

September 18, 2006

Dear Professor Callahan,

You asked for some examples of outright lies that Norman Finkelstein has told or written.

I would like to point out from the outset that the ugly and false assertions that I will discuss below are not incidental to Finkelstein's purported scholarship; they are his purported scholarship. Finkelstein's entire literary catalogue is one preposterous and discredited ad hominem attack after another. By his own admission, he has conducted no original research, has never been published in a reputable, scientific journal, and has made no contributions to our collective historical knowledge. He is a defamer of individuals -- selected for their ideology -- and a spreader of false quotations, assertions, and propaganda. There is nothing scholarly about his writings. Although he claims to be a "forensic scholar," he limits his defamations to one ideological group and never applies his so-called "forensic" tools to his own work or to those who share his ideological perspective. One does not deserve the title of "forensic scholar" unless he is prepared to apply that science equally across the board. Finkelstein merely uses forensic tools available to any first-year college student to defame his ideological enemies. That is not forensic scholarship; it is propaganda. And he uses the imprimatur of whatever university affiliation he currently enjoys in order to try to bestow a seemingly-academic pedigree on his demonstrable lies. Unlike some other academics, who try to distinguish their scholarly work from their polemical writing, Finkelstein always uses his academic title, even in his most extreme polemical writing, such as the one accompanying the cartoon, attached and discussed below. Clearly he is trying to use the fine reputation of DePaul University to lend credibility to his otherwise discredited work.

Of course I am not in a position to refute much of what Finkelstein has said (for example, about Holocaust reparations, or about what is found in German archives). That work has been comprehensively done by others, such as Peter Novick, whose book *The Holocaust in American Life* Finkelstein has characterized as "the initial stimulus for [his] book." Novick has assessed Finkelstein's "scholarship" in the following terms: "As concerns particular assertions made by Finkelstein concerning reparations and restitution, and on other matters as well, the appropriate response is not (exhilarating) 'debate' but (tedious) examination of his footnotes. Such an examination reveals that many of those assertions are pure invention. [...] No facts alleged by Finkelstein should be assumed to be really facts, no quotation in his book should be assumed to be accurate, without taking the time to carefully compare his claims with the sources he cites.)" I suggest that you solicit a detailed letter from Professor Novick, or request that he appear in person before the appropriate faculty groups. (Novick's article is enclosed.) Another distinguished scholar, Omer Bartov of Brown University, characterized *The Holocaust Industry* as "irrational and insidious," a "conspiracy theory," "verg[ing] on paranoia," full of "dubious rhetoric and faulty logic," "indifference to historical facts," and "sensational 'revelations' and outrageous accusations."

Most of the writing I have done concerning Finkelstein has been aimed at exposing his hateful remarks about "American Jewish elites" ("all opinion-leaders, from the left to the right, are Jews"), the Middle East ("My chief regret is that I wasn't more forceful in defending Hezbollah ..."); his conspiracy theories (Schindler's List was filmed in order to

advance the interests of American Jews and Israel); and, of course, his slanders against me. Because of my support of Israel, he has compared me to "Adolf Eichman [sic]," accused me of expressing "Nazi moral judgments" and calling me a "raving maniac," "hoodlum," and "one of the world's great charlatans and frauds." He even accused me of "constitutionally incapable of saying anything that is true. I think that if a true word actually came out of [Dershowitz], he would probably implode." In his most recent article about me ("Should Alan Dershowitz Target Himself for Assassination"), Finkelstein collaborated with a cartoonist he regularly features on his website. The cartoon portrayed me as masturbating in rapturous joy while viewing images of dead Lebanese civilians on a TV set labeled "Israel peep show," with a Jewish Star of David prominently featured. It can be seen here:

<http://www.indybay.org/newsitems/2006/08/10/18296109.php>.

The cartoon aptly represents the content of Finkelstein's piece, which accuses me of being a "moral pervert" who "missed the climatic scene of his little peep show." This is simply disgusting, more suitable for a writer for Hustler than for an assistant professor writing under the imprimatur of a major research university. Finkelstein also claims quite absurdly that I "sanction mass murder" and "the extermination of the Lebanese people." And he calls me a Nazi not once, but twice, first saying that I subscribe to "Nazi ideology" and then comparing me to Nazi propagandist Julius Streicher, who was prosecuted at Nuremberg by my mentor Telford Taylor. This is consistent with his oft-mentioned claim, found on page 176 of *Beyond Chutzpah*, that "It is hard to make out any difference between the policy Dershowitz advocates and the Nazi destruction of Lidice, for which he expresses abhorrence-except that Jews, not Germans, would be implementing it." The trouble is that the policy and passage Finkelstein quotes actually says, "[Israel] would then publicly declare precisely how it will respond in the event of another terrorist act, such as by destroying empty houses in a particular village that has been used as a base for terrorists, and naming that village in advance." In Finkelstein's world, "destroying empty houses" in order to deter terrorism is the equivalent of genocide.

Here, though, are a few of some of the lies that I am absolutely confident the Finkelstein told.\*

#### 1. Burt Neuborne

Finkelstein actually tried to get Burt Neuborne, a professor of law at NYU and one of the country's top civil liberties and Supreme Court advocates, disbarred. The supposed grounds for disbarment were Neuborne's role in the Holocaust reparations cases against Swiss banks. He claims that Neuborne lied and blackmailed Swiss banks in the process of securing a \$1.25 billion settlement for survivors. His evidence was the "fact" that the Volcker report, an investigation into European banks' theft from survivors, found that "no evidence of systematic destruction of account records for the purpose of concealing past behavior has been found."

Neuborne's answered this false charge in a letter-to-the-editor of *The Nation*, dated December 25, 2006:

(New York City) Norman Finkelstein calls my work on the Swiss bank Holocaust case an exercise in blackmail. But the \$1.25 billion Swiss bank settlement on behalf of Holocaust victims cannot possibly be characterized as blackmail unless that term is distorted to include any payment made by a defendant who is afraid to go to trial. Did the lawyers put pressure on the Swiss banks? You bet we did. We threatened them with justice.

Finkelstein's principal claim is that I misstated the documentary record when I charged that Swiss banks systematically destroyed records of Holocaust deposits. Let's look at the document Finkelstein cites—the report of the Volcker committee, which conducted an intensive audit of the banks. The Volcker report finds that records for 2.8 million accounts opened during the Holocaust era had been completely destroyed by the Swiss banks (Volcker report, para. 20). The Volcker report calls the destruction of those records an "unfillable gap." Moreover, the Volcker report finds that almost all of the transaction records for the remaining 4.1 million accounts were also destroyed, leaving a record of an account's opening and closing, but no information about the account's size, or whether it had been plundered (Volcker report, para. 21). I call that a pretty good job of systematically destroying records, especially since, in the absence of records, the banks get to keep the money because Switzerland has no escheat law. It is true that under Swiss law, the banks were required to keep records for only ten years. But, having accepted deposits from Holocaust victims, and knowing that most Jewish depositors had failed to survive the Nazis, how can anyone defend the Swiss banks' widespread destruction of the records needed to trace the true ownership of the Holocaust funds?

