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“Confessions of SS men who were at Auschwitz”

[The following is a revised and corrected version of a 1980 paper delivered at the 2nd IHR Conference August 1-3, 1980 held at Pomona College, Claremont, California. whose publication seems useful in that it illustrates the classic and revisionist method of examination of texts, and also because it shows how and why a man on the vanquished side may be led to “confess” to his conquerors. – author’s note of June 23, 2015]

Some SS men confessed that there were “gas chambers” at Auschwitz or at Auschwitz-Birkenau. The three most important confessions are those of Rudolf Höss, Pery Broad and, finally, Professor Doctor Johann Paul Kremer. For a long time the exterminationists relied especially on the first of these confessions, that of Rudolf Höss, which has appeared in English under the title *Commandant of Auschwitz*. I believe I have noticed, on the occasion of a recent historical debate in France, that the exterminationists seem less sure of the value of this strange testimony. On the other hand, the testimony of Johann Paul Kremer has been very useful to them. Personally, I think the argument supplied by Kremer’s text is in fact, from their point of view, a more valuable weapon than the absurd confession of Rudolf Höss. I must say that first the British and then the Poles made Höss speak in such a way that it is easy to destroy his testimony by simply comparing *Commandant of Auschwitz* with his numerous previous statements, among which I particularly recommend that of 14 March 1946 (IMT Documents NO-1210 and D-749).

I shall limit myself therefore to studying what the exterminationists themselves today seem to consider their best weapons for supporting the allegation of the existence and use at Auschwitz of homicidal “gas chambers.” If I add this adjective “homicidal” it is because there are, as you know, non-homicidal gas chambers which it is impossible to use to kill people in the way in which it is said the Germans did. All the armies of the world have buildings, hastily equipped, for training their recruits in the use of gas masks. In France, these buildings bear the name *chambre à gaz* (“gas chamber”); in Germany, they are called *Gaskammer* or *Gasraum* (“gas chamber” or “gas room”). There are also gas chambers for the disinfecting of clothes, for treating fruit, and the like.

Thus I will speak to you at some length of the testimony of Johann Paul Kremer. You will see how, at first sight, it is troubling, and then how, if you analyze it with a little care, it constitutes a terrible fiasco for the exterminationists. I prize the Kremer case very much. It shows how fragile the evidence that we are offered is; to what extent people allow themselves to be easily

deceived by appearances; how much the official historians have misused the texts and how necessary it is to work if you wish, in the study of texts, to distinguish between the true and the false, between the real meaning and the misinterpretation. This is what is called “text and document appraisal”. It so happens that it is my professional speciality. I am therefore going to inflict upon you, to my great regret, a lecture on “text and document appraisal.” I ask you to forgive me for the strictness of the demonstration I am going to try to carry out here.

Before entering into the heart of the matter, I would like to share two remarks. The first comes to us from Dr. Butz. I recall that, in a letter of 18 November 1979 to a British weekly, the *New Statesman*, about a long article by Gitta Sereny (2 November 1979), he made the observation that it is quite strange to claim to base a historical thesis like that of the formidable massacres of millions of human beings on... confessions. That claim is even harder to defend when you know that such confessions come from persons who had been conquered, and that the ones who obtained the confessions were the conquerors.

My second remark is to recall that, in the cases dealing with Ravensbrück, where it is now known that there was never any “gassing,” the British and French courts obtained very detailed confessions on the eleven alleged gassings. We are told of the three principal confessions of Auschwitz, but we no longer hear anything about the three principal confessions of Ravensbrück: that of the camp commandant, Suhren, that of his adjutant Schwarzhuber and that of the camp physician, Dr. Treite. Do you know what the size of that nonexistent “gas chamber” was? Answer: nine meters by four and a half meters. Do you know where it was located? Answer: five meters away from the two crematory ovens. Do you know how many persons were gassed there? Of what nationality? On what precise dates? Do you wish to know on whose orders all of that was done, from the top to the bottom of the German military and political hierarchy? Are you interested in learning how they used a “gas capsule” [sic]? You will find the answers to these questions and many others in reading, for example, the historian Germaine Tillion. That Frenchwoman had been interned at Ravensbrück. After returning to France, she became an official specialist in the history of the deportation. She worked at the same famous CNRS (“National Center for Scientific Research”) in Paris at which Léon Poliakov worked. For reasons of which I am unaware, Germaine Tillion enjoys considerable moral credit in France. Her honesty is something of an officially established fact. Nevertheless, several years after the

war, she went before the courts to incriminate overwhelmingly the ex-chiefs of Ravensbrück with her stories about the "gas chambers." Even more than her book about the camp (*Ravensbrück* [Paris, Le Seuil, 1973], reprint, 284 p.), one must read her "Reflections on the study of the deportation" ("Réflexions sur l'étude de la déportation," in the *Revue d'Histoire de la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale* (July-September, 1954), p. 3-38).

