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Revisionism, Interrupted Controversy Erupts on Holocaust Denial Scene

By Heidi Beirich

The small, bizarre world of Holocaust denial — where anti-Semites use shoddy science and tortured historical analyses to try to undermine what they sarcastically call the "Holohoax" — is in an uproar. The brouhaha was set off in January, when Mark Weber, who heads the Institute for Historical Review (IHR), the oldest and for decades the most important American denial outfit, published an explosive essay asking "How Relevant Is Holocaust Revisionism?"

Weber's unexpected conclusion: not very.

Weber's essay argues that the decades-long "Holocaust revisionist" effort has been "as much a hindrance as a help" in fighting what he has now decided is the real enemy — "Jewish-Zionist power." Weber advocates a shift in the movement toward "the real world struggle" against Jewish power. For Weber, debating the existence of the World War II Holocaust of European Jewry has become a waste of time.

Weber's recent speeches have reinforced his move from Holocaust denial — a sort of once-removed assault on the Jews — to a more direct attack on Jews and also Israel. At a July IHR meeting held in Costa Mesa, Calif., Weber hauled out plainly anti-Semitic conspiracy theories, complaining about those "who control political and cultural life, including the education system and the mass media." From the looks of his audience, Weber has ditched his usually professorial-looking denier allies for hard-core anti-Semites, neo-Nazis and heavily tattooed racist skinheads.

Weber did not respond to repeated requests for comment.

Weber's indictment of Holocaust denial as a lost and ultimately unimportant battle has fractured the denialist community and put Weber's future at IHR in doubt. Since its founding in 1978, IHR has been the leading American purveyor of denial propaganda. Created by veteran anti-Semite Willis Carto, IHR published the premier periodical on the topic, *The Journal of Historical Review*, with the look and feel of a real academic publication but without any of the usual academic standards. In 1993, Weber helped wrest IHR away from Carto in a nasty legal battle that even featured a standoff at the group's then-headquarters in Newport Beach, Calif.

Until Weber took over, IHR was known predominantly for two things: the *Journal* and, starting in 1979, nearly annual Holocaust denial conferences that included prominent movement figures and featured anti-Semites like Wolf Rudiger Hess, son of Hitler deputy Rudolf Hess, and Maj. Gen. Otto Ernst Remer, an officer under Hitler whose anti-Semitic activities resulted in his 1986 conviction under German hate-crime laws.

Both efforts would fall by the wayside once Weber took over IHR as its director in 1995. In 2002, Weber stopped publishing the *Journal* because of a "lack of staff and funding." IHR now has been reduced to little more than publishing Web commentary on news articles and various posts from Weber, who also gives a few speeches each year. And the group has held only two conferences since 1994.

Though Weber's failure to bring IHR's journal back from the dead had been criticized, most notably in a 2002 essay by imprisoned denier Germar Rudolf, most of Weber's fellow travelers kept their concerns private. Most importantly, IHR's board stood by him. But Weber's January essay changed that.

In the essay, Weber wrote that the movement had achieved "little success in convincing people that the familiar Holocaust story is defective." He berated denialists for being of little use in defeating the more serious problem facing the world — "a phenomenal increase in Jewish influence and power." Noting that IHR's sales of materials related to the Holocaust were

in steady decline while requests for interviews and materials on "the role of Jews in society" were on the rise, Weber argued that denial no longer played "a central role" in the battle against Jewish influence, which should now focus on fighting "Jewish-Zionist power."

Perhaps more heretically, Weber's essay went on to affirm that at least some of the Holocaust actually occurred. Citing Nazi Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels, Weber wrote, "Jews in Europe were, in fact, singled out during the war years for especially severe treatment." Weber concludes that Jews in Europe were "wiped out" and, when the war ended in 1945, most of them "were gone."

The Counterattack

Days after Weber posted his essay, the former editor of IHR's *Journal*, Theodore O'Keefe, mocked Weber for turning his back on "breakthroughs" — the result of years of hard work by deniers — in exchange for "a few more radio interviews and speaking invitations." O'Keefe assailed Weber for abandoning the truth for a "Halfocaust." He said Weber deserved no sympathy after "the responsibility that he has shirked, and the trust he has betrayed in his striving to replace veracity with expediency."