Despite the immense hurdles created by the destruction of records, the Volcker report identified 46,000 Swiss bank accounts with a "probable or possible" connection with Holocaust victims. The names of 26,000 of the accounts are about to be published, and the federal court has set aside \$800 million to pay the owners of those funds. Neve Gordon, in his review of Finkelstein's book, suggests that the sum is exaggerated, but his figures dovetail closely with mine. The \$800 million for bank deposits includes an interest/inflation factor of 10 that the Volcker committee found was necessary to permit payment of current value. Everyone, including Raul Hilberg, agrees that Jewish deposits into Swiss banks on the eve of the Holocaust were at least \$80 million. Surely, the Swiss banks should not have the use of that money for sixty years without paying interest to the accounts' true owners. \$800 million is, therefore, a very conservative estimate of what the banks really owe. Finally, in a characteristically venomous charge, Finkelstein accuses me of "making a mockery of Jewish suffering during World War II," because I have estimated that 1 million victims of the Holocaust are still alive. In order to reach such a figure, Finkelstein argues that I must be diluting what it meant to suffer during the Holocaust. But, as usual, Finkelstein's obsession with criticizing anyone who acts on behalf of Holocaust survivors blinds him to the facts. My figure of 1 million victims was intended to include all surviving victims, not merely Jewish survivors. The German foundation Remembrance, Responsibility and the Future estimates that more than 1 million former slave and forced laborers are still alive and qualify for compensation. The fact is that the Holocaust did not affect only Jews. The Swiss settlement includes Sinti-Roma, Jehovah's Witnesses, the disabled and gays. The German foundation will distribute most of the slave/forced labor funds to non-Jews. About 130,000 Jewish survivors and about 900,000 non-Jewish victims are still alive. Norman Finkelstein accuses me of being a "main party" to seeking compensation for them. Thank you, Norman. I could not be prouder.

Burt Neuborne

(Enclosed please find Omer Bartov's New York Times review of The Holocaust Industry.)

## 2. Israeli Torture

Finkelstein repeatedly claims that Israel, despite outlawing any sort of coercive interrogation in 1999, systematically tortures and kills in cold blood Palestinian detainees. His favorite -- and indeed, often his sole -- evidence is an Israeli Supreme Court decision. Here is what he said in Chicago on March 18, 2004: "There was a famous case in 1995 of a Palestinian who was shaken to death while in detention. And nobody disputed the facts the Israeli pathologist's office, the forensic pathologists who were brought into the case, eventually it went to the Israeli High Court of Justice they all agreed. And I'm quoting now from the High Court of Justice Judgment : 'All agree that Harizad died from the shaking.'" If you go to Dershowitz's book, he discusses the case and says, quote, 'An independent inquiry found that he didn't die from the shaking, but from a previous illness.' That was just made up." (Emphasis added.)

It was Finkelstein who made up the quotation. The Supreme Court actually said that "the suspect expired after being shaken." The difference between "died from the shaking" and "expired after being shaken" is considerable, especially since the sentence that follows in the decision attributes the death to an extremely rare complication, and the sentence before summarizes the literature as having no examples of anyone dying from shaking. This is not a translation error. It is an example of a made-up quotation. Remember, Finkelstein said he was "quoting," not paraphrasing, yet the words he purports to quote simply do not exist. Finkelstein has never, to my knowledge, responded to this serious charge of fabricating a quotation from the Israeli Supreme Court.

Finkelstein's pattern of making up quotations, a pattern identified first by Professor Novick, should alone disqualify him from any tenured academic position.

## 3. Jews Lie About Being Holocaust Survivors

"I am not exaggerating when I say that 1 out of 3 Jews you stop in the street in New York will claim to be a survivor [of the Nazi Holocaust]."

I would ordinarily include this in a list of Finkelstein's wild and hysterical hyperboles. But he uses this figure often, and, as you see, he prefaces it be specifically saying that it is not an exaggeration.

Of course not even one in three Jews in New York is old enough to be a survivor. His statistic is not an exaggeration. It is an outright fabrication. Moreover, only a tiny percentage of those old enough claim to be survivors, and Finkelstein provides no proof that they are not being truthful. Imagine the reaction if he had said that one of three women falsely claim to be a survivor of rape.

## 4. Israel -- As A Matter of Policy -- Fetishizes Aryan-Looking People

In a interview published on Alexander Cockburn's Counterpunch, Finkelstein claimed that a number of non-Jewish Russians had been able to immigrate to Israel because "the Israeli establishment likes the blue eyed, blonde haired Aryan types as a racial group." It goes without saying that this is absolutely untrue. It's characteristic, though, of Finkelstein's drop-of-a-hat willingness to associate Israel with the Nazi racist ideology bizarre as it is from someone whose parents were Holocaust survivors is simply not justifiable on any rational basis. And it gets even stranger. Finkelstein then tried to substantiate his claim about the Israeli government's preference for "Aryans" by claiming that Leon Uris

gave his blond-haired and blue-eyed protagonist in his book Exodus the name "Ari" because it was short for "Aryan." Ari which means lion in Hebrew is about as classic as Hebrew names get, short for names that appear in the Bible many thousands of years before the word "Aryan" even found its way into the English language. Again, Finkelstein simply made it up.

#### 5. Daniel Goldhagen

Among the dozen or so Jewish writers whose careers Finkelstein has tried to destroy with the same accusations -- "fraud," "huxter," "shake-down artist," "plagiarist" -- he has only ever written a full book about one other: Daniel Goldhagen. Goldhagen did a masterful job of going point-by-point on Finkelstein's many lies and distortions. I'm attaching, below, a copy of Goldhagen's essay, "The New Discourse of Avoidance."

#### 6. I Don't Write My Own Books

Finkelstein asserts, and has said on many, many occasions, that my books are written for me by others. Here are some of the remarks Finkelstein has made about my supposed ghostwriters:

"I don't think he wrote the book [The Case for Israel]"; "I very much doubt he had read the book"; "There is no way he wrote the book"; "[Dershowitz] has come to the point where he's had so many people write so many of his books. You know, he just churns them out... [I]t's sort of like a Hallmark line for Nazis... [T]hey churn them out so fast that he has now reached a point where he doesn't even read them."

He characterized our single on-air interaction like this:

"So I kept saying to him, "Mr. Dershowitz I don't think you wrote the book." Now, if somebody really wrote the book you would expect a ferocious answer. Like the guy is going to go at you and want to throttle you. But he really didn't answer that way, because Alan knew he didn't write the book. And then I figure which I honestly believe don't believe he read the book. People think that I'm speaking cavalierly occasionally I do, but mostly in private. In public I want to be responsible for my words. And I said to him at one point, "Look Mr. Dershowitz, if you have any sense of self respect you would just say, 'I didn't write the book and I had no time to read it. I'm sorry.'" But I'm serious. There is no way he wrote the book..."

Here is the actual transcript of the conversation in which Finkelstein claims that I essentially acknowledge his absurd charge that I didn't write The Case for Israel by not vigorously answering it:

NORMAN FINKELSTEIN: I read your book. Or the book you purport to have written.

ALAN DERSHOWITZ: Now you claim somebody else wrote it?

NORMAN FINKELSTEIN: I hope so. For your sake I truly hope you did not write this book.

ALAN DERSHOWITZ: I proudly wrote it.

NORMAN FINKELSTEIN: I think the honorable thing for you to do would be to say I didn't write the book, I had no time to read it. I'm sorry.

ALAN DERSHOWITZ: I wrote every word of it.

He repeated the above false remarks even after I sent his publisher my handwritten manuscript. I write all of my books \*by hand\* and have the manuscripts. I stand ready to send them to you for your

perusal. Finkelstein knows full well that I write my books by hand and that I wrote The Case for Israel. Yet he continues to state the opposite because it draws reactions from his skewed college audiences.

