

'Best Witness': Mel Mermelstein, Auschwitz and the IHR

By Theodore J. O'Keefe

Fourteen years ago, over Labor Day weekend in 1979, the Institute for Historical Review held its very first conference at Northrop University in Los Angeles. At that time, the Institute announced its offer of a reward of \$50,000 to the first person to prove that Jews were gassed at Auschwitz.

A little over a year later, in the spring of 1981, Mel Mermelstein, a southern California businessman and self-described Holocaust survivor, claimed that reward, and then sued the Institute for \$17 million.

On October 9, 1981, in response to a motion by Mermelstein, Judge Thomas Johnson of the Superior Court of California in Los Angeles declared:

Under Evidence Code Section 452(h), this court does take judicial notice of the fact that Jews were gassed to death at the Auschwitz Concentration Camp in Poland during the summer of 1944.... It is not reasonably subject to dispute, and it is capable of immediate and accurate determination by resort to sources of reasonably indisputable accuracy. It is simply a fact.

Because of the prejudicial effect of this action, the IHR decided not to proceed with the suit, and instead settled the matter by signing a formal letter of apology to Mermelstein on July 24, 1985, for the pain, anguish, and suffering he sustained relating to the \$50,000 reward offer, and agreeing to pay him \$90,000 to settle the case. (For more on this, see "About the IHR/Mermelstein Settlement," below.)

Encouraged by this success, Mermelstein later brought yet another suit for \$11 million against the Institute charging malicious prosecution, defamation, conspiracy to inflict emotional distress, and intentional infliction of emotional distress. Yet on Thursday, September 19, 1991, in the Superior Court at Los Angeles, Mermelstein voluntarily dismissed most of his complaints. (Earlier that day, Judge Stephen Lachs had dismissed Mermelstein's complaint of "malicious prosecution.") This victory not only saved the Institute for Historical Review, but also substantially overturned the negative effects of the both the 1981 judicial notice and the 1985 settlement. (For more on this sweeping legal victory, see the October 1991 *IHR Newsletter*.)

The First Case

To appreciate the ramifications of this stunning reversal of fortunes, one must review the convoluted connection between Mermelstein and the IHR.

In the first ("reward") case -- and despite absurdities in his reward claim obvious to any knowledgeable student of Auschwitz -- Mermelstein was able to mount an aggressive attack against the IHR in the courts. He was well armed with first-rate legal assistance, much of it donated, not to mention overwhelming approval and support from the political establishment, the mass media, and southern California's influential Jewish community.

Meanwhile, the Institute had difficulty getting any legal counsel whatsoever, let alone the kind of skilled, dedicated, and fearless attorneys needed to withstand Mermelstein's publicity juggernaut and his blitz in the courtrooms. Recall the hurricane of libel and slander from the press, coming at a time when what Alfred Lilienthal has called Holocaustomania was at high tide in America. In an atmosphere of constant smears against the IHR and Revisionism, every survivor hallucination ("Nazi 'smiled' as dog ate Jew," to cite one headline of the day) gained instant currency in a corrupt media willing to accept such stories unquestionably and spread them as gospel.

Then recall the constant physical attacks that the enemies of truth and freedom aimed at IHR, its staff, and its supporters. In addition to harassment, including telephone threats, there was vandalism of IHR staff cars and homes, a physical beating of IHR founder Willis Carto, and attacks by gunfire

and Molotov cocktail against the IHR office. Three separate firebombings culminated in the arson of July 4, 1984, which resulted in the total destruction of the IHR's office and warehouse. Let us also not forget the role of local Zionist thugs in carrying out much of this intimidation: I refer to the goonwork of that gang led by the revolting Irving Rubin, the so-called national chairman of the Jewish Defense League -- but whom I prefer to regard as the Grand Wizard, or, better, the Grand Dullard, of the Kosher Ku Klux Klan.

Judicial Notice

And so, with the help of high-priced lawyers, a corrupt media, and Jewish terrorists, Mermelstein seemingly laid to rest the historical issue by obtaining Judge Johnson's ridiculous judicial notice. His lawyers went on to concoct a massive \$17 million assault for breach of contract, conspiracy, intentional infliction of emotional distress, and so forth, until IHR had virtually no choice but to capitulate by settling out of court in preference to losing a potentially ruinous trial.

The frustrating thing for all informed and conscientious Revisionists was that the IHR's researchers were aware from the beginning, thanks to the very affidavit Mermelstein presented to claim the \$50,000 reward, that when he described watching his mother and sisters enter "gas chamber no. 5" through a tunnel, he was speaking of an impossibility, an absurdity that became even more absurd six months later, when, in sworn testimony, he said he'd seen them going down the stairs into the tunnel to the gas chamber. Why? Because even then it was well known to all students of Auschwitz that "gas chamber no. 5" -- in fact, Auschwitz Krematorium building V -- had no stairs descending from the outside, no tunnel, and no basement. It was entirely above ground!

As the IHR's staff and supporters gathered more evidence, in the months and years of the first trial, they learned more. In Mermelstein's own book, *By Bread Alone*, which offers a detailed account of the single night and day he spent at Birkenau (May 21-22, 1944), and which was published only two years before his sworn affidavit in application for the reward, Mermelstein wrote nothing of witnessing his mother and sisters enter any building at all, let alone any gas chamber -- whether down the stairs, up the ladder, through the window, or down the chimney.

During the course of the long discovery phase, that is, the period in which the opposing parties gather evidence to support their case, researchers for the IHR, led by Louis A. Rollins, were able to gather much more information about what Mermelstein had said (or hadn't said), and was still saying, about his experiences in wartime Europe.

Working from a mass of statements, either direct or reported, made by Mermelstein about his past life (paying particular attention to his time at Auschwitz and other camps), Rollins was able to compile a list of instances in which, it seemed to him, Mermelstein had either:

- First, contradicted himself in his various statements on what he had seen or experienced during the Holocaust (for example, his several different accounts of how and where his father died), or;
- Second, made absurd claims about what had happened to him and others during the Holocaust -- for example, witnessing a non-existent tunnel leading to the imaginary cellar of Krematorium 5, or being ordered to wash with soap made from dead Jews.

Contradictions and absurdities -- Lou Rollins compiled 33 of them on a list that ran to eleven pages. But because of the judicial notice, all of this research went to naught. How, then, did it prove important in the second case?

The IHR Fights Back

It happened like this: In 1984 an independent writer and journalist by the name of Bradley Smith approached the Institute seeking funding for a newsletter; Smith had decided to take on the thankless task of alerting America's journalists to the falsehood and fraud they were accepting and disseminating uncritically under the rubric of the Holocaust. Smith went on to publish some of the most flagrant instances of these claims in his newsletter *Prima Facie*, and not surprisingly, among

the ripest contradictions and absurdities in the lore of the Holocaust were the testimony and statements of Mel Mermelstein, as researched by Lou Rollins and studied, with due diligence -- remember that phrase, due diligence -- by Bradley Smith.

Alas, Smith's trumpet calls in *Prima Facie* went unheeded by our nation's press corps. In July 1985 came the settlement and the triumph of Mermelstein, followed by his false gloating about how he had collected the reward, and his false claim, made during a radio broadcast from New York that August, that the IHR had signed the 1981 judicial notice, and thus accepted the "fact" of homicidal gassings of Jews at Auschwitz.

As had happened after the 1981 judicial notice, tributes and congratulations flowed in to the "survivor" from around the globe. How galling it was for Revisionists to see Mermelstein vaunt himself to the nation and the world as the man who proved the Holocaust, who had humbled IHR and the Revisionists!

Undaunted

In the wake of this bitter defeat, IHR had two tasks:

- First, to explain the settlement to its subscribers and supporters around the world, to reassure them that IHR had accepted a compromise to avoid the expense and uncertainty of trial but -- and in spite of what Mel Mermelstein and our other enemies were saying -- had not abandoned its skepticism on the gas chambers, and had not accepted the judicial notice.
- Second, to show the flag, to proclaim our defiance, to fight back.

In the September 1986 issue of the *IHR Newsletter* (then editor) Bradley Smith took direct aim, not at the so-called Holocaust, not at every one of its survivors, but at that minority he firmly believed, on the basis of a reasonably careful (or "duly diligent") study of the evidence, was actively engaged in spreading falsehoods about their experiences. Smith wrote of "the vainglorious prevaricators," "the false-tale spinners who claim to speak for the survivor community," and "such demonstrable frauds as Melvin Mermelstein and Elie Wiesel." Smith's good faith assertion that Mermelstein was a fraud was based on the previously mentioned list that Rollins had compiled for the first trial.

The sweet taste of victory had done nothing to mellow Mermelstein's disposition, and when he learned of Smith's short *IHR Newsletter* article, he sued for defamation.

The Second Case

After Mermelstein launched his second suit, the Institute, learning of his misrepresentation of the settlement of the reward case, filed a defamation suit of its own against Mermelstein in August 1986. The IHR never served this suit, and later voluntarily dismissed it. Thereupon Mermelstein sued the IHR for malicious prosecution, and with the help of his attorney, Jeffrey N. Mausner (formerly of the federal government's "Nazi-hunting" Office of Special Investigations), concocted an \$11 million suit for four causes of action: libel, malicious prosecution, conspiracy to inflict emotional distress, and intentional infliction of emotional distress.

This suit was brought against four defendants: the Legion for the Survival of Freedom, the non-profit corporation through which IHR functions; Liberty Lobby, the nationalist and populist institution based in Washington, DC; Willis Carto, founder of both IHR and the Liberty Lobby; and the southern California law firm of Robert Von Esch, Jr., which had defended Liberty Lobby in the reward case, and had filed the IHR's defamation suit against Mermelstein in 1986.

Pre-trial Shenanigans

The lead-up to trial was both protracted and eventful. After hearing of the defamation suit against him, Mermelstein demanded that the Hartford Insurance Company, where he had his homeowner's insurance, pay his legal costs. When Hartford refused, pointing out (reasonably enough) that Mermelstein had never been served, attorney Mausner represented the IHR's suit as a big threat to Mermelstein. Mausner was able to intimidate Hartford with his client's Holocaust-survivor status to

the extent of securing \$60 thousand for Mermelstein in a settlement, as well as obtaining very generous legal fees for himself. Apparently, Hartford was unaware that at this same time Mausner was maintaining in a California court that IHR's suit was entirely groundless and frivolous.

In February 1989, a process server seeking Willis Carto on behalf of Mermelstein mistook the IHR's former accountant, Robert Fenchel, for Carto at the Ninth Revisionist Conference at the Old World Shopping Center. That November, Judge John Zebrowski found that, in spite of the non-service, the IHR was delinquent in not notifying Mermelstein of his mistake: Zebrowski imposed sanctions of \$3,000, which the Institute was obliged to pay before it could begin to defend itself.

This was followed by a number of unfavorable pretrial rulings: Mermelstein was allowed to add new legal theories to his libel suit, four years after it had been filed. The IHR was not allowed to make use of a California law which allows a newspaper to retract offending statements and thus avoid suit. The Institute's motion for summary judgment on whether the Institute had probable cause to sue Mermelstein for libel (and thus defeat his malicious prosecution complaint) was rejected. Finally, in January 1991 Mermelstein succeeded in obtaining a second judicial notice of gassing at Auschwitz.

Nevertheless, not everything went Mermelstein's way: two judges, both Jewish, who believed they might not be able to be impartial, did the decent thing and disqualified themselves.

The Best Defense

After nearly five years of pre-trial maneuvering and legal jousting, the trial at last loomed before us. The IHR was represented by William Hulsy of Irvine. Liberty Lobby's attorney was Mark Lane, an experienced trial lawyer, a long-time fighter for civil rights, noted critic of the Warren Report, bestselling author, movie scriptwriter, and anti-Zionist Jew. Lane served as the defendants' lead attorney, dealing primarily with the conspiracy complaint. Hulsy was responsible for combating the defamation charges, and for formulating the overall trial strategy.

They were assisted by Charles Purdy of San Diego, who also represented Liberty Lobby, and by Willis Carto, who defended himself. Finally, the Von Esches (primarily Mark Von Esch, son of Robert, Jr.) defended their firm, and were to concentrate on dealing with the malicious prosecution complaint.

William Hulsy had been recommended to us by John Schmitz, the former US Congressman and very good friend of Revisionism and IHR. A successful attorney with experience in more than 200 jury trials, Hulsy finally agreed to take our case in spite of warnings from friends and colleagues, and his own apprehensions about possible damage to his career.

Hulsy firmly believed that the case could be fought and won on its legal merits, and that to make the main issue the Holocaust -- as Mermelstein's attorneys were seeking to do -- might very well result in an annihilating defeat. He decided to oppose the libel complaint by convincingly demonstrating to a jury, if possible, that everything Smith had written about Mermelstein was true. Failing that, he would show that Mermelstein was "a public figure," who had thrust himself to the forefront of participation in a public controversy in order to influence the resolution of the issues involved (his constitutional privilege, according to the ruling of the Supreme Court under Earl Warren, in the famous *New York Times* vs. Sullivan ruling of 1964). Hulsy would also seek to show that the question of Mermelstein's credibility as an eyewitness to the gassings and the Holocaust was a matter of public concern; that Brad Smith had exercised "due diligence," not reckless disregard for the truth, in his research for the offending article; that Brad's description of Mel was not based on personal malice; and that the IHR's *Newsletter* was not (as Mermelstein sought to argue) disseminated to the public at large, but was instead a periodical circulated to a limited readership that shared a specific interest in Revisionism. Establishing any or all of these things might suffice to defeat the libel complaint; failing that, to minimize damages.

