barnes, for example, expressed himself with increasing frankness on the corrosive effects of the Holocaust propaganda in his last years, was a free-thinking humanist and progressive. As a glance at the roster of the Institute for Historical Review's editorial advisory committee reveals, Revisionists are not merely Germans or of German descent, but include scholars from France, Sweden, Hungary, Italy, Croatia, Latvia, Argentina, Australia, and South Africa, as well as Americans of English, Irish, Swedish, French, and Italian extraction.

Besides challenging the factual basis of the legend of a war-time Nazi extermination program for Jews, the Revisionists

have sought to establish a historical context for the undeniable persecutions and wrongs which were carried out against the Jews. In this context the Revisionists remind those critics who object, quite rightfully, that the murder of a single Jew is inexcusable, that the willful exaggeration of Jewish losses is similarly intolerable: What man or woman person would condone deliberately multiplying the number of children slain by Israeli soldiers and settlers during the Palestinian intifada?

Revisionist scholars further attempt to compare the ordeal of the Jews during the Second World War with the experiences of other groups during that war and indeed throughout the course of history. Here the Revisionists are mindful of the unique status that most Exterminationists, particularly Jews, have tried to arrogate for the Holocaust. Basing their arguments on the false premise that the architects of Germany's anti-Jewish program planned the systematic killing of all the Jews of Europe, Exterminationists have often minimized the sufferings of non-Jewish civilians. Such has been the power of the Holocaust taboo that the losses of such victims of Axis invasion and occupation as the Poles, Russians, and Ukrainians have been neglected by the Establishment academy and media. It need scarcely be added that the Holocaust devotees who dominate the air waves, the press, and the schools guard against the shedding of even a single tear over the millions of German and other civilian victims of British and American bombers or of the hands-on brutality of Soviet troops.

Above all, the Revisionists argue that the Holocaust story and its exploitation form a massive obstacle to the objective history of Western Civilization in the twentieth century. The successful imposition of the Extermination thesis as an unchallengeable orthodoxy has helped Western intellectuals and opinion makers to shirk a confrontation with the far bloodier record of Communist regimes, as well as to gloss over sometimes comparable atrocities by regimes and movements, Left and Right, colonialist and revolutionary, around the world. By exploiting the Holocaust taboo, the ideologues of so-called liberal democracy are able to forestall any dispassionate analysis of ideas and movements tarred as "fascist" or "Nazi." The inevitable result has been a general version of the political and historical dynamics of this century which is woefully inaccurate, is not merely useless but dangerous as an aid to

understanding the present and the future, and which serves only the short-sighted and selfish interests of small elites.

For today's—and tomorrow's—Americans, the consequences of a continued refusal to establish and disseminate the facts, instead of the lies, about the Extermination legend can only be grave. For present-day America is in the grip of what can only be called "Holocaustomania." The purveyors of this contagion—in New York, in Hollywood, in Washington, and in schools all across America—have been working industriously for years now to convert the Holocaust from an alleged historical event to an active present reality. Their mastery of the media has enabled them to vend Holocaust propaganda as edification and entertainment to tens of millions. Their grip on governments—national, state, and local—has allowed them to mandate national holidays in "remembrance" of this historical hoax, to construct museums and memorials for the exhibition of relics and the generation of hatred and guilt. Federal prosecutors and police hunt down "war criminals" fifty years after the fact—or often, the non-fact—but only "Nazi" war criminals—for justice, too, must yield its claims to the Holocaust. Our children are being indoctrinated in a growing number of compulsory programs in the schools, programs which aim not merely at conveying information and reasoning ability, but which attempt to mold emotions and attitudes through techniques of "group learning" and "enforced sensitivity" that recall those of the Communist Chinese in Chairman Mao's heyday. Christian theologians grandly proclaim that the Jewish tales from Auschwitz invalidate the Gospel of Christ, and that Christians and Gentiles bear a moral stain which can be expunged only by eternal allegiance to Israel.

The next few decades will be dangerous ones for Americans blinded to past and present realities by Holocaustomania. Like it or not, Germany and Europe are working free from political and economic domination by the rulers of America and Russia. That they will shake free from the historical myths which served to dominate them spiritually is inevitable. In the Soviet Union, the archives are opening, the mass graves are being opened, almost invariably to the embarrassment of those who placed their trust in Stalin's propagandists. Israel has become an international pariah everywhere except in America and among America's dwindling number of subervient clients abroad. A country that can't support itself