It should also be noted that I did not have a preexisting feud with Finkelstein prior to his claims that I don't write my books. I'd quoted him a few times in The Case for Israel, but had never met him and certainly had no prior interaction with him.

After claiming that I didn't write The Case for Israel, Finkelstein hedged his accusation by saying that if I \*did\* write the book, I plagiarized it. Of course I was completely cleared of that charge by an independent Harvard University investigation. I am not answering that charge here, because much of it turns on the definition of plagiarism: whether it is proper to find a quotation in one source, check it against the original source, and cite to the original, rather than the secondary, source. The Chicago Manual of Style says that that is the preferred method of citation; Finkelstein calls that plagiarism. Indeed, many academics whom Finkelstein admires -- including Noam Chomsky -- use precisely this method of citation. Of course Finkelstein would never apply his forensic scholarship to question their citation methodology. As he himself admitted, his first foray into forensic scholarship occurred when he and Noam Chomsky agreed to "expose" Joan Peters for writing a book about whose substantive conclusions the two disagreed.

There are also issues of fact involved in Finkelstein's accusation. Some of the sources he claimed that I found in Joan Peters's book were quotations I had been using for decades before Peters even wrote her book, including a quotation by Mark Twain and the British Peel Commission. For a full response to Finkelstein's plagiarism accusation, you can read Chapter 16 of The Case for Peace, accessible here:

[http://www.law.harvard.edu/faculty/dershowitz/Chapter\\_16.pdf#search=%22Alan%20Dersh](http://www.law.harvard.edu/faculty/dershowitz/Chapter_16.pdf#search=%22Alan%20Dersh)

## 6. I Support Ethnic Cleansing

Finkelstein also likes to say that I support ethnic cleansing, or in the alternative, that I "If you open up [Dershowitz's] book, Chutzpah, he says that, well as far as I'm concerned, he says, ethnic cleansings are, quote, a fifth-rate moral issue, and no different - he says, and they're analogous I'm now quoting him they're now, ethnic cleansings are analogous to massive urban renewal."  
(Vancouver, May 15, 2004) (emphasis added).

This quotation is totally made up. I never said that ethnic cleansing is "analogous to massive urban renewal." He misquotes something I said about an entirely different matter: the movement of people as part of a post-conflict "political solution," such as what occurred after World War II when "approximately fifteen million ethnic Germans" were moved from Czechoslovakia and other Eastern European nations to Germany as part of an international effort to produce increased stability. This is not ethnic cleansing, but, as I wrote, it "may constitute a human rights violation" as may the movement of Palestinians following the Arab attack on Israel in 1947-48. (See Chutzpah, p. 215.)

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The above are just a few representative examples of Finkelstein's disqualifying academic dishonesty. There are of course many, many more examples of simple historical absurdities -- for example, he claims that

Israel started the 1973 Yom Kippur War -- that are Finkelstein's bread and butter. But the above are some of the more verifiably false.

I am also attaching the "speaking packet" that my office has sent to schools requesting information from me about Norman Finkelstein. It includes a list of preposterous quotations, lies, and damning comments about Finkelstein from mainstream, reputable sources. It also includes my response to Finkelstein's most recent book, Beyond Chutzpah.

And finally, here are two student opinion pieces about Finkelstein, the first from the Harvard Law Record ("Justice for Palestine or Jew-Baiting"), the second from the Yale Daily News ("Finkelstein and the YCIAS: Misusing Yale, Abusing Students"):

<http://www.hlrecord.org/media/paper609/news/2005/10/20/Opinion/Amicus.Curiae.Justice>

A school should also take into account the fact that Finkelstein is a classic anti-Semite who has invoked anti-Jewish stereotypes.\*\* He says in his book Beyond Chutzpah, "Should people like Abraham Foxman, Edgar Bronfman, and Rabbi Israel Singer [who are prominent Jewish leaders] get a free ride because they resemble stereotypes straight out of Der Stürmer?" Can you imagine a professor issuing a similar description of a woman or a Muslim, or describe the Pope according to an anti-Catholic stereotype? In fact, just a quick check of his website today, Monday, shows that in his blog headlines alone, Finkelstein has compared Israel to Nazi Germany twice, American Jews to the mafia twice and to the KKK once, and has called Elie Wiesel, "[p]ersona summa creepa." And those are just the headlines of his most recent posts! Perhaps most notably, Finkelstein has called American Jews "parasites" and blamed Jews themselves for anti-Semitism. "Alongside Israel ["American Jewish elites"] are the main fomenters of anti-Semitism in the world today... They need to be stopped." Were he not Jewish, these statements would clearly disqualify him from tenure. If he made comparable statements about Muslims or Catholics, he would be disqualified. The fact that he is a Jew making anti-Semitic statements does not mitigate his bigotry. For purposes of scholarship, the important point is that, because of his bigotry, he has forever disqualified himself from being taken seriously on issues of Jews, the Jewish State, Jewish leaders, or the Jewish religion.

In the end, there is no Finkelstein "scholarship"; there are only false attacks.

Please let me know if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

Alan Dershowitz

\* Sometimes there are differences involving interpretation of words, where reasonable people might disagree on the meanings of words used. I am not speaking of those sorts of disagreements such as Finkelstein's statement concerning his mother:

Still, if she didn't cross fundamental moral boundaries, I glimpsed from her manner of pushing and shoving in order to get to the head of a queue, which mortified me, how my mother must have fought Hobbes's war of all against all many a time in the camps. Really, how else would she have survived?

I interpreted that question -- If she did not "cross fundamental moral boundaries ... how else would she have survived?" -- as Finkelstein questioning whether his mother had crossed such boundaries, that is, whether she might well have collaborated or violated other moral norms in the camps. When I pointed out that Finkelstein even questioned his own mother's survival story, Finkelstein savagely attacked me for claiming that his mother might have been a Nazi collaborator (when of course he was the one who raised that question, not me). Finkelstein disputes that he was raising such suspicion about his mother. Perhaps. It is a matter of interpretation upon which reasonable people could disagree. I leave these issues out of the present letter.

\*\* I do not think that harsh criticism of Israel, or even strident anti-Zionism, is tantamount to anti-Semitism. Nor do I think, though, that harsh criticism of Israel exempts one from being an anti-Semite if that charge can be independently established. In my book *The Case for Peace*, 139 - 41, I outline thirty factors that can be used to distinguish anti-Zionism from anti-Semitism.

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The New Discourse of Avoidance

by

Daniel Jonah Goldhagen

Before my book, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, was published in Germany last year, many launched attacks on it that have since been shown to be gross misrepresentations of its contents. *Der Spiegel* was at the forefront of the initial assault, publishing a lengthy cover story, "A People of Demons?" Its central theme was the fictitious charge that I had revived the notion of "collective guilt," in which *Der Spiegel* tried to blacken my character, among other ways, by likening me to an American who during the war wrote that Germans should all be sterilized. (1) *Der Spiegel* then published another fictitious story claiming that the German translation of my book was cooked, which was such obvious nonsense that it was ignored in Germany. (2) These stories did, however, give a hint as to the depths of dishonesty to which some would sink in order to impugn a book that told long neglected truths that many desperately wished not to hear.

When my book was finally published in German, several things became clear to the German public. The initial attacks constituted a discourse of avoidance that deflected attention from the real issues, the new materials, and the conclusions that my book brings forth. It was also obvious that many of the critics simply did not want to discuss these central issues that had hitherto never been forcefully put before the public: Why did so many ordinary Germans (however many did) support and even participate in the persecution of the Jews and how did long existing anti-Semitism (however widespread it was) contribute to their actions?