Thanks to the evidence carefully compiled by Lou Rollins and others, we could show that what had

appeared in the *IHR Newsletter* about Mermelstein was true. This alone should have been enough to defeat the libel complaint, but Hulsy believed that it might not be enough to convince a Los Angeles jury.

My Assignment

My first assignment was to demonstrate to Bill Hulsy that the IHR and revisionists were not "neo-Nazis" or cranky flat-earthers, but responsible researchers with a different viewpoint on modern history. After winning his confidence, he set me to work gathering, compiling and evaluating evidence to defend against Mermelstein's libel complaint, based on Hulsy's research and understanding of the law. Again and again, Hulsy stressed that he wanted evidence to win the trial, not to disprove the Holocaust. But I must confess that I cheated: I sought every bit of evidence I could lay my hands on about Mermelstein's actual experiences during the Second World War, and what he'd said about them over the years.

Aided by numerous volunteers who worked not only in California but across the United States, and in Germany, Poland, and Israel, we searched for whatever we could find about Mermelstein and his family. This included evidence about his mental soundness (Mermelstein had admitted to being under the care of a psychiatrist); information as to his litigation with persons other than the IHR; newspaper reports quoting Mermelstein on his Auschwitz experiences; and, of course, wartime documents from Auschwitz and elsewhere that would disprove his claims about witnessing atrocities, above all the alleged gassing of his mother and sisters at Auschwitz in May 1944.

My first step was to nail down the existing evidence, much of it from the first trial: Mermelstein's sworn statements in the form of transcribed depositions (of which there were eleven, running to some twelve hundred pages of close interrogation by IHR and Liberty Lobby lawyers), written responses to interrogatories, and the like; Mermelstein's writings, above all his autobiographical account of his concentration camp experiences, *By Bread Alone*; and his public statements on his Holocaust years, reported in more than a hundred different newspaper and magazine articles, and on several recordings of presentations by Mermelstein at synagogues or seminars as well as on radio broadcasts.

Further evidence came from history and reference books, such as Jewish encyclopedias; public documents and records, including statements made by Mermelstein to authorities at the Auschwitz State Museum and the German consulate in Los Angeles; wartime documents from the German camps; and Mermelstein's US Army medical records.

As this mass of paper and audiotape accumulated, I had to read and re-read, to analyze and evaluate, to extract and collate and tabulate the evidence that would serve our defense against Mermelstein's complaint that he was libeled by the IHR's description of him as "a vainglorious prevaricator," "a false-tale spinner," and "a demonstrable fraud."

Contradictions and Absurdities

While Mermelstein was a rather difficult witness who had attempted (sometimes with success) to intimidate IHR attorneys during depositions by playing the Holocaust card, he was often boastful and extravagant, and provided many nuggets for analysis and comparison.

I began my compilation of contradictions and absurdities in Mermelstein's Holocaust claims with the list that Lou Rollins had put together. With much more evidence and a great deal more time than was available to Rollins, I compiled a new list, longer and more thorough than his original, but including many of the discrepancies and exaggerations that he had caught years earlier.

This listing had to be not only exhaustive, but reasonable and persuasive. Citing mere slips of the tongue, or mistakes attributable to sloppy journalists, would not only have been poor scholarship, it wouldn't have persuaded a jury.

Caught

In all, I discovered 30 absurdities, 22 contradictions, and a number of exaggerations. These examples went directly to the matter of Mermelstein as a "demonstrable fraud," a "vainglorious prevaricator," and a "false-tale spinner."

Among the absurdities were the nonexistent subterranean tunnel to the above-ground crematory, the soap made from Jewish bodies, a claim that Auschwitz camp "kapos" were rewarded for every prisoner they killed, and that there was a railroad track leading from the crematory to a pond for dumping ashes.

Contradictions

Since the summer of 1980, Mermelstein has repeatedly stated that he saw his mother and sisters go into a gas chamber, or into tunnel leading to it, from a distance of "a stone's throw away," a distance of "40, 50 feet," and that he watched the "gas chamber" building for "a couple of hours."

Remarkably, though, Mermelstein made no mention of witnessing any of this in any account available prior to 1980, including his supposedly autobiographical book, *By Bread Alone*.

This is nothing compared to his varying versions of the fate that befell his father. In a declaration given in November 1969 at the German consulate in Los Angeles, Mermelstein said his father died during "evacuation marches to Blechhammer from other camps." According to the account given in *By Bread Alone*, though, Mermelstein's father died in bed after working himself to death, trading food for cigarettes. In a May 1981 deposition, his father had died of overwork and exhaustion, while in a June 1985 deposition, he died of "exhaustion, cruelty, starvation, and beatings."

According to still other accounts given by Mel Mermelstein, his father was "gassed at Auschwitz."

Mermelstein has given similarly contradictory accounts of what he did while interned at Auschwitz (between approximately May 21 and July 1, 1944). In a statement given in November 1969 at the German consulate in Los Angeles, he had "no occupation." Similarly, in a May 1981 deposition, he declared that had done "practically nothing ... just some detail work" and "no physical work."

In February 1987, a dramatically different account of Mermelstein's time in Auschwitz appeared. Ed Koch (who was then mayor of New York City) told of a meeting with Mermelstein during a tour of Auschwitz. Koch reported in a newspaper article that Mermelstein had told him: "I was part of the special detail which hauled the bodies from the gas chamber and took them to the crematoria."

Exaggerations

In claiming that Auschwitz camp kapos would kill an inmate if "they didn't like the shape of your nose," Mermelstein seemed to suggest that his own nose was not unattractive. Survival could be just as cruel as death, Mel implied on another occasion, because the bread given to Auschwitz inmates (during the period when he claimed to have done "practically nothing") was intended not for nourishment, but to kill inmates "as fast as they expected us to die." At Buchenwald, Mermelstein would have us believe, he went swimming "in blood," even though he and others had been transported to Buchenwald "only for one purpose" -- to be disposed of in crematorium rather than "litter ... the beautiful towns and cities with our bodies."

Fortunately, Mermelstein and many others like him miraculously survived. One of these friends, Dr. Miklos Nyiszli (who wrote his own book about his stay entitled, *Auschwitz: A Doctor's Eyewitness Account*), was a truly exceptional survivor. In a 1981 deposition, Mermelstein claimed that Dr. Nyiszli, whom he supposedly knew personally, would testify on Mermelstein's behalf about the alleged crimes of Dr. Josef Mengele at Auschwitz. At that time, though, Nyiszli had been dead for more than 25 years.

The evidence we were able to collect about Mermelstein's credibility not only persuaded our attorneys that this was a very unreliable witness, to say the least; it also, I believe, gave them additional confidence to challenge Mermelstein directly.

New Evidence

In addition to all the evidence cited above, we obtained yet another piece of potentially explosive evidence: a document that indicates that Mermelstein's sisters may have been alive nearly five months after he insisted they were killed. This secret German document, dated October 12, 1944, lists 500 Jewish females who were being transported from Auschwitz to Altenburg (a sub-camp of Buchenwald). Among those listed are Edith and Magda Mermelstein, names identical to those of Mermelstein's two sisters. This document is dated almost five months after the day in May 1944 when Mermelstein swears he saw them gassed. While the birth dates of Edith and Magda as typed on this document do not tally precisely with those given by Mermelstein for his two sisters in *By Bread Alone*, there is good reason to believe that the two women on the list were, in fact, his sisters.

Forewarned and Forearmed

From the volume of evidence we acquired, we learned two important things:

- First, that Mermelstein is simply not a credible witness to gassings at Auschwitz, or to very much else involving concentration camps and the Holocaust. The contradictions, exaggerations, and absurdities lovingly noted and recorded by the IHR's researchers amply demonstrate this, not merely to Revisionists and others skeptical of "survivor" testimony, but any knowledgeable, intelligent, and fair-minded person. Whether Mermelstein is fibbing, to others or to himself; whether he has forgotten; or whether whatever he did experience has so deranged his mind as to render him incapable of rationally recounting the facts, his testimony proves nothing about the existence of Nazi gas chambers or a policy to exterminate Jews. If anything, careful analysis of his statements indicates the opposite: that there were no Auschwitz gas chambers or German policy to exterminate the Jews.
- Second, there is no evidence that Mermelstein ever claimed to have witnessed the gassing of his mother and sisters until after he learned of the IHR's reward offer. He apparently first claimed to have personally seen them enter a so-called gas chamber in letters attacking the IHR that appeared in newspapers in southern California and Israel in the summer of 1980.

Neither his book, *By Bread Alone* (published in 1979), nor a statement made for the Auschwitz State Museum in 1967 about his wartime experiences in the camp, nor a sworn affidavit given at the German consulate in Los Angeles in 1969 about crimes he had witnessed during his time at Auschwitz, contains a word about witnessing any gassing.

Similarly, there is no mention whatsoever of Mermelstein having witnessed the entry of his mother and sisters into a gas chamber, or anything like that, in any of the several detailed press accounts about his industrious activity as a lecturer, exhibitor of artifacts, and museum proprietor published prior to the 1979 reward offer.

The Trial

After several postponements in the first half of 1991, the trial was upon us. It followed a new Mermelstein media propaganda blitz, the centerpiece of which was the made-for-television movie *Never Forget*. This lurid and false account of the "reward case" was broadcast nationwide over the Turner cable television network in April 1991 (or just before the original trial date).

To make things more interesting, shortly before trial the Von Esches, on whose shoulders virtually our entire defense of the malicious prosecution complaint rested, threw in the towel and capitulated. After already enduring years of vituperation as agents of a worldwide Nazi cabal, they gave in to fear that their law practice would be ruined.

The Von Esches settled with a payment to Mermelstein of \$100,000, and a craven -- I'm sorry to say -- apology agreeing that, yes, Jews had been gassed at Auschwitz, and that millions more had perished in Auschwitz and other camps at the hands of the Germans.

Then we got a break. We learned that the trial judge, Stephen Lachs, was Jewish, a member of the liberal American Civil Liberties Union, and the first avowed homosexual to serve as a judge in California history. As it happened, Lachs turned out to be a conscientious and impartial judge,

despite the sensitive nature of the case and the blatant attempts by Mermelstein's attorneys to appeal to his Jewish background.

The combination of Mark Lane's trial savvy and Bill Hulsy's careful strategy brought about, against all expectations (ours as well as theirs), an annihilating victory for the forces of historical truth and freedom of inquiry. The 49 pretrial motions crafted by Hulsy to withstand and counter Mermelstein's case were like a mighty fortress protecting us and blocking the enemy's advance. Thus, even to get to a jury trial, Mermelstein's three lawyers -- lead attorney Lawrence Heller, Peter Bersin, and Jeff Mausner -- were forced to attack across legal mine fields, negotiate factual tank traps and concertina wire, dare procedural pill boxes and machine gun nests. The plaintiff's legal assault was contained at the outset, suffering heavy casualties during the close-in combat over the pre-trial motions. When Mermelstein's lawyers attempted a retreat it quickly turned into a rout. In the end, a downcast plaintiff and his (somewhat bedraggled) lawyers slunk from the courtroom, seemingly dazed by defeat.

Mermelstein Takes the Stand

This is not to say that Mel Mermelstein didn't have his day in court. He and his counsel had unwisely declined to stipulate that he was a "public figure," as we had tried to establish (mindful of the added protection against defamation suits by public figures provided by the Supreme Court in a landmark 1964 decision). He also contested our motion to sever the determination of that issue from the matters to be decided by the jury. (We had wanted Judge Lachs to rule on this.)

As a result, Mermelstein took the stand, allowing Mark Lane to examine him on the question of whether his activities qualified him as a public figure according to the standards of the court. Mermelstein attempted to argue that he was not a public figure, in spite of his admission on the stand that he is: a published author; the founder of the "Auschwitz Study Foundation"; the curator of a Holocaust museum (that was first a traveling Holocaust exhibition); the willing subject of scores of newspaper and magazine stories, radio and television interviews; an eager accumulator of plaudits and testimonials from state and local governments, and laurels from the likes of Israel's late Prime Minister Menachem Begin; and a lecturer who has spoken, over nearly two decades, at numerous colleges, high schools, synagogues, and so forth, across the United States.

Lane led him carefully through each of these damaging admissions. Evidently Mermelstein had believed that he could represent himself as someone who had been dragged unwillingly into the public arena by the IHR (even though most of his various public activities started before he'd ever heard of the Institute).

After establishing Mermelstein as an author, curator, founder of a non-profit educational organization, political honoree, and media star over the airwaves and in print, Lane zeroed on Mermelstein's activities as a lecturer. About how many lectures had he given on Auschwitz prior to 1985, Lane wanted to know. Here Mermelstein, uncommonly forthcoming so far, began to prevaricate. Despite ample testimony out of his own mouth and pen as to his numerous lectures over the years, testimony of which the defendants were very well aware, Mermelstein claimed that he had given only about as many talks as "the fingers on my hands."