O'Keefe's sentiments were reiterated by many other deniers, including Arthur Butz, a well-known Holocaust denier who teaches engineering at Northwestern University and is the author of *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century: The Case Against the Presumed Extermination of European Jewry*. Butz wrote that "Weber is not a revisionist" and "not one of us." Richard Widmann, webmaster of the denialist Committee for Open Debate on the Holocaust (CODOH), said IHR "is no longer part of our struggle. The time has come to move on." And French denier Serge Thion reacted viscerally to Weber's use of the word "hindrance" to describe Holocaust denial. "A Hindrance? Certainly not," Thion wrote, adding that denial was a "hammer for many anvils."

In February, a more personal attack came from the wife of Ernst Zundel, a man who is a prolific neo-Nazi publisher and propagandist now serving time in Germany for Holocaust denial. The Zundels had been close to Weber, whom they at one time employed as a spokesman. Saddened by it all, Ingrid Rimland Zundel slammed Weber in her newsletter, *Power: Personal Opinions of Ingrid Zundel*. Under the title "'Friendly Fire' from unexpected quarters," Rimland Zundel denounced Weber for his "act of duplicity," "perplexing" views, and "having run IHR right into the ground." She also reproduced excerpts of several other attacks on Weber.

Rimland Zundel declined to comment on the conflict, telling the *Intelligence Report* that it was "a family quarrel."

The clearest condemnation of all came from Robert Faurisson, a French Holocaust denier who was fined for defamation by a French court in 1983 when his revisionist writings were found to violate hate-speech laws. In the March edition of CODOH's *Smith's Report*, Faurisson wrote a lengthy attack on Weber entitled "Mark Weber Must Resign from the Institute for Historical Review."

Faurisson demanded that Weber leave IHR and create a different institution to fight "Jewish-Zionist power." Faurisson implied that a cowardly Weber was leaving the movement for fear of being jailed, writing that Weber is "fully aware that it's always highly dangerous" to question the Holocaust. Faurisson's conclusion was that Weber "disgraced himself" and "must therefore resign."

By June, a new website had appeared under the title of "Mark Weber Must Go." That same month, both Weber and Bradley Smith, the American denier who founded and runs CODOH, were interviewed for a four-part story that ran in the pages of *Tablet*, a liberal online magazine of Jewish news, ideas and culture. Most of the story consisted of each man calling the other a fraud. Weber denounced Smith and Faurisson as having "their identities tied to Holocaust revisionism in a way that isn't healthy." The *Tablet* article did confirm, after years of rumors, that Weber indeed has a sister who converted to Judaism.

Weber & Friends

Though hot and heavy in the Holocaust denial community, the controversy over Weber's views didn't even come up at his July speech in Costa Mesa, Calif., where he spoke about the non-Jewish victims of World War II, or what he called "the unknown Holocaust of non-Jews," along with Jewish control of such things as the media. Weber also told the audience that

California now has a "third-world population" due to immigration from Latin America.

That seemed to suit the audience just fine and none of them asked him about his January essay denouncing Holocaust denial. That's probably because the hotel conference room where Weber spoke was filled with extremists who would certainly agree that the Jews in general are a better target than the Holocaust. A particularly notable audience member was Kevin MacDonald, the California State, Long Beach, professor who says that Jews are genetically driven to undermine white society by pushing liberal policies such as non-white immigration. Also there was white nationalist activist Jamie Kelso, who for years worked for former Klansman David Duke and, more recently, as a moderator of the racist website Stormfront.org.

The other speaker on the bill that day was David Irving, probably the best-known Holocaust denier in the world. Irving started his talk by alleging that the numbers of dead in the Allied bombing of Dresden, Germany, were severely undercounted. He then described a bizarre conspiracy involving Enigma coding machines and a massive British spy operation after the war that gave Britain access to the secret message traffic of several small nations in the Southern hemisphere. Telling the audience "many people in this room will not want to hear this," Irving, like Weber, admitted that more than 1.2 million Jews were killed at several camps. But he added that he thought this was all the work of Heinrich Himmler. Hitler, he said, merely wanted "to move Jews to Madagascar."

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