Having failed with its earlier attempts, *Der Spiegel* is now resorting to using a notorious anti-Zionist ideologue, Norman Finkelstein, to launch a

new discourse of avoidance, with its article "Goldhagen -- a Source Trickster?" (3) Finkelstein's piece, "Daniel Jonah Goldhagen's 'Crazy' Thesis," is a fifty page screed (stretched out over one hundred pages in the book version to lend it more gravity), which relies systematically on distortions, misrepresentations, out-of-context quotations, and outright inventions, to present a fallacious case that I misrepresent the secondary sources and that my arguments are self-contradictory. (4) Der Spiegel, in making its case for Finkelstein's "devastating result," obviously chose to present what it believes are the strongest examples from Finkelstein's piece. So looking at the "best" that Finkelstein has to offer is sufficient to reveal the general character of his work.

One of Finkelstein's examples concerns the ritual murder charges (that Jews killed Christian children for ritual purposes) during the nineteenth century, and that twelve of the charges eventually led to trials between 1867 and 1914. I bring them up as a small part of a larger discussion of how widespread, vehement, and hallucinatory the anti-Semitism was in nineteenth century Germany (and Austria) where such canards had widespread currency. Ignoring the other voluminous evidence regarding the wide scope and great intensity of anti-Semitism in Germany during this period, Finkelstein zooms in on the fact that prosecutors could not prove that Jews had actually committed these invented crimes (these cases actually went to trial!) and concludes that this shows that Germans were not anti-Semitic, and I should have said as much. (5) He writes as if "ritual murder" trials of Jews had to yield guilty verdicts before one is permitted to conclude that the widespread currency of such charges in Germany indicated anything at all about the character of anti-Semitism among its people. Based on the relevant German secondary sources, which Finkelstein's footnotes indicate he has not read, I write: "Even liberal newspapers took to printing all manner of rumors and accusations against Jews, including ritual murder charges, as if they had been proven facts." (6) Finkelstein would have people believe that this is either not true or irrelevant to the discussion of how widespread and hallucinatory anti-Semitism was in Germany, and that the only thing that matters about the routine ritual murder talk and accusations is that a court of law -- where actual evidence must be presented -- could not convict any Jew on the charge.

Finkelstein also attacks my discussion of the anti-emancipation petition campaign in Bavaria in 1849. (7) In the original, New Left Review version of his piece, he uses a qualification that I present in my own endnote, where I openly discuss the complexity of the events and the contested nature of some of the evidence, to suggest that what I write in the text is a misrepresentation! Moreover, in order to make his case, he violates scholarly practice by presenting another scholar's words describing the campaign, "spontaneous, extremely broad-based, and genuine..." as mine, for which he attacks me as misrepresenting the real nature of the campaign. (8) This conclusion about the nature of the opposition to Jewish emancipation is from James Harris' exhaustive, definitive book on the subject, *The People Speak! Anti-Semitism and Emancipation in Nineteenth-Century Bavaria*. I write: "James Harris' study of the petition campaign concludes that, in one region of Bavaria, five to six times more Germans opposed than favored Jewish emancipation." (9) But Finkelstein -- whose notes indicate that he has not even consulted Harris, the expert on the subject -- declares not only the opposite to be true but also that I have misrepresented the record.

After I exposed this example of Finkelstein's unscholarly legerdemain in the *Frankfurter Rundschau*, Finkelstein doctored this section of his piece for its sanitized publication in *A Nation on Trial*. Finkelstein's New Left

Review version on p. 48 reads: "To further document the extent of German anti-Semitism, Goldhagen recalls a 'spontaneous, extremely broad-based, and genuine' petition campaign in Bavaria opposing the full equality of Jews. Yet the corresponding note tucked in the book's back pages reveals that..." The same passage in A Nation on Trial on p. 21 reads: "Quoting a scholarly study, Goldhagen recalls a 'spontaneous, extremely broad-based, and genuine' petition campaign in Bavaria opposing the full equality of Jews. Yet in the corresponding note buried in the book's back pages, Goldhagen himself cites credible evidence that..." So Finkelstein, in his original falsified version, has my note "revealing" that my attempt to show that my statement about anti-Semitism's scope is a misrepresentation. In the revised version -- which was doctored after Finkelstein got caught -- Finkelstein has me quoting a "scholarly study" and then in my note "cit[ing] credible evidence" that casts doubt on the general statement. His now revised section, in which he still leaves out the relevant evidence, is still a misrepresentation of my book, of Harris' work, and the historical record -- though as damning criticism of me, it hardly makes sense.

Finkelstein has effectively conceded with his surreptitious alteration of his text after the exposure of his falsehood that he fabricated the original New Left Review example of my supposed misrepresentation of the record. He does so without informing the reader. And when one sees the real text of my book, which follows the conclusions of James Harris, it becomes clear that Finkelstein's charge here is just a calumny. If Finkelstein were, in a similar manner, to change every one of his misrepresentations of text so that his piece's contents would accord with the actual relevant texts, then his "textually" based case would evaporate. It is worth emphasizing that this is one of Finkelstein's strongest, most unassailable examples, which, in so many ways, does nothing more than reveal that Finkelstein has delegitimized himself and has himself proven that he has no credibility.

A third example concerns a section in my book on the widespread posting of signs in German cities and towns declaring "Jews Not Wanted." From that section, Finkelstein quotes, out of context, three words, "Germans posted signs," suggesting that I covered up that it was really "Nazis" who did so.(10) The section in my book begins: "For the next two years, Germans inside and outside the government succeeded in making life for Jews in Germany... all but unbearable.... During this period, the society-wide attack proceeded in an uncoordinated manner. Some of its aspects were mandated from above, some initiated from below, the latter generally, though not always, by avowed Nazis. The main, though not sole, initiators of assaults upon Jews were the men of the SA, the brown shirt shock troops of the regime." So I make it clear here that they were mainly Nazis, specifically saying that most of them were SA men. I then write: "During the 1930s, towns throughout Germany issued official prohibitions on Jews entering them, and such signs were a near ubiquitous feature of the German landscape."(11) These passages make it clear that it was principally Nazis who were responsible (who else was in a position to make "official prohibitions"?), so Finkelstein's attack that I cover up that the signs came from Nazis is a fiction, which he makes by quoting three words out of context.

The fourth example regards his falsification of evidence concerning my use of a source. The compiler of Hitler's public pronouncements, Max Domarus believed that Hitler's many public declarations that the war would end in the extermination of the Jews was put forward within the context of foreign policy because, in Domarus' view, Hitler believed that the extermination would not be approved of in Germany. After Finkelstein

quotes this, he writes: "Yet, Goldhagen writes: 'Hitler announced many times, emphatically, that the war would end in the extermination of the Jews. The killing met with general understanding, if not approval.' The endnote refers to Max Domarus." (12) With this Finkelstein, as he does throughout his article, contends that I appeal to the authority of other authors when they say the opposite of what I maintain. The texts of my book and Domarus' book show that Finkelstein has invented this notion in order to invent yet another false charge against me.