Thereupon Lane flourished a typed list, signed by Mermelstein, of more than 30 lectures given by him in a period of just 18 months in 1981-1982. Mermelstein tried to be crafty: he allowed that he might have lectured more than once at the same place -- not the most effective answer, but one that later might defuse the issue for an inattentive jury.

At this point I recalled that in one of his depositions Mermelstein had estimated giving an average of 20 lectures a year on Auschwitz since 1967. I quickly found the statement in a deposition given in 1985. After a break for lunch, Mark Lane confronted Mermelstein with his own words, and then, using a pencil and pad to multiply 18 by 20 (a calculation equalling 360), Lane asked Mermelstein if he hadn't just told the court that he had only given as many lectures as there are fingers on his hands. A vexed Mermelstein then blurted out, "I meant the fingers of my hands and feet!"

At that point, Judge Lachs was seen to roll his eyes heavenward. A few minutes later, Bersin rose to concede his client's status as a public figure.

Judge Lachs Rules

Several days later, after carefully considering the text of Mermelstein's characterization of the IHR's 1985 settlement (which the plaintiff had made on a New York City radio broadcast shortly after that settlement), Judge Lachs declared that Mermelstein's claim that IHR had "signed" the 1981 judicial notice of gassing at Auschwitz could indeed be interpreted by a reasonable man as defamatory. This meant, he ruled, that IHR had had probable cause to sue Mermelstein in 1986, and that thus he had no alternative but to grant the IHR's motion for dismissal of Mermelstein's malicious prosecution complaint.

Soon afterwards, Mermelstein dismissed his libel and conspiracy complaints, and he and his attorneys trundled wearily out of the courtroom, haggling over who would pay for the transcript, a requirement in any appeal.

As reported elsewhere in this issue of the *Journal*, Mermelstein's appeal of Judge Lachs's dismissal of his malicious prosecution complaint was unanimously rejected by the California Court of Appeal on October 28, which should serve to end the second Mermelstein suit and, perhaps, the long and costly Mermelstein affair.

Best Isn't Good Enough

At one point in a deposition, Mel Mermelstein referred himself as his own "best witness." In spite of his evident failings as a credible eyewitness to the gas chambers and the Holocaust, I agree with this self-description. In a very real sense, Mermelstein is indeed the best witness to the gas chambers. He twice succeeded in getting judges in the state of California, a trendsetter in legal fashion as in so much else, to pronounce the Auschwitz gassings as indisputable fact.

While sharing with the Elie Wiesels, the Rudolf Vrbas, and the Filip Müllers the same knack for wild exaggerations, bizarre contradictions, and flat absurdities, Mermelstein is unlike them in having submitted his claims to careful scrutiny and relentless cross-examination. And so, while Mel Mermelstein is admittedly so far the best witness to the alleged gas chambers at Auschwitz, the best clearly isn't good enough.

If it were to end right here, this report on the great victory by the IHR and its co-defendants would be incomplete. This account -- delivered before this Institute's loyal supporters and contributors, and some of the many researchers who gathered evidence across America and around the world -- must appropriately conclude with an expression of our heartfelt thanks to them, and to all our subscribers and supporters. By contributing their time, their expertise, their money and their prayers, they have made this victory possible. With your loyal support, we pledge to carry on the fight for truth and freedom, for the honor of those who can no longer speak, for the enlightenment of those yet unborn, until the final victory.

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About the Author

Theodore J. O'Keefe worked as an Institute for Historical Review editor from 1986 until 1994. He led the IHR's research effort during the second Mermelstein lawsuit, devoting hundreds of hours without pay to uncovering and organizing the evidence. He served as chief editor of the IHR's *Journal of Historical Review* from 1988 until April 1992, and addressed several IHR Conferences. Educated at Harvard, he is the author of numerous published articles on historical and political subjects.

About the IHR/Mermelstein Settlement

The July 1985 agreement between the Institute for Historical Review (IHR) and Mel Mermelstein received considerable media attention. Because the terms of the agreement were widely misrepresented, IHR director Tom Marcellus issued this statement which was published in the IHR Newsletter.

With so many wild rumors still being circulated about the IHR/Mermelstein settlement, we want to remind our readers that, contrary to what has gone out through the press and media:

- 1. The settlement agreement did not include any provision for a payment of any reward offer, and in fact was not such a payment.
- 2. The IHR did not accept or in any way agree with Judge Johnson's ridiculous 1981 "judicial notice" that Jews were "in fact" exterminated in "gas chambers" at Auschwitz.
- 3. The IHR has not retreated one inch from its well-known position that there is no credible evidence to support the theory that Germans allegedly used homicidal poison gas chambers to exterminate the Jews of Europe.
- 4. The letter of apology addressed the "suffering" some Jews said they experienced around the \$50,000 award offer. It did not apologize for revisionist theory or revisionist literature in any way.

Following is the complete text of the letter our lawyers signed:

“Each of the answering defendants do hereby officially and formally apologize to Mr. Mel Mermelstein, a survivor of Auschwitz-Birkenau and Buchenwald, and all other survivors of Auschwitz for the pain, anguish, and suffering he and all other Auschwitz survivors have sustained relating to the \$50,000 reward offer for proof that 'Jews were gassed in gas chambers at Auschwitz'.”

Any person or organization that claims our lawyers signed any apology other than these few lines is either mistaken or knowingly distributing false information.

History and 'Memory'

An Examination of the Evidence of 'Holocaust Witness' Mel Mermelstein

By Theodore J. O'Keefe

In September 1991 the Institute for Historical Review prevailed in a lawsuit brought by Mel Mermelstein, a southern California businessman and self-professed eyewitness to the gas chambers of Auschwitz. This victory closed more than ten years of wrangling in two legal cases, neither of which ever came to trial, in a rancorous dispute that tested the legitimacy of efforts by skeptical scholars to revise the generally held version of the Holocaust.

It all began at the first IHR conference in 1979, when co-founder and then-director David McCalden announced an award of \$50,000 to anyone who could provide proof of homicidal gassings of Jews at Auschwitz. Mermelstein, a wartime detainee of the camp, submitted a claim for the award, and then brought a lawsuit against the Institute on the grounds that it had not acted quickly enough on his claim.

The first suit was settled in July 1985 when the Institute and co-defendants paid Mermelstein \$90,000, and issued an apology to him "and all other survivors of Auschwitz for the pain, anguish and suffering he and all other Auschwitz survivors have sustained relating to the \$50,000 reward offer." [\(note\)](#). Mermelstein's victory predictably received sympathetic nationwide media attention, and was dramatized in a flattering and much publicized made-for-television movie, "Never Forget," starring Leonard Nimoy (as a heroic and principled Mel Mermelstein) and Dabney Coleman (who played Mermelstein's lawyer). [\(note\)](#).

In the second case, Mermelstein brought an \$11 million suit for defamation (libel) because of an *IHR Newsletter* item by Bradley Smith that called him a "demonstrable fraud," a "vainglorious prevaricator," and a "false-tale spinner." [\(note\)](#). On September 19, 1991, Mermelstein was obliged to drop what remained of his suit after a Los Angeles Superior Court judge dismissed a substantial portion of it. (For the most comprehensive account of the second Mermelstein trial, see this writer's article in the January-February 1994 *Journal of Historical Review*.) [\(note\)](#). In contrast to the generous media coverage of the first case, newspapers all but ignored the second. [\(note\)](#).

Although in each case the judicial dispute centered on such strictly legal issues as whether a valid contract had existed, whether Mermelstein had been libeled, whether he was a public figure, and whether earlier suits had been brought maliciously, the essence was Mermelstein's claim to have witnessed his mother and sisters as they were driven into a gas chamber at Auschwitz-Birkenau in May 1944. [\(note\)](#). Mermelstein and his lawyers stressed the "Holocaust" angle, twice succeeding in having a judge take "judicial notice" of the claim that Jews were gassed at Auschwitz. In the second, 1991 trial, they even attempted to introduce as evidence the entire transcript of the main Nuremberg (IMT) trial.

For our part, Institute researchers, including McCalden, IHR writers Lou Rollins and Bradley Smith, and I, devoted considerable effort to checking the various claims Mermelstein had made over the years. During the course of this ten-year investigation, which intensified with the approach of trial in the second case in 1991, we were assisted by volunteers across America and in several foreign countries. For example, through intermediaries we obtained information about Mermelstein and his family from the Auschwitz State Museum.

While several accounts have already been published that focus on the legal and public relations aspects of the dispute, this article centers on Mermelstein's credibility as a Holocaust witness. Here we take a look at his public statements and writings, especially his autobiographical memoir, *By Bread Alone*, as well as hitherto unpublished testimony and recollections he provided to authorities at the Auschwitz State Museum and the German consulate in Los Angeles, from wartime

concentration camp records obtained in Germany and in Poland, and from other sources. [\(note\)](#).

This is all the more fitting given the fervor with which Jewish-Zionist groups, public officials, and much of the media have embraced Mermelstein as a particularly important and credible Holocaust witness. [\(note\)](#). For example, a *Los Angeles Times* feature article by staff writer Mark Pinsky praised Mermelstein as "a normally soft-spoken, single-minded man, a persistent witness, much like Nobel Prize-winning Elie Wiesel and no less eloquent ..." [\(note\)](#). The Los Angeles City Council honored Mermelstein on December 15, 1981, with a formal resolution that declared:

Mel Mermelstein, in 1944, May the 22nd, at dawn, saw his mother and two sisters among other Jewish women and children from his hometown, lured and driven into gas chambers disguised as shower rooms at the Auschwitz-Birkenau extermination center in Poland.

Four months later, the California state Assembly acclaimed him with a similarly laudatory formal resolution. [\(note\)](#).

Research Sources and Obstacles

Our efforts to obtain information about Mermelstein and his family, and to find Mermelstein relatives in Israel and the United States, were hampered in part because Mermelstein is a common family name among Hungarian Jews. [\(note\)](#). Adding to the difficulties in tracking down Mermelstein family members (and other European Jews) is the common practice of changing the last name upon emigration, and the possibility of Mermelstein's sisters marrying after the war (and his mother re-marrying). To this must be added confusion about first names. As a young man in Europe Mel Mermelstein evidently went by the first names of "Mor," "Moric" (or "Moritz"), and (at home) "Moishe." His father's first name is given in documents, in *By Bread Alone*, and elsewhere, variously as "Bernard," "Bernád," "Bernat," "Hersh-Ber" or "Hermann."

In line with longstanding practice, the American Red Cross and the International Tracing Service at Arolsen, Germany (which is administered by the International Committee of the Red Cross), informed our researcher that any information regarding former detainees (including Mermelstein and his family members) is shared only with former detainees, their next of kin, or their attorneys. [\(note\)](#).

Our researchers were able to confirm that Mel Mermelstein was born on September 25, 1926, in Örsveg, a suburb of Munkacs, where he was also raised. At the time of his birth this area was part of eastern Czechoslovakia, but was annexed to Hungary from 1939 to 1944. Today Munkacs is the western Ukrainian city of Mukachevo.

Along with some two thousand other Hungarian Jews, he was deported to Auschwitz on or about May 20-21, 1944, where he was registered on the 22nd as prisoner number A-4685 (the registration number which is still tattooed on his arm). About six weeks later, he was apparently taken to the Gleiwitz I labor camp (a satellite of Auschwitz), where he was detained and worked until the camp was evacuated in January 1945. In the face of the approaching Soviet forces, he and the other inmates were marched to Blechhammer and then westwards to the Gross-Rosen camp, from where he was transported by train to the Buchenwald. Apparently arriving there on or about February 10, 1945, he remained in the camp until it was liberated by American troops on April 11, 1945. [\(note\)](#).

Gassing Witness?

Very early on we noticed significant discrepancies between Mermelstein's different accounts, and that some of his claims contradicted well established and easily verifiable facts.

Perhaps most remarkable, we discovered that it was not until the summer of 1980 -- that is, after he decided to respond to the IHR challenge -- that Mermelstein first made his key "eyewitness" claim about seeing his mother and sisters enter a gas chamber. In none of the numerous newspaper interviews he gave prior to 1980 (that we were able to discover) did he make any mention of seeing

anyone go into any gas chamber. [\(note\)](#) Similarly, Mermelstein makes no mention of seeing his mother and sisters enter any building or "gas chamber" in the first, 1979 edition of his detailed memoir, *By Bread Alone* (written before the reward offer). [\(note\)](#).

Instead he makes only an ambiguous reference (p. 119) to seeing them for the last time as he and his father watched from near their barracks building ("The column neared our barracks. Separated only by strands of barbed wire, I could see them ..."). He even suggests that, instead of being gassed, his mother and sisters had been "burned alive. Specifically, he recounts (p. 129) the words of his father during a conversation a few days after their arrival at Birkenau:

"Your mother and sisters are..." He paused a moment, unable to go on. "And you must not torture your minds [sic] about their fate. Yes, yes. Look! There!" And he pointed to the flaming [sic] chimneys. The vision of my mother, Etu and Magda being burned alive made me feel faint.

More to the point, what Mermelstein wrote on this matter in his memoir actually contradicts his later claims. In *By Bread Alone* he specifically relates that it was only at the end of the war, after his liberation from Buchenwald, that he first heard, second-hand, that his mother and sisters had been gassed. Believing that his brother and sisters and likely his mother were still alive, he made his way back to Munkacs, where his uncle, Moshe-Aron, told him that none had survived. Moshe-Aron said he had heard that Mermelstein's mother and sisters had been "led to the gas chambers at Birkenau." [\(note\)](#)

Yet, in a letter published in a California daily paper in July 1980 (responding to the IHR challenge for proof of a Nazi gas chamber), he wrote: [\(note\)](#).

I witnessed my own mother and two sisters driven among others to the tunnel for their final station, the Gas Chamber No. 5 at Birkenau. It was on May 22, 1944, at dawn. I remember it. I was but a stone's throw away from the gas chambers and crematoriums...

The contrast between this and his earlier statements strongly suggests that Mermelstein never witnessed any such event, but rather that he invented or imagined this scene in response to the IHR's challenge. If Mermelstein had actually witnessed his mother and two sisters led into a gas chamber at Birkenau, is it believable that he would make no mention of this in his numerous pre-1980 interviews, or in his 1979 memoir of more than 270 pages?

Fantasy 'Tunnel'

On other occasions since mid-1980, Mermelstein has claimed that he saw his mother and sisters enter "gas chamber no. 5" going into a "tunnel." For example, in a written declaration made in December 1980, he stated: [\(note\)](#)

On May 22, 1944, I observed the buildings used as gas chambers and saw a column of women and children being driven into the tunnel that lead into the gas chambers, which I later determined to be the gas chamber number 5. The last time I saw my mother and two sisters was when they were driven into what I later discovered to be the gas chamber at Birkenau at dawn on May 22, 1944.

In a July 1981 response to pretrial questions, he declared: [\(note\)](#)

I personally observed my mother and sisters being driven, along with a group of women and children, into the gas chambers at Auschwitz. The building had two chimneys which had been and continued to spew a peculiar reddish flame and which has been identified as gas chamber #5.

Mermelstein's precision on this point is all the more noteworthy considering his numerous visits to Auschwitz (more than a dozen, he says), his testimony given there, and his evident concern,

expressed in his public statements, with the details of Auschwitz and the standard Holocaust legend.

Mermelstein's "gas chamber no. 5" can only designate the building that is more commonly known as "Crematory 5," "Krematorium V," or "Krema 5." But this claim is simply not possible. As all authoritative sources agree, Crematory 5 (as well as its mirror double, Crematory 4), was built entirely above ground and had neither stairs, tunnel, basement, nor morgue cellar. (The two structures that did have semi-underground "morgue cellars" ["Leichenkeller"] were crematories 2 and 3, some distance away.) [\(note\)](#) Interestingly, crematory building 5 (Krema V) was surrounded by trees, and was therefore called the "forest crematory." [\(note\)](#) Mermelstein, though, has never made any mention of these trees.

In short, Mermelstein's testimony about "gas chamber number 5" and its "tunnel" alone discredits him as a trustworthy "gas chamber" witness, and further suggests that he is lying about this key "eyewitness" claim.

Extermination Victims?

What was the actual fate of Mermelstein's parents and siblings? In *By Bread Alone* (p. 119), he describes the last time he saw his mother, Fani, and his sisters, Edith and Magda:

In the distance, toward the railroad tracks, we once again saw long columns of women and children walking toward the blazing [sic] chimneys. There were hundreds of them quietly humming and chanting. The column neared our barracks ...

A comparison of this description with the actual layout of the camp as established by aerial photographs and layout plans suggests that what Mermelstein most likely saw was his mother and sisters entering the "Sauna" center, where new arrivals were routinely cleaned and deloused. This is near the westernmost end of the "Kanada" section, where the personal effects of the inmates were stored and where they were issued camp clothing. [\(note\)](#)

Mermelstein claims that he and the rest of his family arrived by train at Auschwitz on May 21, 1944 -- that is, during the May-July 1944 period when, according to most Holocaust historians, the great majority of newly arriving Hungarian Jews (some 400,000 in all) were promptly gassed and cremated. [\(note\)](#) Jewish historian Martin Gilbert writes in his book *Auschwitz and the Allies* that three trainloads of some 12,000 Hungarian Jews arrived at Auschwitz on May 21, 1944, of whom all but eleven men and six women were gassed. [\(note\)](#)

Consistent with this, for years it has been widely and authoritatively asserted that all Jews arriving at Birkenau who were not able to work, or who were not registered, were promptly consigned to death in the gas chambers. [\(note\)](#) In fact, camp records and other incontestable evidence show that at least a very high percentage of Auschwitz Jews who were not able to work, or who were not registered, were nevertheless not killed. [\(note\)](#) At the Eleventh IHR Conference in 1992, this writer described [\(noet\)](#) finding the names of Mermelstein's sisters, Edith and Magda, on an October 1944 SS document in the Auschwitz Museum archives that lists 500 Jewish female prisoners, with their birth dates, who were transferred from Auschwitz to Altenburg, a satellite labor camp of Buchenwald. [\(note\)](#)

This document would seem to prove that Mermelstein's sisters "survived" Auschwitz. However, the birth dates given on this list for these two Mermelstein women are different than the birth dates Mel Mermelstein has provided for his sisters. Whereas the 1944 SS listing gives the birth dates as September 4, 1923, for Edith, and May 17, 1926, for Magda, Mermelstein gives the birth dates as October 31, 1923, and June 12, 1928, respectively. [\(note\)](#)

In any case, the fact that the Jewish women on this transport list ranged in age from 15 to 48 (with most in their twenties), including quite a few sharing the same age as Mermelstein's "gassed" sisters, at least shows that Jewish women of this age were not automatically "gassed." [\(note\)](#) Also significant, nearly half the women on this 1944 transport list, including Edith and Magda

Mermelstein, were not given Auschwitz registration numbers. Of the 500 Jewish Auschwitz prisoners on this SS list, 212 were transferred from the camp, alive and well, without having been registered.

Fate of Other Family Members

Mermelstein has also given contradictory information as to the fate of his father, Bernard. In his memoir, he gives a detailed and heartrending account of how he learned, at Buchenwald in early 1945, from an acquaintance from his home town, that his father had died in his bed of exhaustion at the Jaworzno (Neu-Dachs) satellite camp on December 18, 1944.[\(note\)](#) However, in a 1969 declaration given in Los Angeles he stated: "My father and my brother [Lajos] died during the evacuation marches to Blechhammer from other camps."[\(note\)](#)

We were unable to find any substantive information about the fate of brother Lajos, although in *By Bread Alone* (p. 241), Mermelstein reports that after the end of the war his uncle Moshe-Aaron told him that his brother had been "shot on the road to [satellite camp] Blechhammer [sic] from Camp Jaworzna [sic]" during the evacuations in early 1945.[\(note\)](#)

More Misinformation

In *By Bread Alone*, Mermelstein describes the escape in 1944 of several non-Jewish inmates from Gleiwitz I, the satellite camp of Auschwitz where he was interned for a time. He then tells readers that the camp's remaining Slavic inmates were sent to Auschwitz and gassed: "All of the Poles, Ukrainians and Russians were going to Auschwitz -- to the gas chambers."[\(note\)](#) However, an official Polish version of this escape and its consequences (in an article in *Hefte von Auschwitz*, a scholarly periodical issued by the Auschwitz State Museum) differs markedly from Mermelstein's. This is all the more remarkable considering that this article includes information on the affair from Mermelstein himself (p. 98), and because the article was published in 1973, and thus available to him, a frequent visitor to Auschwitz, six years before *By Bread Alone* appeared.[\(note\)](#)

What was the actual fate of the Slavic inmates at Gleiwitz after the escape of their fellows? According to the *Hefte von Auschwitz* article, the Slavic inmates were actually transferred for labor to a series of camps inside the Reich proper. While the article doesn't reveal how many survived the war, there certainly is no evidence that a single one was gassed.

This same *Hefte von Auschwitz* article cites former inmate Mermelstein as having taken part in the "uprising and self-liberation" of Buchenwald. This is based on a statement he made in his 1967 affidavit to the Auschwitz camp authorities.[\(note\)](#) The story that Buchenwald was self-liberated by an inmate uprising is now almost universally acknowledged as a myth -- a legend fostered in particular by the Communists, who claimed to have organized the revolt.[\(note\)](#)

To be sure, in the 1960s and 1970s, a period during which Mermelstein made at least nine visits to Auschwitz and other sites in Communist-ruled eastern Europe, the functionaries at the Auschwitz State Museum and the steering committee of the International Auschwitz Committee were either Communists themselves or beholden to the Communist line on Auschwitz, the Holocaust story, and doubtless much else.[\(note\)](#) Interestingly, in *By Bread Alone* (pp. 206-207), written for American consumption, there is nothing about an "uprising and self-liberation": merely "rumors" and "talk" about such a thing. When American forces arrive for the actual liberation, Mermelstein describes himself as a somewhat bemused observer, not a participant.

Bizarre Dance of Death

Perhaps the most fantastic of the claims made by Mermelstein in *By Bread Alone* (pp. 115, 117) is that on the night of his arrival at Auschwitz-Birkenau, he, his father, and his brother, among many other Jews, were driven naked to three flaming pits in which it was possible to discern burning bodies. Mermelstein and the other new arrivals joined a complicated choreography wherein the nude inmates simultaneously ran around the pits as SS men with guard dogs forced others to join the macabre dance:

Ahead were three huge pits dug deep into the ground. In each a fire was raging. Around the flaming pits naked men were running in an endless circle.... Quickly father grabbed my one hand and Lajos the other. Together we continued the race around the pit of death.

In his breathless telling, Mermelstein successfully resists the pit's hypnotic lure, and withstands as well the danger of being shot, struck or bitten. He also avoids being driven into the flames after he has been knocked down near the edge of the pit by "the oncoming crowd." Regaining his feet, he is able to join hands with his father and brother as they whirl about the pit, and to discuss a daring plan with a friend who has foresightedly concealed a straight razor on his naked person: in succession, each will kill a Nazi, slit his own wrist, then hand the razor on to another inmate. "Mad words, yet under the circumstances, reasonable enough," mulls autobiographer Mermelstein.

Just then, however, the SS fiends flail their whips, shouting, "Back to the barracks! Back to the barracks!" Many years later, in *By Bread Alone*, Mermelstein will wonder, with Talmudic acuity, whence and why the phantasmagoria at the pit. The most charitable explanation is doubtless raised by his final musing: "Or was it just an aberration of a demented mind?"

'Special Detail' Confusion

In an article published in early 1987 in the New York Post, Edward Koch, at that time mayor of New York City, recounted his meeting with Mermelstein at Auschwitz a short time before. The mayor quoted Mermelstein: "I was part of a special detail which hauled the bodies from the gas chamber and took them to the crematorium."([note](#))

This astonishing claim contradicts virtually every other statement Mermelstein has made about his time at Auschwitz-Birkenau, where he claims to have spent a couple of days, and at the main Auschwitz camp (Stammlager), where he says he spent six weeks or so. In all other available accounts, he claims not to have done any noteworthy work. In his 1967 statement to the Auschwitz Museum authorities, for example, he said: "During my six week stay in the Auschwitz camp I was not working."([note](#)) In his 1969 declaration given in Los Angeles, he said he had "no duties" there. ([note](#)) And in his May 1981 deposition, he said that at Auschwitz and Birkenau he had done "practically nothing... just some detail work" and "no physical work."([note](#))

On November 1, 1989, attorney Mark Lane questioned Mermelstein about these flagrant discrepancies. It is safe to say that this "eyewitness" has never been subjected before or since to such a dogged grilling, nor perhaps has any other self-professed Holocaust witness. The end result of several dozen pages of question and answer was, not, as one could expect, elucidation, but rather contradiction heaped on contradiction, all devastating to Mermelstein's credibility: he did and he didn't drag bodies; there may have been bodies in the clothes that he dragged to open pits; he might have but probably didn't drag bodies from the gas chambers. ([note](#))

"Did you say those things to Mayor Koch?," he was asked. "No, not quite," answered Mermelstein. Under prodding, he added, "Well, I was in a special detail there, yes, close to the pits, next to the -- those open pits ... But we hauled not only bodies but clothes, whatever, dragging them into the pits."

Q. Are you telling me that you do not recall if you hauled bodies from the gas chamber?

A. Not [sic] -- I saw too much.

A moment later:

Q. Is it your testimony that you don't remember whether or not you hauled bodies from the gas chamber?

A. I don't remember. Okay? I don't know specifically the way you put it. Okay? But I know I was there.

A frustrated Lane pressed on:

Q. I'm asking you if you were part of a special detail and if part of your obligation on the special detail was in any way related to the gas chamber.

A. No, not specifically.

Trying to untangle himself, Mermelstein declares:

To be part of a special detail, and that was, from time to time, you were pulled to do different things. There were days when we dragged -- just looked like -- it looked like a heap of clothes. And within these clothes, probably -- and it was to have been dropped into the pits. Within those clothes and other items may have been some bodies as well.

Spoken like a real eyewitness. According to Mermelstein, his embarrassment springs from having seen too much, not too little. When, under challenge, his memory seems to fail him, it is enough that he was there.

More Phony 'Evidence'

Mermelstein is not above simply inventing historical evidence. In a 1981 newspaper interview he said:[\(note\)](#)

Goebbels reassured Hitler he ought not to worry about the consequences of the Final Solution of "the Jewish question," ... Goebbels said to Hitler that because of the way the Germans were doing it -- luring the Jews into gas chambers disguised as shower rooms -- what the Germans were doing was so inconceivable, it will be unbelievable. The civilized world will simply dismiss it as a hoax.