The Domarus work to which I refer is a multivolume compilation of Hitler's speeches and proclamations. It contains an introduction by Domarus, where he presents a different interpretation from mine of how to understand Hitler's not entirely consistent statements. Finkelstein falsely suggests that I cite Domarus ("the endnote refers readers to Max Domarus") as a supporter of my interpretation while concealing that he actually has a different view; yet my book is as clear as can be -- following standard scholarly practice -- that I am not citing Domarus, the interpreter, but referring to the materials that he has compiled. The endnote reference mark in my book is placed after my sentence "Hitler announced many times, emphatically, that the war would end in the extermination of the Jews," (13) which is an undisputed fact. The single page in Domarus' book which I cite in this note is vol. 1, p. 41. It contains some of these announcements and references to others. My sentence subsequent to the endnote reference mark, "The killings met with general understanding, if not approval," is clearly my view, which I spend the next four hundred pages substantiating. There is no reference or appeal to Domarus' views or authority. The view of Domarus that Finkelstein cites is not on the page that I cite but on vol. 1, p. 37. So Finkelstein has taken an endnote reference -- which indicates exactly and only where readers can find the relevant quotations from Hitler -- and invented the notion that it comes after a sentence in my book where I state my own interpretation of the data. It is on the basis of Finkelstein's own deception that he then attacks my integrity. For Finkelstein to make this and his many other charges seem plausible, he must engage in this sort of falsification, which he does again and again. Concocting these sorts of falsifications requires effort and ingenuity.

It is only through such wholesale falsification of evidence that Finkelstein can give surface plausibility to his attack. His two principal charges are, on the face of it, absurd. The first is that I have falsified secondary sources. After hundreds of articles have been written about my book -- including very critical ones, some by scholars in the field who are the authors of the secondary sources that Finkelstein cites -- suddenly Finkelstein, a man who is a self-proclaimed amateur in the field, for the first time, "discovers" my alleged transgression. His second charge is that my argument falls apart through internal contradiction. Prior to Finkelstein's second "discovery," one of the standard criticisms of the book is that its argument was too tight, too neat, seamless. Finkelstein can make this second argument seem plausible only through out-of-context quotation, the manifest twisting of meaning, and blatant misrepresentation. This is also his standard technique for inventing the aspersion that I have misused sources.

In addition to misrepresenting the contents of my book and the secondary literature, Finkelstein relies on a second technique of deception throughout. He finds an instance where a scholar disagrees with my interpretation about some point. He then asserts, as if it is uncontested fact, that such a disagreement shows that I have falsified two things. The first is my conclusions. It is an assumption of his entire piece that whenever a disagreement over interpretation exists between any scholar and

me 1) that the other scholar is automatically correct, 2) that I know it, and 3) that I have willfully hidden it. He typically presents other scholars' interpretations of data as facts, which makes it seem as if my putting forward a different position is to deny uncontested facts.

My second alleged falsification is of the work of others. He writes as if any time one uses a single fact that is contained in another book, it creates an obligation to accept its author's interpretation of that fact and on seemingly all other matters as well. No scholar does this.(14) (My book is not a historiography of the scholarship on the Holocaust but a study of the Holocaust itself which already has 125 pages of endnotes without the additional endless historiographical discussions that the man who cannot read most of the sources demands.) That my interpretations and conclusions, on small and large points, often differ from those of other scholars is extremely well known -- after all my book is based on new evidence and new interpretations, and I say at the beginning that it revises central notions about the Holocaust. That these differences exist, I also frequently state explicitly in my book and refer readers to alternative views. Virtually every reviewer of the book has also stated that my book departs from existing interpretations.

Without these two central techniques of falsification, Finkelstein would have no critique to write other than one which merely expressed his ideological aversion for my book. The examples discussed here are, according to Der Spiegel's choice, Finkelstein's strongest, most scholarly, and presumably most devastating ones. Yet they are so blatant in their violation of scholarly practice that they show that nothing can be believed in Finkelstein's piece without first comparing his text against my original text and whatever sources are relevant, including, of course, the enormous number of sources, primary and secondary -- which Finkelstein pretends do not exist -- which support my conclusions and which are cited in my book.(15) Undertaking such verification would show that Finkelstein's violations of scholarly practice and rectitude, found in the examples discussed here, are typical of and repeated throughout his piece. It would also show that his piece is nothing more than the ideological tract that he all but announced it to be in the last section of its original publication in New Left Review (discussed below), which consists of an anti-Zionist diatribe and wild inventions about, and denunciations of, Holocaust studies.

Finkelstein's gross misrepresentation of my book is just one indication that his attack on it has little to do with any knowledge of, and concern for, scholarship on the Holocaust and everything to do with his burning political agenda. Here are the facts about the German history and Holocaust "expert" Finkelstein. None of his previous published books and articles are on German history or the Holocaust. Even though the primary material and critical secondary material are in German, he does not cite a single German source because he does not even read German. Nevertheless, the neophyte Finkelstein makes a string of pronouncements (and errors) about what the sources prove, all the while pretending that the enormous amount of evidence that contradicts his wishful assertions and ideological pronouncements do not exist.

None of this is surprising, since Finkelstein's published work has been in the "field" of anti-Zionism. In an earlier article, Finkelstein argued that Israel is as criminal as Saddam Hussein's Iraq, the state that decimated Kuwait and systematically slaughtered Kurds and Shiites.(16) Elsewhere, he has written, "I can't imagine why Israel's apologists [those who defend Israel against such charges] would be offended by a comparison with the Gestapo," suggesting that those who supported Israel should be

flattered by the comparison. (17)

Finkelstein's attack on my book flows from his earlier work in a manner that suggests that, in order to write it, he did not even have to consult the sketchy source base that he did. His piece about my book in New Left Review ends with a five page anti-Zionist diatribe in which he argues that non-German scholars of the Holocaust are Zionist propagandists whose work legitimizes Israel's existence "which is celebrated as a bastion of Western Civilization doing battle on the front lines with and, against, all odds, smashing the Arab hordes." (18) According to Finkelstein, not only my book but all of what he terms "Holocaust studies" is "mainly a propaganda enterprise." (19) Thus, Finkelstein writes: "'The Holocaust' is in effect the Zionist account of the Nazi holocaust." (20) What amounts to an international Zionist conspiracy even allegedly goes so far as to silence dissenting voices with something Finkelstein invents, called "the 'Holocaust Studies' index," which supposedly proscribes works that diverge from the alleged Zionist propagandistic position, as the Catholic Church once did.

Finkelstein fabricates the whopper that I am now at the cutting edge of this Zionist conspiracy: "Seen through Goldhagen's effectively ultra-Zionist lens, in the dialectic of anti-Semitism, not only can Gentiles do no good but Jews can do no evil." Thus, Finkelstein goes far beyond the phony "collective guilt" charge with new, invented, monstrous allegations that I believe that no non-Jew can ever do good, that all non-Jews are "potential if not actual homicidal anti-Semites," and that Jews can do no evil. He also writes that "the essence of Goldhagen's thesis" is "that only deranged perverts could perpetrate a crime so heinous as the Final Solution."

Those who are the least bit familiar with my book know that it emphasizes that we must restore the humanity to the perpetrators of the Holocaust and recognize that they were ordinary people from all walks of life, who, like other genocidal killers (e.g., in Turkey and in Rwanda), acted upon their beliefs. Those who are familiar with my statements about postwar Germany, including in my book itself, know that I am an admirer of the Federal Republic of Germany, where anti-Semitism has declined enormously. Anyone who knows any of my clearly stated views on these and other subjects will also know that Finkelstein's allegations, including that I think Germans are "crazy" and "deranged perverts," are wild inventions.