In fact, there is not a scrap of evidence that Goebbels, or anyone else, ever said any such thing to Hitler.

In *By Bread Alone* (pp. 120-121) Mermelstein provides a two-page photograph showing the interior of a large room, which he describes in the caption: "The interior section of one of the five gas chambers at Auschwitz-Birkenau. Note the pipes and shower heads above."

This is demonstrably untrue. First, this photo was not taken at Auschwitz-Birkenau. Rather, it shows the interior of a room in the Auschwitz I (main) camp, several kilometers away. Second, although this room has been displayed for years to tourists as a "gas chamber" in its "original state," it is actually a fraudulent postwar reconstruction. This fact is now widely and authoritatively acknowledged.[\(note\)](#) Third, although electrical wiring and light fixtures are visible in the photo, "pipes and shower heads" are not.

Also in his book, Mermelstein emphatically endorses figures of Auschwitz deaths that are now thoroughly discredited. At one point he calls Auschwitz "the graveyard of four million human beings, of which ninety per cent were Jews, and a million little children." On another page he refers to Auschwitz as the place "where 4 million Jews died."[\(note\)](#) Although the four million figure of Auschwitz deaths was endorsed at the Nuremberg Tribunal, and affirmed for decades by government officials and prominent historians, today no serious historian supports it. (In July 1990 the Auschwitz State Museum in Poland and Israel's Yad Vashem Holocaust Center announced that altogether perhaps one million people, both Jews and non-Jews, died there, of all causes.)[\(note\)](#)

In a grotesque and fanciful scene spectacle conjured up during a 1981 legal deposition (but one he failed to mention in his 1979 memoir), Mermelstein claimed to have seen babies tossed into pits, where they were burned.[\(note\)](#)

Either out of ignorance or malice, Mermelstein misrepresents the views of revisionists. In a letter published in 1980 in the *Jerusalem Post*, he writes that "these gentlemen" of the Institute for

Historical Review "are teaching our new generation that the chimneys of Auschwitz were only those of the bakeries." This is absurd, of course, as even the most cursory examination of revisionist scholarship reveals.[\(note\)](#)

Mermelstein writes in his book of the well-known 1944 report about Auschwitz produced by Alfred Wetzler and Rudolf Vrba (Walter Rosenberg). He describes (p. 108) them as

two brave Slovakian Jews who made a daring escape from the death camps of Auschwitz-Birkenau. It was they who took it upon themselves to inform the Slovakian Jewish community, as well as the Hungarian Jewish community, what fate is awaiting them at Auschwitz-Birkenau in 1944.

"However," Mermelstein goes on to write, "none would listen to these two brave and courageous young fighters."[\(note\)](#)

Not true. Already in 1942, 1943 and 1944, American and British newspapers and government officials repeatedly publicized claims that the Germans were systematically exterminating European Jewry. The US government's War Refugee Board (WRB) published the Vrba-Wetzler report in November 1944, shortly after receiving it. Newspapers in the United States, Switzerland, and other countries gave prominent coverage to the report's sensational claims of systematic mass killing of Jews in gas chambers at Auschwitz.[\(note\)](#)

'Human Soap'

Mermelstein is also certain that the Germans manufactured bars of soap from the bodies of murdered Jews. During his May 1981 deposition, he was questioned on this point:[\(note\)](#)

Q. Did you ever see any of that soap allegedly made from the bodies or fats of Jews?

A. That's what we were ordered to use in the death camps.

Q. Was there some sort of insignia or initial on that soap?

A. I don't remember that. All I remember was the color of it was yellowish, and we knew that it was made out of humans. Yes.

Q. You heard it from other inmates; is that right? There was a rumor floating around the camp that the soap was made from Jewish bodies; is that correct?

A. That's correct. That was not a rumor, it was an established fact.

Mermelstein seems incapable of distinguishing between rumor and "established fact." In truth, the "Jewish soap" story is a wartime propaganda claim that no serious historian now accepts. In 1990 it was formally repudiated by Israel's Yad Vashem Holocaust center.[\(note\)](#)

Correcting the Historical Record

Revisionists from Paul Rassinier onward have discerned a pattern among "survivor witnesses" of warping reality in favor of rumor, allegation and libel. As one Jewish historian, who was himself interned in the Kaunas ghetto during the war, has noted:[\(note\)](#)

Most of the memoirs and reports [of Holocaust survivors] are full of preposterous verbosity, graphomantic exaggeration, dramatic effects, overestimated self-inflation, dilettante philosophizing, would-be lyricism, unchecked rumors, bias, partisan attacks and apologies.

Mel Mermelstein has proven himself to be no exception to this pattern. This man whom responsible

public officials and many in the media are eager to praise as a truthful and reliable Holocaust witness is in fact, as Bradley Smith has written, a "demonstrable fraud." Any intelligent and open-minded person can confirm for himself the many contradictions, exaggerations and absurdities detailed here.

And whereas today in Germany and some other countries skepticism toward the Holocaust story is forbidden by law, nowhere is it illegal to make the sort of slanderous accusations fabricated by such "witnesses" as Mermelstein, against Germans and others, whether as individuals or as a nation.

Far more culpable than Mermelstein himself are those who, either through uncritical silence or overt action, contribute to his fraud, and thereby to the corruption of our political and social life.

From the mass of evidence we studied, we learned that Mermelstein is simply not a credible witness to gassings at Auschwitz, or to much else involving the German camps and the wartime treatment of Jews. If anything, a close scrutiny of his statements suggests further reason to be skeptical of the gassing story and other claims.

The Institute for Historical Review has never desired nor sought to belittle the losses Mel Mermelstein suffered during the Second World War -- and those of us who worked on this case suspect that they were considerable. As conscientious revisionists, however, we believe that historical truth must be pursued and embraced, regardless of consequences. In exposing Mermelstein's deceit, we can say, with some pride, that it has done its duty.

Notes

1. Myrna Oliver, "Holocaust Doubters Settle Auschwitz Survivor's Suit," *Los Angeles Times*, July 25, 1985, pp. 1, 26; "Report on Settlement of Mermelstein vs. IHR, et al.," *IHR Newsletter*, August 1985, pp. 1-7; "Survivor Must Get Reward" (UPI), *The Washington Post*, July 25, 1985; "The Holocaust, Proved," *The New York Times*, editorial, July 29, 1985.
2. See J. Marcellus' review of "Never Forget" in the Summer 1991 *Journal of Historical Review*, pp. 229-238; J. J. O'Connor, "Certifying the Holocaust's Horrors," *The New York Times*, April 8, 1991; *TV Guide* (Washington-Baltimore ed.), week of April 6-12, 1991, p. 38; M. Pinsky, "Roadshow Paves the TV Airwaves for 'Never Forget'," *Los Angeles Times* (OC ed.), April 5, 1991; M. Zad, "Cable Links" column, *The Washington Post*, Sunday "TV Week" supplement, April 7, 1991, p. 5; M. Pinsky, "Rescuing the Memory of the Holocaust," *Los Angeles Times*, December 28, 1990.
3. "How the Press Invites Anti-Semitism," Sept. 1985 *IHR Newsletter*, pp. 3-4; See also "Mermelstein Trial to Begin August 9," *IHR Newsletter*, July-August 1991, pp. 1-2, 4.
4. Theodore J. O'Keefe, "'Best Witness': Mel Mermelstein, Auschwitz and the IHR," *The Journal of Historical Review*, Jan.-Feb. 1994 (Vol. 14, No. 1), pp. 25-32. Based on O'Keefe's presentation at the Eleventh IHR Conference, October 1992.
5. For example, whereas the *Los Angeles Times* gave sympathetic front page coverage to Mermelstein's 1985 courtroom victory, this same paper's total coverage of the Institute's 1991 victory against Mermelstein was a short inside item that appeared only in its Orange County edition. See: M. Pinsky, "Doubters of Holocaust Win a Round in Court," *Los Angeles Times*, Orange County ed., September 25, 1991, p. B9.
6. Mermelstein declaration of December 18, 1980, offered in connection with IHR claim, and published in facsimile in the 1981 edition of *By Bread Alone*, pp. 276-278.
7. Mel Mermelstein's autobiography, *By Bread Alone: The Story of A-4685*, was first published in 1979 (Los Angeles: Crescent Publications). The second edition was published in 1981 by his "Auschwitz Study Foundation" of Huntington Beach, California (xvi+290 pages).
8. See: "A Holocaust Survivor Keeps on Fighting," *Newsweek*, July 23, 1984; "'Debunkers' of Holocaust Linked to Right-Wing Extremists," *Los Angeles Times*, May 3, 1981; R. Lindsey, "Auschwitz Survivor Sues for Prize For Proving Germans Gassed Jews," *New York Times*, March 11, 1981; D. Haldane, "Holocaust Survivor and Historian Meets Push With Shove Once More," *Los Angeles Times*, Nov. 12, 1988.

9. M. Pinsky, "An Unforgettable TV Movie," *Los Angeles Times* (OC ed.), October 4, 1990, p. F2.
10. "Nazi camp survivor honored by Assembly" (AP), *Press-Telegram*, April 20, 1982.
11. Although Mermelstein contends (in *By Bread Alone*, p. 243) that "the Jewish population of Munkacs had been annihilated," we found tantalizing but unconfirmed evidence that large numbers of Jews from Munkacs survived the war.
12. The ITS letter (reproduced in *By Bread Alone*, pp. vii-viii) informed Mermelstein that it had no information about his father and brother, whom Mermelstein has claimed died in or around subcamps of Auschwitz. The letter makes no mention of the female Mermelsteins.
13. The information in this paragraph is based on the following sources: Documents from the records of the Buchenwald camp, reproduced in facsimile in M. Mermelstein's *By Bread Alone* (1981), pp. 184-188; letter to Mermelstein from the International Tracing Service (Arolsen, Germany), Sept. 3, 1971, reproduced in *By Bread Alone*, pp. vii-viii; Mel Mermelstein interrogation protocol ("Vernehmungs niederschrift"), given at the German General Consulate, Los Angeles, November 13, 1969. A copy of this German-language declaration is in the Auschwitz State Museum (PMO) archives, filed under: Zespol "Oswiadczenia," Vol. 68, pp. 183-192 (Nr. inw. 156642); Danuta Czech, comp., *Auschwitz Chronicle: 1939-1945* (London/New York: I.B. Tauris, 1990), p. 630; M. Mermelstein, *By Bread Alone*, pp. vii, 1-3, 93-130, 184.
14. For example, in none of the following pre-1979 articles is there any mention by Mermelstein that he personally saw his mother and sisters, or anyone, led to gas chambers: B. Altman, "Auschwitz survivor maintaining his vow," Long Beach (Calif.) *Independent/Press-Telegram*, July 9, 1977, p. C1; K. Sherman, "Holocaust exhibit chills most viewers," Long Beach (Calif.) *Independent/Press-Telegram*, Oct. 3, 1978; S. Karl, "Survivor of Auschwitz says it could happen again," *Daily Forty-Niner* (California State University Long Beach), Oct. 11, 1976, p. 1; P. Kennedy, "L.B. survivor of Auschwitz finds 'Holocaust' real," *Daily Forty-Niner* (CSU Long Beach), April 19, 1978.
15. Likewise, in neither his October 23, 1967, PMO declaration, or in his 1969 German Consulate declaration, does he make any mention of having seen his mother and sisters, or anyone, enter a gas chamber.
16. M. Mermelstein, *By Bread Alone*, pp. 240-241. Mermelstein also relates, p. 238, that as he returned to his home town after the end of the war, "I was sure that when I reached the house and opened the door, Father, Mother, Etu, Lajos and Magda would all be there, as before, waiting for me."
17. M. Mermelstein letter, "Invitation to the doubters," Long Beach (Calif.) *Independent/Press-Telegram*, July 29, 1980; during his deposition of May 27, 1981 (transcript, p. 46), he claimed to have witnessed them enter the "gas chamber" from "40, 50 feet" away.
18. Mermelstein declaration of December 18, 1980, published in facsimile in the 1981 edition of *By Bread Alone*, pp. 276-278.
19. Interrogatory of Mel Mermelstein, July 21, 1981. Response to question No. 26.
20. Y. Gutman and M. Berenbaum, eds., *Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994, with the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, DC), pp. 168, 172, 173. See also: Jean-Claude Pressac, *Auschwitz: Technique and Operation of the Gas Chambers* (New York: B. Klarsfeld, 1989). Mermelstein's testimony about "Gas Chamber No. 5" is also difficult to accept because crematory facility (Krema) V (as well as Krema IV) had been shut down in 1943 -- months before he claimed to have seen it in operation. See the essay by J.-C. Pressac, with Robert-Jan van Pelt, in *Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp* (1994), pp. 236, 237, 238, and p. 173. See also: J.-C. Pressac, *Auschwitz: Technique and Operation of the Gas Chambers*, pp. 413, 420. For additional reasons why this building or facility could not possibly have served as an extermination facility, see the review by M. Weber of Pressac's 1989 book in *The Journal of Historical Review*, Summer 1990, pp. 235-236. See also: M. Weber, "Legal Declaration," *The Journal*

- of *Historical Review*, Spring 1982, pp. 31-46.
21. D. Czech, comp., *Auschwitz Chronicle: 1939-1945* (1990), p. 368.
 22. D. Czech, comp., *Auschwitz Chronicle* (1990), p. 5; John Ball, *The Ball Report* (Canada: 1993; 16 pp.), pp. 4, 5.
 23. Y. Gutman and M. Berenbaum, eds., *Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp* (1994), p. 31.
 24. Martin Gilbert, *Auschwitz and the Allies* (New York: 1981), p. 210 (and pp. 211, 220). See also: D. Czech, comp., *Auschwitz Chronicle* (1990), pp. 629, 630.
 25. See, for example: E. Kogon, et al., *Nazi Mass Murder* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Press, 1994), p. 172; Jean-Claude Pressac, *Die Krematorien von Auschwitz: Die Technik des Massenmordes* (München: Piper, 1994), pp. 198-199.
 26. M. Weber, "Pages from the Auschwitz Death Registry Volumes," *The Journal of Historical Review*, Fall 1992, pp. 265-268; The semi-official Auschwitz "Kalendarium" reports that an unknown number of Jewish arrivals were admitted as unregistered "depot prisoners," and that some of these were sent from Birkenau to other camps for war work. See: Danuta Czech, comp., *Auschwitz Chronicle* (1990), pp. 628, 629, 630, 633, 636, 641, 643, 655, and others.
 27. T. O'Keefe, "Best Witness," *Journal of Historical Review*, Jan.-Feb. 1994, p. 30.
 28. List of 500 Jewish Female detainees transferred from Auschwitz to Buchenwald/Altenburg, October 12, 1944, Überstellung 500 Jüdinen Schutzhäftlingen aus Auschwitz. Auschwitz State Museum (PMO) Archives. Sygn. D-Bu-3/2a, Nr. inw. 163105.
 29. Particularly in the case of "Magda Mermelstein," the two different dates, when typed numerically in order of day, month, and year -- the German fashion used in the concentration camps -- are susceptible to confusion, "17.5.26" and "12.6.28," by someone with defective eyesight, under poor lighting, and so forth. Perhaps whoever compiled the list misunderstood the birth dates given by the sisters. Anyway, given Mermelstein's frailties of memory, there is no reason to give his statement regarding their birth dates any special weight.
 30. We examined a letter from the Auschwitz Museum (PMO) to Tjjudar Rudolph, April 26, 1991 (No. IV-8521/2221-2227/91), listing available records on certain Mermelsteins, as well as a letter from the Museum to the Polish Historical Society of Stamford, Conn., September 4, 1991 (No. IV-8520-107/4104-5/910), listing all Mermelsteins supposedly in the Museum's records. In this September 4, 1991, letter the names of Edith and Magda Mermelstein are to be found -- in fact three Magdas and two Ediths -- but none has a birth date matching that given by Mermelstein for his sisters. The names and birth dates of two of these women do, however, match those of the Edith and Magda Mermelstein of the October 1944 SS (Altenburg) transfer list. Their birthplace is given as "Szolyva," Hungarian for a Carpatho-Ukraine town also known as Svalyava that is about ten miles distant from Munkacs/Mukhachevo.
 31. M. Mermelstein, *By Bread Alone*, pp. 173, 194-195. We shall pass over the one or two instances in which Mermelstein, quoted in the press or speaking heatedly in deposition, says his father was gassed at Auschwitz. For example, Mermelstein is quoted in a 1981 issue of a Los Angeles daily paper as saying: "They [the revisionists] are inferring that Jews were not killed in the gas chambers, that I did not see with my own eyes my mother and father and sisters led off to the gas chambers." (Source: T. Carlson, "The \$50,000 challenge: Prove Holocaust really happened," *Los Angeles Herald-Examiner*, Feb. 15, 1981, p. B-8).
 32. Mel Mermelstein interrogation protocol ("Vernehmungs niederschrift"), given at the German General Consulate, Los Angeles, November 13, 1969, p. 9, para. 2. A copy of this German-language declaration is in the Auschwitz State Museum (PMO) archives, filed under: Zespol "Oswiadczenia," Vol. 68, pp. 183-192 (Nr. inw. 156642).
 33. Interestingly enough, Mermelstein claims in *By Bread Alone* (p. 242) that on his brief return to Munkacs after the war's end he met with a number of men who had been with his father and brother at the Jaworzno camp, although evidently none supplied particulars clarifying

- their fate. The Auschwitz records obtained by IHR include no reference to a Fani Mermelstein born in 1900 (Mel's mother). As already mentioned, inquiries to Auschwitz (by IHR) and to Arolsen (by Mermelstein) have yielded, so far as could be discovered, only such names and data as were supplied by Mermelstein.
34. M. Mermelstein, *By Bread Alone*, pp. 140-142, 146.
 35. Mag. Irena Strzelecka, "Arbeitslager Gleiwitz I," *Hefte von Auschwitz*, Nr. 14 (Oswiecim [Poland]: Verlag Staatliches Auschwitz-Museum, 1973). See especially pages 86, 92, 95, 98, 106, 188.
 36. Deposition of Mel Mermelstein, October 23, 1967, p. 5. A copy of this Polish-language deposition is in the Auschwitz State Museum (PMO) archives, filed under: Zespol "Oswiadczenia," Vol. 57, pp. 14-20. (An English-language translation is in the IHR archives.)
 37. See also: M. Weber, "Buchenwald: Legend and Reality," *The Journal of Historical Review*, Winter 1986-87, pp. 405-417.
 38. The Communist-run "International Auschwitz Committee" of Warsaw assisted "Comrade Mermelstein" in his legal fight against the IHR. See: *Information Bulletin* of the International Auschwitz Committee, Feb. 1981, quoted in *IHR Newsletter*, Oct.-Nov. 1981 p. 1, and, *Information Bulletin* (Intl. Auschwitz Comm.), July-August 1981, quoted in *IHR Newsletter*, June 1982, p. 5.
 39. E. Koch, "A Wall in Auschwitz," *New York Post*, February 9, 1987, p. 19, and, E. Koch, "Auschwitz Still Haunting the World," *Staten Island (New York) Advance*, February 23, 1987, pp. A1, A10.
 40. Deposition of Mel Mermelstein, Oct. 23, 1967, p. 1. A copy is in the Auschwitz PMO archives.
 41. Mermelstein interrogation protocol, given at the German General Consulate, Los Angeles, November 13, 1969, p. 1. ("keine Beschäftigung").
 42. Mermelstein deposition, May 27, 1981, Los Angeles, transcript pp. 68, 77.
 43. Deposition of Mel Mermelstein, November 1, 1989, reported by S. K. Farwell, in the case of M. Mermelstein vs. LSF, IHR, Liberty Lobby, et al. (2nd case), transcript pages 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 207.
 44. T. Carlson, "The \$50,000 challenge: Prove Holocaust really happened," *Los Angeles Herald-Examiner*, Feb. 15, 1981, pp. A-1, B-8.
 45. "Major French Magazine Acknowledges Auschwitz Gas Chamber Fraud," *The Journal of Historical Review*, Jan.-Feb. 1995, pp. 23-24; see also: G. Raven, "Dramatic new Videotape Presentation Takes Aim at Key Holocaust Claim," *The Journal of Historical Review*, March-April 1993, pp. 8-13.
 46. M. Mermelstein, *By Bread Alone*, pp. 123, 267.
 47. "Auschwitz Deaths Reduced to a Million," *Daily Telegraph* (London), July 17, 1990; F. Piper, "The Number of Victims," in: Y. Gutman & M. Berenbaum, eds., *Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp* (1994), p. 71; see also the comment by R. Faurisson in *The Journal of Historical Review*, Jan.-Feb. 1995, p. 24.
 48. Mermelstein deposition, May 27, 1981, Los Angeles, transcript pp. 188, 189.; This repulsive allegation has also been made by such poetic liars as Elie Wiesel. See: E. Wiesel, *Night* (New York: Discus/Avon books, 1969), pp. 41, 42, 43, 44, 79, 93.
 49. Letter in the *Jerusalem Post*, intl. ed., August 24-30, 1980. Facsimile in the second, 1981 edition of Mermelstein's *By Bread Alone*, p. 270.
 50. M. Mermelstein, *By Bread Alone*, p. 108. Likewise, on page 86 he castigates the leaders of the wartime Allied coalition -- Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin -- for their supposed indifference to the destruction of Europe's Jews.
 51. See, for example, Martin Gilbert, *Auschwitz and the Allies* (1981), pp. 328-329. See also the detailed discussion of the WRB (Vrba-Wetzler) report in A. Butz, *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century*. Regarding the testimony of Rudolf Vrba in the 1985 Zündel trial in Toronto, see the

- remarks by R. Faurisson in the Winter 1988-89 Journal, pp. 420-421.
52. Mermelstein deposition, May 27, 1981, Los Angeles, transcript p. 40.
53. M. Weber, "Jewish Soap," *The Journal of Historical Review*, Summer 1991, pp. 217-227.
54. Samuel Gringauz in *Jewish Social Studies* (New York), January 1950, Vol. 12, p. 65.
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About the Author

Theodore J. O'Keefe worked as an Institute for Historical Review editor from 1986 until 1994. He led the IHR's research effort during the second Mermelstein lawsuit, devoting hundreds of hours without pay to uncovering and organizing the evidence. He served as chief editor of the IHR's *Journal of Historical Review* from 1988 until April 1992, and addressed several IHR Conferences. Educated at Harvard, he is the author of numerous published articles on historical and political subjects.

Irving on Churchill. Dismantling Churchillian Mythology

by [Theodore J. O'Keefe](#)

World-class historian David Irving is no stranger to readers of the IHR's Journal of Historical Review. His address to the 1983 International Revisionist Conference, which appeared in the Winter 1984 Journal of Historical Review ("On Contemporary History and Historiography"), was something of a primer on Irving's revisionist historiographical method. It was spiced as well with tantalizing hints of new directions in Irving's research and new book possibilities arising from them.

Not the least among Irving's revelations were those that touched on Winston Churchill, descendant of one of England's greatest families and leader of his nation and its empire (as he still thought it) at what many of his countrymen and many abroad still regard as Britain's "finest hour." Readers will recall that Irving exposed several instances of Churchill's venality, cowardice and hypocrisy, including Churchill's poltroonish posturing at the time of the German air raid against Coventry and the facts of Churchill and his cronies' secret subvention by the Czech government.

It will also be recalled that in his lecture Irving spoke of his projected book on Winston Churchill, which at the time was to be published in the U.S. by Doubleday and in Great Britain by MacMillan, two great firms entirely worthy of an author who has been churning out meticulously researched historical bestsellers for a quarter of a century. As has been pointed out in recent issues of the IHR Newsletter, Irving's challenges to the reigning orthodoxy have become so unbearable to the Establishment that both these major houses refused to print the books as written. The task has now been undertaken by a revisionist operation in Australia. Nearing completion is the first volume of Irving's new book Churchill's War.

Last year David Irving made a world-wide speaking tour, visiting North America (the U.S. and Canada), Australia, South Africa, and Europe. He lectured on a wide range of topics pertaining to the troubled history of our century, with his customary flair for the pointed phrase and the telling anecdote. During one of his lectures, delivered at Vancouver, British Columbia, on March 31, 1986, Irving offered a series of mordant new facts and insights on the life and career of Winston Churchill.

At the outset of his lecture, Irving remarked that the late Harold MacMillan (Lord Stockton), recently targeted by Nikolai Tolstoy (The Minister and the Massacres) for his role in the forcible deportation of tens of thousands of anti-Communist Cossacks, Byelorussians, Ukrainians, and others to the U.S.S.R. after World War II, had stated that Irving's Churchill book would "not be published by his company, over his dead body." Clearly Lord Stockton's recent demise didn't alter things at MacMillan, however.

Then Irving let out an electrifying piece of information:

The details which I will tell you today, you will not find published in the Churchill biography. For example, you won't even find them published in Churchill's own biography because there were powers above him who were so powerful that they were able to prevent him publishing details that even he wanted to publish that he found dirty and unscrupulous about the origins of the Second World War.

For example, when I was writing my Churchill biography, I came across a lot of private papers in the files of the Time/Life organization in New York. In Columbia University, there are all the private papers of the chief editor of Time/Life, a man called Daniel Longwell. And in there, in those papers, we find all the papers relating to the original publication of the Churchill memoirs in 1947, 1949, the great six-volume set of Churchill memoirs of the Second World War. And I found there a letter from the pre-war German chancellor, the man who preceded Hitler, Dr. Heinrich Brüning, a letter he

wrote to Churchill in August 1937. The sequence of events was this: Dr. Brüning became the chancellor and then Hitler succeeded him after a small indistinguishable move by another man. In other words, Brüning was the man whom Hitler replaced. And Brüning had the opportunity to see who was backing Hitler. Very interesting, who was financing Hitler during all his years in the wilderness, and Brüning knew.

Brüning wrote a letter to Churchill after he had been forced to resign and go into exile in England in August 1937, setting out the names and identities of the people who backed Hitler. And after the war, Churchill requested Brüning for permission to publish this letter in his great world history, The six-volume world history. And Brüning said no. In his letter, Brüning wrote, 'I didn't, and do not even today for understandable reasons, wish to reveal from October 1928, the two largest regular contributors to the Nazi Party were the general managers of two of the largest Berlin banks, both of Jewish faith and one of them the leader of Zionism in Germany.'