And his "evidence" is no better. Finkelstein's hollow practice, which consists of his customary techniques of falsification documented here, flows from his ideological pronouncements: Finkelstein, in the cause of anti-Zionism, declares Holocaust studies, and work that shows that the Jewish people were persecuted because they were hated, to be "propaganda." Some of these clear statements of Finkelstein's self-discrediting ideological views were excised from the version of Finkelstein's piece that Henry Holt published in A Nation on Trial. A comparison of the last section of the versions in New Left Review (pp. 82-87) and in A Nation on Trial (pp. 87-100) reveals this cover-up. It is not hard to believe that the publisher would want to conceal Finkelstein's true views, views of the sort which, heretofore, had been confined to the publications of fringe groups. If the publisher had included in the book the views that Finkelstein has so stridently expressed about "Holocaust studies" being propaganda and the like, then Finkelstein and the entire publishing enterprise would have been exposed by Finkelstein's own ideological pronouncements to be the unscholarly, dishonest polemic that it is; Henry Holt would have immediately delegitimized its own publication.

Imagine that someone would write that all or most German scholarship on the Holocaust is mainly "propaganda" and would attack a German scholar in the most vicious of terms. Does anyone believe that Der Spiegel would pretend that such a person is an expert voice of scholarly probity and reason, and would devote many pages to his attacks on a scholar? Would Henry Holt? But when Finkelstein, a man with an explicit political agenda who has never written about the Holocaust, writes the same about the scholarship of Jews -- which is what he makes clear he means by "Holocaust studies" (the occasional, in his view, exceptional Jewish scholar of the Holocaust notwithstanding) -- Der Spiegel and now Henry Holt present him as the crown witness.

Der Spiegel, in its initial attack on my book, used the irrelevant facts of my identity to suggest that I have other than scholarly motives. In its current attack, it uses the exact same irrelevant facts about Finkelstein (as Finkelstein does himself) but this time to portray Finkelstein, the anti-Zionist crusader and conspiracy theorist, as a man above suspicion, who could not possibly have any agenda other than telling the world the truth about the Holocaust! Henry Holt and those who support the publication of *A Nation on Trial* present Finkelstein in the same manner. With the justification that Finkelstein's parents are survivors of the Holocaust, Der Spiegel tells the unwitting reader: "It is certain that Finkelstein has no ulterior motives in making his attack." Henry Holt has now tried to foist the same deception on what it hopes remains an unsuspecting public.

End Notes:

1. Der Spiegel, May 20, 1996, pp. 48-77.
2. "'Riesige Mehrheit,'" Der Spiegel, August 12, 1996, p. 42.
3. "Goldhagen -- ein Quellenstrickser?" Der Spiegel, August 11, 1997, pp. 156-158.
4. Published in *A Nation on Trial: The Goldhagen Thesis and Historical Truth* (New York: Owl Books, 1998), pp. 1-100. The earlier version, which Henry Holt sanitized in order to make it more presentable, is to be found in *New Left Review*, July/August, 1997, pp. 39-87.
5. *A Nation on Trial*, p. 21.
6. *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, p. 64.
7. *A Nation on Trial*, p. 21.
8. *New Left Review*, p. 48.
9. See James F. Harris, *The People Speak! Anti-Semitism and Emancipation in Nineteenth-Century Bavaria* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), p. 169.
10. *A Nation on Trial*, p. 40.
11. *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, pp. 91-92.
12. *A Nation on Trial*, p. 30.
13. *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, p. 8. That Hitler would repeatedly assert publicly, for the entire nation, that he would annihilate the Jewish people, immediately casts doubt on Domarus' notion that Hitler was convinced that the majority of the German people and of the members of the Nazi Party would "resist" such a program -- if he had believed this, then why would he keep announcing and emphasizing it both before and while he was annihilating the Jews?
14. Domarus' view of how widespread anti-Semitism was in Germany prior to the Nazis' assumption of power is on p. 38: "At the time National Socialism was beginning to take hold, it was widely held that the Jews were responsible for every mishap in Germany from the early Middle Ages to the 20th century." This is a view similar to my own, which Finkelstein,

against overwhelming and voluminous evidence, denies and accuses me of inventing. According to Finkelstein's own disingenuous accusatory practice, his reliance on Domarus elsewhere means that he is obliged to present this view of Domarus and, since Finkelstein has not, he has therefore falsified a secondary source.

15. So, on anti-Semitism, which Finkelstein would have people believe was neither very widespread nor particularly virulent, Werner Jochmann, the leading scholar of anti-Semitism in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Germany writes: "A wealth of examples shows how, in the [18]90's, anti-Semitism infiltrated in this way into every last citizens' association, penetrating folk clubs and cultural societies." After surveying anti-Semitism in Germany from 1914 to 1924, Jochmann concludes "that already in the first years of the republic the anti-Semitic flood had inundated all dams of legality. Still greater was the devastation in the spiritual realm. Even the democratic parties and the governments of the republic believed that they could escape the pressure being exerted on them if they recommended to the Jews restraint in political and social life, and deported or interned the East European Jews." See Hitler's *Willing Executioners*, pp. 72, 84. For Jochmann's devastating documentation of the ubiquity and virulence of anti-Semitism in Germany, see the original essays, "Structure and Functions of German Anti-Semitism, 1878-1914," in Herbert A. Strauss, ed., *Hostages of Modernization: Studies on modern Antisemitism, 1870-1933/39* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1993); "Die Ausbreitung des Antisemitismus in Deutschland, 1914-1923," in *Gesellschaftskrise und Judenfeindschaft in Deutschland, 1870-1945* (Hamburg: Hans Christians Verlag, 1988); and the other chapters of *Gesellschaftskrise und Judenfeindschaft in Deutschland, 1870-1945*.

16. "Israel and Iraq: A Double Standard in the Application of International Law," *Monthly Review* 43, 3 (July-August 1991).

17. Quoted in John Dirlík, "Canadian Jewish Organizations Charged with Stifling Campus Debate," *The Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*. Finkelstein's "scholarship" in his own area of expertise, *The Rise and Fall of Palestine: A Personal Account of the Intifada Years* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), received the following sobering evaluation in *Kirkus Reviews* (September 30, 1996): "Another contribution to the vast body of propagandistic literature (produced by both sides) that has helped to block a balanced discussion of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict... this book is fatally compromised by a radical anti-Israeli animus. In the service of his bias, Finkelstein sometimes distorts history, as in his ludicrous claim that 'Israel's founding father, David Ben-Gurion, envisioned that the future state would incorporate the West Bank and Gaza, Jordan, the Golan Heights, and Lebanon,' and his assertion that 'it was Yasir Arafat's acceptance of the two-state solution that triggered Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982.' There is no evidence for the latter argument." The reviewer then informs the reader of the basic facts that show the falsity of Finkelstein's account of the partition: Ben-Gurion accepted the UN's 1947 partition plan, which was rejected by all the surrounding Arab states. The reviewer continues: "In support of his positions, Finkelstein sometimes cites himself, sometimes such extreme critics of Israeli policies as Noam Chomsky and Alexander Cockburn, and almost never a meticulous scholar at home in both Hebrew and Arabic sources, such as Benny Morris. This work may interest those who are already convinced that Israel is a kind of neocolonialist state." The reviewer concludes with the recommendation that those who want to get "a more balanced and substantial view" of the sources of the conflict should look elsewhere.

18. *New Left Review*, p. 84; *A Nation on Trial*, p. 92.

19. *New Left Review*, p. 83; excised from *A Nation on Trial*.

20. *New Left Review*, p. 84; *A Nation on Trial*, p. 94.

21. *New Left Review*, p. 83; doctored in *A Nation on Trial*, p. 89.

22. New Left Review, p. 85; excised from A Nation on Trial.
23. New Left Review, p. 86; A Nation on Trial, p. 98.
24. See, for example, my speech "Modell Bundesrepublik: National History, Democracy, and Internationalization in Germany," available at this website.
25. "Holocaust studies first flourished in the wake of the June 1967 Arab-Israeli war... Jewish intellectuals suddenly discovered the Jewish state, now celebrated as a bastion of Western Civilization doing battle on the front lines with and, against, all odds, smashing the Arab hordes. They also suddenly discovered the Nazi genocide. A tiny cottage industry before 1967, Holocaust studies began to boom" (New Left Review, p. 84; A Nation on Trial, p. 92 for the amended version). It should come as no surprise that the man who would have people believe that the Germans who tortured, brutalized, and killed Jews were not anti-Semites, that whatever enmity existed against Jews was partly the Jews' own fault (he derides the notion that Jews were "innocent" in the Germans' genocidal assault on them), would also like people to believe that when Jews study the systematic attempt to annihilate the Jewish people, resulting in the death of one-third of the world's Jews, they do so not because of any genuine interest in the world historical catastrophe but because of a desire -- that Finkelstein has himself concocted and imputes to them -- to serve Zionism.

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Peter Novick's review of The Holocaust Industry  
'Offene Fenster und Tueren,'  
Sueddeutsche Zeitung, February 7, 2001.[1]

Last summer, after the initial publication of Norman Finkelstein's The Holocaust Industry in English, there was said to be something called a "Finkelstein debate" in Germany. Now that the book has appeared in German translation, we will perhaps see this renewed. But it is hard to know what there is in The Holocaust Industry, then or now, that is "debatable."

Finkelstein's assertion that in negotiations with Swiss banks and German industrial corporations inflated numbers were often tossed around by claimants is hardly "debatable." It is simply a fact that this was the case--as is the fact that, from the other side, deflated numbers were presented. Similarly, it is an undebatable fact that heavy-handed pressure tactics were sometimes employed on behalf of the claimants--a response to intransigence and delaying tactics on the part of the banks and corporations. One could certainly wish that the negotiations had been conducted differently; wish, especially, that all these matters had been disposed of decades ago. But they weren't: another undebatable fact. In any case, all of this is widely known, and widely-deplored: what was there, what is there, to debate?

As concerns particular assertions made by Finkelstein concerning reparations and restitution, and on other matters as well, the appropriate response is not (exhilarating) "debate" but (tedious) examination of his footnotes. Such an examination reveals that many of those assertions are pure invention.

Among his more startling claims is that the treasury of the World Jewish Congress has "amassed no less than 'roughly \$7 billion' in compensation monies." Finkelstein's source for this startling revelation is an article in FAZ which reported the very unstartling fact that the WJC was holding discussions about how such monies might be distributed if and when they received. This is not just carelessness on Finkelstein's part, since he knew when he wrote the book that the WJC had not received any such funds: deliberate deception. (Examples could be multiplied. No facts alleged by

Finkelstein should be assumed to be really facts, no quotation in his book should be assumed to be accurate, without taking the time to carefully compare his claims with the sources he cites.)

Or is the issue in the "Finkelstein Debate" his overall thesis, of which the discussion of reparations and restitution is merely an illustration? That larger thesis is clearly stated in his book and is easily summarized. "American Jewish elites," Finkelstein argues, have cynically constructed a "Holocaust Industry" to serve their selfish interests. To anyone familiar with the author's lifelong crusade against Israel, it will come as no surprise that first among these interests is to "justify criminal policies of the Israeli state".

But to credit "American Jewish elites" with sincerity in their concern for Israel would, in his view, be a mistake. In reality, he says, these elites are merely sycophantic tools of American imperialism. They came to support Israel only when it became a compliant tool of US policy-makers; they would abandon immediately if it ceased to be an American "strategic asset."

"The Holocaust Industry," Finkelstein tells us, also serves domestic American purposes. Keeping alive the memory of the Holocaust immunizes American Jews from "justified criticism" for their shift rightward in recent years. But here too, we are told, one should not credit "American Jewish elites" with sincere concern for the well being or reputation of American Jewry: "If US ruling circles decided to scapegoat Jews, we should not be surprised if American Jewish leaders acted exactly as their predecessors did during the Nazi holocaust. . . . 'Jews would lead Jews to death.'"

The overall argument of Finkelstein's book is that "American Jewish elites" conspire only in their private interest: to line their own pockets and to facilitate their "entry into the inner sanctums of American power." For these elites, he tells us, "the Holocaust performed the same function as Israel: another invaluable chip in a high-stakes power game." For Finkelstein, it is only by acknowledging this long-standing conspiracy of "Jewish elites" that one can really understand what was involved in reparations and restitution negotiations.

I had not thought that (apart from the disreputable fringe) there were Germans who would take seriously this twenty-first century updating of the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion." I was mistaken: last summer the reviewer for the FAZ compared the book's author to Hannah Arendt; said that reading the book was "like opening a window for a sudden gust of fresh air."

Understandably dismayed by this sort of response to Finkelstein's book, there were those in Germany who said that it was "impermissible" for Germans to discuss the questions which the book raised. As an outsider, I hesitate to express an opinion on how Germans conduct their public discourse, but I must say that I am opposed to their ruling any subject "impermissible" or "out of bounds." And this applies particularly to subjects having to do with the memory of the Holocaust.

Germany's relationship to the Holocaust and its memory is not "given"--set in stone--but, must, like the relationship between any collectivity and its memories, be the subject of continued rethinking and renegotiation. Among American Jews, the rethinking and renegotiation of how we handle the memory of the Holocaust has been underway for some time, and it has been the occasion of lively debate. Though obviously the two cases are very dissimilar, many of the same issues arise. As the years pass, what should

change and what should stay the same in our relationship to the memory? How does one steer a path between forgetfulness and obsession? What should be the relative weight of this memory compared to other memories of the collective past? If we've made mistakes in how we've memorialized the Holocaust, how can we learn from those mistakes and do better in the future?

On neither side of the Atlantic should discussion of any of these issues be "impermissible." Indeed such discussions are highly desirable. But Finkelstein's rant is not a contribution to such discussions; it is a subtraction from them.

[1] Accessible at <http://www.vho.org/aaargh/fran/div/racket/holindustry/novickeng.html> ; the original article that was published in the German newspaper Sueddeutsche Zeitung can be found in: Petra Steinberger (ed.): Die Finkelstein-Debatte, (Piper Verlag: Muenchen 2001), pp. 158-162

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The New York Times  
August 6, 2000

HEADLINE: A Tale of Two Holocausts

BYLINE: By Omer Bartov; Omer Bartov's most recent book is "Mirrors of Destruction: War, Genocide, and Modern Identity."

BODY:

THE HOLOCAUST INDUSTRY

Reflections on the Exploitation  
of Jewish Suffering.

By Norman G. Finkelstein.

150 pp. New York:

Verso. \$23.

NORMAN G. FINKELSTEIN first gained a national reputation with his essay, "Daniel Jonah Goldhagen's 'Crazy' Thesis," included in the book he wrote with Ruth Bettina Birn, "A Nation on Trial." Much of the essay was a brilliant dissection of Goldhagen's book, "Hitler's Willing Executioners." Its last section, however, revealed Finkelstein undergoing a bizarre metamorphosis, in which he employed the same dubious rhetoric and faulty logic he had identified in Goldhagen's work in order to propound his own, even "crazier," thesis on the dark forces lurking, to his mind, behind his adversary's success.