Now there is a letter from Dr. Heinrich Brüning to Churchill in 1949, explaining why he wouldn't give permission to Churchill to publish the August 1937 letter. It was an extraordinary story, out of Churchill's memoirs. Even Churchill wanted to reveal that fact. You begin to sense the difficulties that we have in printing the truth today. Churchill, of course, knew all about lies. He was an expert in lying himself. He put a gloss on it. He would say to his friends, "The truth is such a fragile flower. The truth is so precious, it must be given a bodyguard of lies." This is the way Churchill put it.

Irving went on to describe several sources of secret financial support enjoyed by Churchill. In addition to money supplied by the Czech government, Churchill was financed during the "wilderness years" between 1930 and 1939 by a slush fund emanating from a secret pressure group known as the Focus.

Irving on the Focus:

The Focus was financed by a slush fund set up by some of London's wealthiest businessmen -- principally, businessmen organized by the Board of Jewish Deputies in England, whose chairman was a man called Sir Bernard Waley Cohen. Sir Bernard Waley Cohen held a private dinner party at his apartment on July 29, 1936. This is in Waley Cohen's memoirs ... The 29th of July, 1936, Waley Cohen set up a slush fund of 50,000 pounds for The Focus, the Churchill pressure group. Now, 50,000 pounds in 1936, multiply that by ten, at least, to get today's figures. By another three or four to multiply that into Canadian dollars. So, 40 times 50,000 pounds -- about \$2 million in Canadian terms -- was given by Bernard Waley Cohen to this secret pressure group of Churchill in July 1936. The purpose was -- the tune that Churchill had to play was -- fight Germany. Start warning the world about Germany, about Nazi Germany. Churchill, of course, one of our most brilliant orators, a magnificent writer, did precisely that.

For two years, The Focus continued to militate, in fact, right through until 1939. And I managed to find the secret files of The Focus, I know the names of all the members. I know all their secrets. I know how much money they were getting, not just from The Focus, but from other governments. I use the word "other governments" advisedly because one of my sources of information for my Churchill biography is, in fact, the Chaim Weizmann Papers in the State of Israel. Israel has made available to me all Churchill's secret correspondence with Chaim Weizmann, all his secret conferences. It is an astonishing thing, but I, despite my reputation, in a kind of negative sense with these people, am given access to files like that, just the same as the Russian Government has

given me complete access to all of the Soviet records of Churchill's dealings with Ivan Maisky, Joseph Stalin, Molotov and the rest of them. I am the only historian who has been given access to these Russian records. It is a kind of horse trading method that I use when I want access to these files, because it is in these foreign archives we find the truth about Winston Churchill.

When you want the evidence about his tax dodging in 1949 and thereabouts, you are not going to look in his own tax files, you're going to look in the files of those who employed him, like the Time/Life Corporation of America. That's where you look. And when you're looking for evidence about who was putting money up for Churchill when he was in the wilderness and who was funding this secret group of his, The Focus, you're not going to look in his files. Again, you're going to look in the secret files, for example, of the Czech government in Prague, because that is where much of the money was coming from.

Irving then revealed further details of Churchill's financing by the Czechs, as well as the facts of Churchill's financial rescue by a wealthy banker of Austro-Jewish origins, Sir Henry Strakosch, who, in Irving's words, emerged "out of the woodwork of the City of London, that great pure international financial institution." When Churchill was bankrupted overnight in the American stock market crash of 1937-1938, it was Strakosch who was instrumental in setting up the central banks of South Africa and India, who bought up all Churchill's debts. When Strakosch died in 1943, the details of his will, published in the London Times, included a bequest of £20,000 to the then Prime Minister, eliminating the entire debt.

Irving dealt with Churchill's performance as a wartime leader, first as Britain's First Lord of the Admiralty and then as Prime Minister. The British historian adverted to Churchill's "great military defeat in Norway, which he himself engineered and pioneered," and mentioned the suspicion of Captain Ralph Edwards, who was on Churchill's staff at the time, that Churchill had deliberately caused the fiasco to bring down Neville Chamberlain and replace him as prime minister, which subsequently happened.

Irving spoke of Dunkirk:

In May 1940, Dunkirk, the biggest Churchill defeat of the lot. It wasn't a victory. It wasn't a triumph. Nothing for the British to be proud of. Dunkirk? If you look at the Dunkirk files in the British archives now, you will find, too, you're given only photocopies of the premier files on Dunkirk with mysterious blank pages inserted. And you think, at first, how nice of them to put these blank pages in to keep the documents apart. Not so. The blank pages are the ones that you really want to be seeing. In some cases, of course, the blank pages are genuinely censored with intelligence matters. But the other blank pages are letters between Churchill and the French Prime Minister, Paul Reynaud, which revealed the ugly truth that Churchill, himself, gave the secret order to Lord Gort, the British General in command of the British expeditionary force at Dunkirk, "Withdraw, fall back," or as Churchill put it, "Advance to the coast." That was Churchill's wording. "And you are forbidden to tell any of your neighboring allies that you are pulling out. The French and the Belgians were left in the dark that we were pulling out.

I think it's the most despicable action that any British commander could have been ordered to carry out, to pull out and not tell either his allies on his left and right flanks that he was pulling out at Dunkirk. The reason I knew this is because, although the blanks are in the British files, I got permission from the French Prime Minister Paul Reynaud's widow. His widow is still alive. A dear old lady about 95, living in Paris. And guiding her trembling hand, I managed to get her to sign a document releasing to me all

the Prime Minister's files in the French National Archives in Paris. And there are documents, the originals of the documents which we're not allowed to see in London. and there we know the ugly truth about that other great Churchill triumph, the retreat to Dunkirk. If peace had broken out in June of 1940, Churchill would have been finished. No brass statue in Parliament Square for Mr. Winston Churchill. He would have been consigned to the dustbin of oblivion, forgotten for all time and good riddance I say, because the British Empire would have been preserved. We would, by now, have been the most powerful race -- can we dare use the word, the British race, the most powerful race on Earth.

Irving pointed out that Churchill rejected Hitler's peace offers in 1939, 1940, and 1941. (Irving supports the thesis that Rudolf Hess's flight to Scotland was ordered by the Führer). Irving pinpointed one critical moment, and supplied the background:

The crucial moment when he managed to kill this peace offensive in England was July 1940. If we look at the one date, July the 20th, this I think was something of a watershed between the old era of peace, the greatness of the British Empire and the new era, the new era of nuclear deterrent and the holocaust, the nuclear holocaust. July 20, 1940: Mr. Churchill is lying in bed that Sunday out in Chequers, when he gets a strange message. It's an intercept of a German ambassador's telegram in Washington to Berlin. It's only just been revealed, of course, that we were reading all of the German codes -- not only the German Army, Air Force and Navy Codes, but also the German embassy codes. And if you're silly enough to believe everything that's written in the official history of British Intelligence, you will understand that the only reason that they released half of the stories is to prevent us from trying to find out the other half. And what matters is that we are reading the German diplomatic codes as well. On July 20th, the German ambassador in Washington sent a message to Berlin saying that the British ambassador in Washington had asked him very quietly, very confidentially, just what the German peace terms were. This, of course, was the one thing that Churchill could never allow to happen, that the British find out what Hitler's peace terms are. He sends an immediate message to the foreign office, to Lord Halifax, saying, "Your ambassador in Washington is strictly forbidden to have any further contacts with the German ambassador, even indirectly." They were communicating through a Quaker intermediary.

Now, on the same day, Churchill sent a telegram to Washington ordering Lord Lothian, the British ambassador in Washington, to have nothing to do with the German ambassador. And the same day, he takes a third move to ensure that the peace moves in Britain are finally strangled at birth. He orders Sir Charles Portal to visit him at Chequers, the country residence of British prime ministers. Sir Charles Portal was Commander in Chief of Bomber Command. Now what is the significance? Well, the significance is this. Up to July 1940, not one single German bomb has fallen on British towns. Hitler had given orders that no British towns are to be bombed and, above all, bombing of London is completely forbidden and embargoed. Churchill knows this, because he's reading the German code. He's reading the German Air Force signals, which I can now read in the German files. Churchill is reading the signals, and he knows that Hitler is not doing him the favor.

Hitler is still hoping that this madman in England will see reason or that he will be outvoted by his cabinet colleagues. So he's not doing Churchill the favor of bombing any English towns. Churchill is frantic because he thinks he's being outsmarted by Hitler. On July the 20th he sends for Sir Charles Portal, the Chief of Bomber Command, and he says to Sir Charles Portal, as we know from records from Command to the Air

Ministry, "When is the earliest that you could launch a vicious air attack on Berlin?" Sir Charles Portal replies to Winston, "I'm afraid we can't do it now, not until September because the nights aren't long enough to fly from England to Berlin and back in the hours of darkness. September, perhaps, and in September we will have the first hundred of the new Sterling bombers ..." But he also says, "I warn you, if you do that, the Germans will retaliate. At present they're not bombing English targets, they're not bombing civilian targets at all and you know why. And if you bomb Berlin, then Hitler will retaliate against English civilian targets." And Churchill just twinkles when he gets this reply, because he knows what he wants.

We know what he wants because he's told Joe Kennedy, the American Ambassador - Joseph P. Kennedy, father of the late President - "I want the Germans to start bombing London as early as possible because this will bring the Americans into the war when they see the Nazis' frightfulness, and above all it will put an end to this awkward and inconvenient peace movement that's afoot in my own Cabinet and among the British population." I've opened Kennedy's diary. I've also read Kennedy's telegrams back to the State Department in Washington. They're buried among the files. You can't find them easily, but they are worth reading, and you see in detail what Churchill was telling him. What cynicism. Churchill deliberately provoking the bombing of his own capital in order to kill the peace movement. He's been warned this would be the consequence, but he needs it. And still Hitler doesn't do him the favor.

Irving then gave a detailed account of the cynical manoeuvrings of Churchill to escalate the aerial campaign against Germany's civilian population to the point at which Hitler was driven to strike back against Britain's cities, supplying the spurious justification for the R.A.F.'s (and later the U.S. Army Air Force's) monstrous terror attacks against centuries-old citadels of culture and their helpless inhabitants.

The British historian further expanded on a theme he had touched on in his address to the IHR's 1983 conference: Churchill the drunkard. Irving substantiated his accusation with numerous citations from diaries and journals, the originals of which often differ from heavily laundered published editions. He concluded his address with an anecdote of a ludicrous incident which found Churchill pleading with William Lyon Mackenzie King, wartime prime minister of Canada, to shift production in his country's distilleries from raw materials for the war effort to whiskey and gin, twenty-five thousand cases of it. According to Mackenzie King's private diary, the Canadian prime minister tore up Churchill's memorandum on the subject at precisely twenty-five minutes to eight on August 25, 1943, and Sir Winston had to soldier on through the war with liquid sustenance from other lands and climes. As Irving emphasized, Churchill's drunken rantings, often during cabinet meetings, disgusted many of his generals, as when, at a meeting on July 6, 1944, the prime minister told his commanders to prepare to drop two million lethal anthrax bombs on German cities. Of this meeting Britain's First Sea Lord, Admiral Cunningham, wrote, according to the Irving: "There's no doubt that P.M. is in no state to discuss anything, too tired, and too much alcohol."

Irving's demolition of the Churchill myth, based on a wealth of documentary evidence, most of which has been studiously avoided by the keepers of the Churchill flame, may constitute his most important service to Revisionism. The legendary V-for-victory- waggling, cigar-puffing "Winnie" is for many of a centrist or conservative bent the symbol and guarantee that Britain and America fought and "won" the Second World War for traditional Western values, rather than to bleed Europe white and secure an enormous geopolitical base for Communism.

Irving's Churchill biography promises to make trash of such authorized studies as that of Martin Gilbert (which has already been described in private by one Establishment historian as "footnotes to Churchill's war memoirs"). The publication of the first volume of Churchill's War later this year should be an historiographical event of the first importance.

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The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum: A Costly and Dangerous Mistake

By Theodore J. O'Keefe

Hard by the Washington Monument, within clear view of the Jefferson Memorial, an easy stroll down the Mall to the majestic Lincoln Memorial, has arisen, on some of the most hallowed territory of the United States of America, a costly and dangerous mistake. On ground where no monument yet marks countless sacrifices and unheralded achievements of Americans of all races and creeds in the building and defense of this nation, sits today a massive and costly edifice, devoted above all to a contentious and false version of the ordeal in Europe, during World War II, of non-American members of a minority, sectarian group.

In the deceptive guise of tolerance, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum promotes a propaganda campaign, financed through the unwitting largesse of the American taxpayer, in the interests of Israel and its adherents in America.

How did the federal government allow the creation of such a monstrosity? What is its meaning for American policy and for American values? And what must the American people do to regain control of the land their servants in Washington handed over to a foreign interest, and to establish an enterprise thereon, whether a museum or otherwise, informed by and conducted according to American principles and interests?