Now Finkelstein is back, with a vengeance, a lone ranger with a holy mission -- to unmask an evil Judeo-Zionist conspiracy. The main argument in "The Holocaust Industry" is based on a simple distinction between two phenomena: the Nazi Holocaust and "The Holocaust," which he defines as "an ideological representation of the Nazi holocaust." The author has little interest in the former, though he readily acknowledges that it happened, since both his parents survived its horrors and since some of the few historians he respects, notably Raul Hilberg, have written on it.

But in one of those strange inversions that characterize his book, Finkelstein speaks of the historical event with the same kind of awe, and demands the same sort of silent incomprehension, that he ascribes to his main foe, Elie Wiesel. In order "to truly learn from the Nazi holocaust," he asserts, "its physical dimension must be reduced and its moral dimension expanded." Whatever that might mean, it comes as no surprise that his views about the origins, nature and implications of the genocide

of the Jews are but a series of vague, undocumented and contradictory assertions. Thus, for instance, in one place he writes that the "historical evidence for a murderous gentile impulse is nil," and rejects the notion that there might have been an "abandonment of the Jews" by the United States government. But in another place he charges that the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum "mutes the Christian background to European anti-Semitism" and "downplays the discriminatory U.S. immigration quotas before the war," and then goes on to cite approvingly David S. Wyman's book, "The Abandonment of the Jews."

But what really interests Finkelstein is "The Holocaust." The gist of his argument is simple: Had the Jews and the Zionists not had the Holocaust already, they would have had to invent it. Indeed, for all intents and purposes, this is precisely what they have done, in the form of "The Holocaust," despite the distracting fact that, once upon a time, such an event actually took place. And why was "The Holocaust" fabricated? Because it legitimizes "one of the world's most formidable military powers," Israel, allowing it to "cast itself as a 'victim' state," and because it provides "the most successful ethnic group in the United States," the Jews, with "immunity to criticism," leading to "the moral corruptions that typically attend" such immunity.

Finkelstein views himself as innocent of any desire to exploit "The Holocaust" for his own ends, unlike his apparently countless enemies. The fact that his sensational "revelations" and outrageous accusations draw a great deal of public and media attention is no fault of his own. Nor is his vehement anti-Zionism and seething hatred of what he perceives as a corrupt Jewish leadership in the United States anything but a reflection of a reality that only he can perceive through the clouds of mystification and demagoguery that have deceived thousands of lay persons, scholars, and intellectuals. From his Mount Sinai, everything is clear and obvious. It's just that his voice is too faint to be heard in the valley.

The main culprit, in the world according to Finkelstein, is "the Holocaust industry," made up of Israeli officials and fat lawyers, Jewish agents well placed in American political circles and ruthless Zionists determined to subjugate the Palestinians. Here he combines an old-hat 1960's view of Israel as the outpost of American imperialism with a novel variation on the anti-Semitic forgery, "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion," which warned of a Jewish conspiracy to take over the world. Now, however, the Jewish conspiracy is intended to "shake down" (his favorite phrase) such innocent entities as Swiss banks, German corporations and East European owners of looted Jewish property, all in order to consolidate Jewish power and influence without giving the real survivors of the genocide anything but empty rhetoric.

Nowhere does Finkelstein mention that the main beneficiaries of compensation for forced labor will be elderly gentile men and women living their last days in poverty in Eastern Europe, or that German scholars like Ulrich Herbert, hardly an employee of "Jewish interests," have been at the forefront of the struggle to gain compensation from corporations that for decades refused to admit their enormous gains from slave and forced labor.

From the author's perspective, this is simply a case of organized American Jewry "lording it over those least able to defend themselves," such as, presumably, the Swiss banks it was "plotting" to boycott, and "the United States and its allies" from whom it "finagled another \$70 million."

Thus have the great powers of the world capitulated to what The Times of London called the "Holocash" campaign in the United States, according to Finkelstein. He reserves special contempt for the Claims Conference, an

umbrella of Jewish organizations that distributes reparations funds to survivors, and quotes approvingly the right-wing Israeli Parliament member Michael Kleiner, who called the conference "a Judenrat, carrying on the Nazis' work in different ways." Indeed, as Finkelstein says in another context, les extrêmes se touchent: in denouncing the "shakedown" of German corporations, this left-wing anti-Zionist uses precisely the kind of rhetoric that Menachem Begin employed when he spoke out against taking "blood money" during the right-wing riots against the restitution agreement with West Germany in the early 1950's, which almost toppled the Israeli government.

There is something sad in this warping of intelligence, and in this perversion of moral indignation. There is also something indecent about it, something juvenile, self-righteous, arrogant and stupid. As was shown in Peter Novick's far more balanced (though not entirely satisfactory) book, "The Holocaust in American Life," the changing perception of the Nazi genocide of the Jews has also opened the way for a variety of exploiters and small-time opportunists. Yet to make this into an international Jewish conspiracy verges on paranoia and would serve anti-Semites around the world much better than any lawyer's exorbitant fees for "shaking down" a German industrialist.

Finkelstein speaks of the "Holocaust industry" as "cloaking itself in the sanctimonious mantle of 'needy Holocaust victims.'" "Yet he cloaks himself in that very same mantle, while at the same time showing little sympathy for the feelings of the survivors and enormous zeal in exposing the "reckless and ruthless abandon" of the "Holocaust industry," which he calls "the main fomenter of anti-Semitism in Europe." By its "blackmailing of Swiss bankers and German industrialists," as well as of "starving Polish peasants," the "Holocaust industry" seeks endlessly to augment that pile of gold, or "Holocaust booty," on which Jewish and Zionist leaders are now allegedly sitting. "The Holocaust," Finkelstein concludes, is possibly "the greatest robbery in the history of mankind."

What I find so striking about "The Holocaust Industry" is that it is almost an exact copy of the arguments it seeks to expose. It is filled with precisely the kind of shrill hyperbole that Finkelstein rightly deplores in much of the current media hype over the Holocaust; it is brimming with the same indifference to historical facts, inner contradictions, strident politics and dubious contextualizations; and it oozes with the same smug sense of moral and intellectual superiority.

This book is, in a word, an ideological fanatic's view of other people's opportunism, by a writer so reckless and ruthless in his attacks that he is prepared to defend his own enemies, the bastions of Western capitalism, and to warn that "The Holocaust" will stir up an anti-Semitism whose significance he otherwise discounts. Like any conspiracy theory, it contains several grains of truth; and like any such theory, it is both irrational and insidious. Finkelstein can now be said to have founded a Holocaust industry of his own.

At 12:02 PM 6/15/2006, you wrote:

Dear Professor Dershowitz:

I hope this note finds you well and enjoying your summer.

I write you about the matter of Norman Finkelstein, who comes up for a tenure decision this autumn. To prepare myself, I am investigating your charges that he is guilty of various forms of intellectual dishonesty.

I have contacted Professor Peter Novick to follow up on his indictment which you quoted in your letter of November 10, 2005, to Father Holtschneider and in the manuscript titled "Literary McCarthyism" which you sent me the previous year. I am contacting you, too, to ask your assistance. Could you point me to the clearest and most egregious instances of dishonesty on Finkelstein's part?

Thank you for your assistance in this matter. If you care to contact me via telephone, my office number is 773.325.7338. During the summer I will be working out of my home most of the time; my number there is 630.264.0773.

Best regards,

Patrick Callahan  
Professor  
Department of Political Science  
DePaul University  
Chicago, IL