Origins

In the late 1970s, during the presidency of James Earl "Jimmy" Carter, a propaganda campaign to promote the "Holocaust," the alleged systematic slaughter of some six million Jews by the Germans during the Second World War, was organized and carried out from Hollywood and New York. As Benjamin Meed, an important functionary of the Council that controls the Holocaust Museum, wrote in 1990: [1] Almost a dozen years ago, a new phenomena [sic] developed. The Holocaust was introduced into schools, colleges, and universities. Television broadcast programs on the Holocaust and millions of Americans watched them. Soon, Americans took great interest in the lessons of the Holocaust, its uniqueness and its universal message.

Why the urgency of this campaign? Two factors were paramount: first, the beginnings, more than three decades after the end of the Second World War, of an objective, scholarly assessment of the facts of the alleged German policy to exterminate European Jewry. [2]

Second, the need to justify Zionist theory and practice in the face of unprecedented international resistance to Israeli intransigence (including the famous UN General Assembly Resolution that equated Zionism with racism), and to defend Israel's aggressive policy under the leadership of the former terrorist, Prime Minister Menachem Begin. [3]

The US Holocaust Memorial Council

In 1978 President Carter, his administration beleaguered at home and abroad, succumbed to pressure from the new "Holocaust" lobby (and thus America's influential Israel-first minority) by creating, through executive order, the President's Commission on the Holocaust. Two years later, on October 7, 1987, Congress passed -- unanimously -- a law establishing the United States Holocaust Memorial Council, charged principally with constructing and overseeing the operation of "a permanent living memorial to the victims of the holocaust" and with providing "for appropriate ways for the Nation to commemorate the Days of Remembrance, as an annual, national, civic commemoration of the Holocaust ..." [4]

A priceless tract of public land was turned over to the Council, and, after years of costly delay (during which the Council's budget swelled from \$2.5 million to over \$18 million a year), the US

Holocaust Memorial Museum was finally completed and opened, to great media fanfare, in April 1993.

A Sectarian, Alien Agenda

Besides soliciting tens of millions of dollars in tax-deductible donations to finance the Holocaust Museum, the US Holocaust Memorial Council has busied itself with promoting an agenda of unalloyed support for minority, Zionist ends.

The membership of the Council, a US federal agency, has been overwhelmingly Jewish since its founding in 1980. The Council's two different chairmen -- Elie Wiesel and Harvey Meyerhoff -- have both been committed to the support of the State of Israel, and the chairs of the Council's most important committees have been likewise Jewish and Zionist.

The chief fund-raiser for the Holocaust Museum [and later Council Chairman], Miles Lerman, was formerly American vice chairman for the State of Israel Bonds Organization, promoting tax-free investment in a country which receives by far the largest amount of US foreign aid per year. Working the same wealthy Jewish-Americans he has long dealt with in his fund-raising for Israel, Lerman has helped raise nearly \$160 million in tax-deductible contributions. The biggest donors have been rewarded by having various components of the museum named for them (e.g. the Wexner Learning Center).

Nor is erecting and operating the Museum the only function with which the Holocaust Memorial Council has been charged. Another of its duties is to commemorate the "Days of Remembrance for Victims of the Holocaust," which Congress has raised to "an annual, national, civic commemoration of the Holocaust." Like the Israeli Yom ha-Shoah ("Day of the Holocaust"), on which they are based, the Days of Remembrance are dated according to the lunar Hebrew calendar, and thus, like Passover or Chanukah, fluctuate from year to year. These foreign days of lamentation are currently celebrated, under the flag of the Republic, to prayers and chants in Hebrew, across the land in governmental settings from the Capital Rotunda to city halls.

Need it be stated that no group of American victims of persecution, let alone another foreign group, enjoys any such federally mandated and tax-supported day, or days, of recognition?

Museum's One-Sided 'History'

Although the Council during its early years made noises about recognizing the ordeals of non-Jews during the Second World War, the US Holocaust Memorial Museum is relentlessly Judeocentric. While here and there are nods to non-Jewish groups oppressed by the German National Socialists (although never to groups victimized by Germany's enemies, above all by Stalin's USSR), the larger holocaust of the Second World War, which claimed an estimated 75 to 80 million lives around the world, is ignored in preference to the Jewish ordeal. Thus, to cite just one telling example, the Museum's "Life before the Holocaust" exhibit refers strictly to Jewish life before the Holocaust. [5]

Where, in fact, non-Jews figure in the Museum, they figure largely as villains: the Germans and their allies and collaborators; the Western allies, including America, who refused to accept a large immigration before the war; the American political and military leaders who refused to authorize costly bombing raids on the Auschwitz "gas chambers."

Soviet Liberators?

The Museum's message that support for Jews is the sole measure of decency during the Second World War leads to anomalies which, in an American museum raised on ground hallowed to the principles of liberty on which this republic is based, can only be called shocking. That the victims of World War II atrocities by the Allies -- massacres such as the firebombing of Tokyo and Dresden,

the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Soviet slaughter of Polish prisoners at Katyn, the mass rapes carried out by the Red Army at the war's end -- receive no mention is deplorable. But the Museum's treatment of the armed forces which defended Stalin's savage Soviet tyranny is nothing short of grotesque.

Communists appear in this Museum only in the guise of "resistance fighters" and "liberators." For example, the submachine gun and false papers of Samuel Weissberg, a Communist Party member who rose to high rank in a Communist guerrilla group in North France, are on honored display, no less precious a relic in the Museum's permanent exhibit than the standard heaps of shoes and hair. [6]

Even more unsettling is the honor given to Stalin's notorious Red Army, which compiled a bloody and shameful record of atrocities across Europe during, and after, the war. As the US Holocaust Memorial Council's newsletter fulsomely puts it, "Flags will hang in the museum to honor the millions of Soviet soldiers who drove Nazi forces westward and who were the first allied forces to liberate and publicize the existence of the camps." In the words of Council chairman Meyerhoff, these martial banners of the Red tyranny have a single association: "Much more than simply wartime memorabilia, these military artifacts are a significant contribution to memory, one that will remind future generations of the pivotal role Soviet forces played in defeating Nazism ..." [7]

What must the millions of Americans originating or descending from the European nations -- Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia -- for which the Red "military artifacts" symbolize invasion, tyranny, oppression, and persecution of religion, think as they see the fierce armies of their persecutors hailed as "liberators"?

Israel in the Museum

Just as one might guess from the circumstance that the Museum's director, Jeshajahu Weinberg, and the head of its "Learning Center," Yechiam Halevy, were brought in from Israel, the Museum's treatment of the state of Israel is adulatory. An emotive tribute to the founding of Israel is an integral part of the exhibition. That the establishment of Israel, and its expansion in subsequent wars, has meant colonial occupation and oppression for millions of the land's native Palestinians, and dispossession and exile for millions more, goes unmentioned -- another grotesquery in an American museum supposed to instruct in the dangers of intolerance and disregard of human rights.

As for the momentous collaboration between Hitler's German state and the Zionist Jewish Agency in the 1930s, which through the Haavara Agreement enabled the transfer of vital capital and the influx of tens of thousands of highly skilled Jewish immigrants to Palestine -- that is passed over in utter silence. [8]

'Historical Correctness'

The Museum's skewed history is not simply a matter of one-sidedness and omission. It has further committed itself to a fixed and final interpretation of the surprisingly scanty and sometimes suspect evidence for a German policy of annihilating European Jewry, largely in gas chambers, in numbers approaching six million. This despite a considerable body of research and scholarship that has arisen over past two decades in many lands, and which contests, by academic means, the substance of the Holocaust "extermination thesis." [9]

That the US Holocaust Memorial Council is aware of the work of revisionist scholars is clear: the Council's literature is replete, not with substantive refutations of revisionist scholarship, but with slander and polemic. To cite one characteristic example, the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum Newsletter of May 1992 featured a front-page attack on Holocaust revisionism by Professor Deborah Lipstadt. In this article, Lipstadt decried the revisionists for producing material that looked

scholarly, then lauded the US Holocaust Memorial Museum as "among the most efficacious ways" of "combatting this pernicious trend," while neglecting to specify a single error of revisionist scholarship. [10]

While the US Holocaust Memorial Council recognizes that there is a historical debate on the Holocaust, it takes official notice of the dissenting position only to attack it. That an American institution, supported by the taxes of all Americans, should commit itself to inflexible historical orthodoxy -- in the service of a single American minority -- is an intolerable imposition on our First Amendment rights, as well as a mockery of the Western, and American, ideal of objective scholarship.

A Center for Education?

Council Chairman Meyerhoff has stated: "The Museum is primarily an educational institution." [11] From the Council's own literature, however, it is clear what Meyerhoff means by education. The "role-playing" for children as well as adults who visit the Museum (visitors issued "identity cards" bearing the name and alleged fate of various Holocaust victims); the high-tech computer and video effects, and the recordings of speech and music that augment the Museum's tendentiously described artifacts; and the Museum's goal, as proclaimed by its Zionist fund-raising chairman, Miles Lerman, of insuring that "Children in Dubuque, families in Tucson, and schoolteachers in Atlanta will learn the history and the lessons of Auschwitz as thoroughly as they learn the history of their own communities": all these show that the US Holocaust Memorial Museum is a propaganda enterprise that seeks to indoctrinate all Americans in a uniquely and partisanly Jewish (and Zionist) version of not merely the past, but the present and the future. [12]

The American Response

What is the American response to a partisan museum constructed in a place solemnly consecrated to the heroes and the values of our Republic, to be lavishly operated with taxpayer dollars at a time when, even in our country's capital, thousands sleep homeless in the shadow of our national monuments? What is the American response to an ambitious propaganda agenda that aims to impose a sectarian "Holocaust remembrance" in schools where our children cannot pray, in town halls and federal buildings from which the religious symbols of the majority are banned in the name of freedom of worship?

Over two centuries ago, Thomas Jefferson wrote: "To compel a man to furnish contributions of money for the propagation of opinions which he disbelieves and abhors is sinful and tyrannical." [13]

Nearly 150 years ago, Abraham Lincoln said: "I insist, that if there is anything which it is the duty of the whole people to never entrust to any hands but their own, that thing is the preservation and perpetuity of their own liberties and institutions." [14]

The US Holocaust Memorial Museum, and the Council that runs it, as agencies of the government in which the American people is sovereign, must be removed from the special interest that now controls it.

The scope and purpose of the Museum must be expanded, from its present one-sided emphasis on foreign Jewish sufferings, real and imagined, in Europe during the 1930s and 1940s to a compassionate yet realistic concern for all victims, but above all for American victims, of historic injustice.

The Museum must be made a place where Americans of every heritage, and scholars of every viewpoint, may gather, educate, and be educated, without accusation and in the absence of propaganda. Until it is, the men and women who founded and built and suffered and fought and died for America, of every race, nationality and creed, will rest uneasy.

Notes

1. *The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Newsletter* (Washington, DC), August, 1990, "Survivors Play Major Role in Establishing the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum," p. 1. Meed is president of the American Gathering of Holocaust Survivors, and chairman of the Council's Content and Days of Remembrance committees.
2. In 1976, Professor Arthur Butz's book *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century: The Case Against the Presumed Extermination of European Jewry* was first published in England; in November 1978 Professor Robert Faurisson's article, "The Problem of the Gas Chambers," was published in the Paris daily *Le Monde*. Professor Butz has commented on the simultaneous and independent appearance of a variety of earlier academic criticisms of the wartime propaganda version of Jewry's ordeal in "The International Holocaust Controversy," *The Journal of Historical Review*, Spring 1980, pp. 5-22.
3. By resolution of the United Nations General Assembly on Nov. 10, 1975, Zionism was condemned as "a form of racism and racial discrimination."
4. Public Law 96-388, 1, Oct. 7, 1980, 94 Stat. 1547.
5. Statements regarding the Museum's permanent exhibit, except where otherwise noted, are derived from the floor plan and photographs in United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, a brochure published in 1991 by the USHMC.
6. *U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum Newsletter*, "French Resistance Fighter's Weapon Will Help Tell Story of Underground Movement," Sept. 1991, p. 4.
7. *U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum Newsletter*, "Russian Embassy Presents Flags of Liberating Units to Museum," Fall 1992, p. 6.
8. For the most complete account of relations between the Nazis and the Zionists, see Francis Nicosia, *The Third Reich and the Palestine Question*, (Austin: Univ. of Texas, 1985). See also: M. Weber, "Zionism and the Third Reich," *The Journal of Historical Review*, July-August 1993, pp. 29-37.
9. The most complete survey of Holocaust revisionist writings to date is Carlo Mattogno's "The Myth of the Extermination of the Jews -- Part II," in *The Journal of Historical Review*, Fall 1988, pp. 261-302.
10. *U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum Newsletter*, May 1992, "Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth," p. 6.
11. *US Holocaust Memorial Museum Newsletter*, Nov. 1991, "Wexner Family Donates \$5 Million to Fund Interactive Learning Center," p. 1.
12. The "identity cards" and other features of the Museum are described in the brochure cited in note 5, above. Lerman's statement is in a fund-raising letter mailed out by the Museum to potential Jewish contributors in 1991.
13. From "A Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom," 1779, in *Jefferson: Magnificent Populist*, edited by Martin Larson, (Greenwich, Conn.: Devin-Adair, 1981), p. 319.
14. "Speech at Peoria, Ill.," Oct. 16, 1854, in *The American Intellectual Tradition*, Vol. 1, edited by David Hollinger and Charles Capper (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1989), p. 382.

About the Author

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