Germaine Tillion begins with some remarks on false testimony about the deportation. She says that she has "known of numerous mentally damaged persons, half-crooks, half-fools, exploiting an imaginary deportation." She adds that she has known of other persons who were "authentic deportees, whose sick minds had striven to go beyond even the monstrous things that they had seen or of which people had spoken, saying that they had happened to them." She writes further: "There were even publishers for certain of these fabrications, and more or less official compilations to present them, but there is no excuse whatsoever for publishers and editors, since the most elementary inquiry would have sufficed to expose the deception."

While reading these lines, which date from twenty-six years ago, we realize that publishers and editors of that kind have only increased in number, and that the Martin Grays and the Filip Müllers still have a good future ahead of them. Two of the three accused who confessed at Ravensbrück were hanged, and Dr. Treite committed suicide. What is awful is that without this testimony about the "gas chambers" their lives might well have been spared. In regard to Suhren, Germaine Tillion writes, on page 16, that he began by displaying a "stubborn bad faith" in the course of his two trials (one at Hamburg, by the British, and one at Rastatt, by the French); she adds this terrible sentence: "But, without that gas chamber that he created, on his own initiative, two months before the collapse, he could perhaps have saved his life." In note 2 on page 17 she writes of Schwarzhuber, who confessed immediately, some even more dreadful lines, each word of which I ask you to ponder:

According to the English investigators, from the first moment he had coolly faced his position, considering himself doomed and, either to have peace (and the small privileges to which prisoners who do not deceive their examining magistrates have a right), or else due to lassitude, indifference or for some other reason, he took his course and held to it, without regard for himself or for his accomplices. He was not a brute (like Binder or Pflaum); he had an intelligent expression, the appearance and behavior of a psychologically normal man.

Let us leave Ravensbrück and the Schwarzhuber confession for Auschwitz and the confession of Kremer, the other SS man who had "an intelligent expression" as well as "the appearance and the behavior of a psychologically normal man." To begin with, let us look at some extracts from his private diary written during his short stay at Auschwitz, and then at the explanations he gave for those extracts, after the war, to his Polish jailers, explanations to which he stuck later on, at his trial 1960, which took place at Münster (Westphalia), and at the trial of the Auschwitz guards in 1964 at Frankfurt-on-Main. The name of Professor Doctor Kremer should not be confused with that of Josef Kramer. The latter

held high positions at the camp of Struthof-Natzweiler (Alsace), then at Auschwitz-Birkenau, and finally at Bergen-Belsen. He, too, made various confessions. All are interesting to study. On the alleged homicidal "gas chamber" at Struthof, I would like to point out that the French did not, as I believed until recently, wring just one confession out of Kramer, but, as I have discovered, two totally absurd and astonishingly contradictory confessions. People sometimes refer to one of these, but the other has been kept carefully hidden. One day I shall deal with it, as well as with the two reports of the French military courts on the "gas chamber" at Struthof: the one report, really childish, concludes that there were "gassings"; the other has disappeared from the military court archives, and reaches the opposite conclusion. This report, dated 1 December 1945, was made by the eminent toxicologist Professor René Fabre.

1. EXTRACTS FROM THE DIARY OF DR. JOHANN PAUL KREMER, PHYSICIAN AT AUSCHWITZ, OF SUMMER 1942, SELECTED AND PRESENTED BY THE OFFICIAL HISTORIANS (LEON POLIAKOV, GEORGES WELLERS, SERGE KLARSFELD)

- 2 September 1942: This morning, at three o'clock, I was present for the first time at a *Sonderaktion*. Compared with that, Dante's Inferno appears to be a comedy. It is not without reason that Auschwitz is called an extermination camp. (sources?) (Georges Wellers's version, in *Le Monde*, 29 December 1978, p. 8; the author explains beforehand that a *Sonderaktion* is a "selection for the gas chambers.")

- At three o'clock in the morning, I was present for the first time at a "special action" (thus did they refer to the selection and murder in the gas chambers). In comparison with the Inferno of Dante that seemed to me almost a comedy. It is not without reason that they call Auschwitz an extermination camp (Serge Klarsfeld's version, in *Le Mémorial de la Déportation des Juifs de France*, 1978, p. 245; the author obviously reproduced page 48 of a book (not dated) published in Poland by the International Auschwitz Committee under the title *KL Auschwitz: Arbeit Macht Frei* (Concentration Camp Auschwitz: work makes one free), 96 p.).

- This morning at three o'clock, I was present for the first time at a "special action." In comparison, Dante's inferno appeared to me a comedy. It is not for nothing that Auschwitz is called an extermination camp (Léon Poliakov's version, in *Auschwitz*, Paris: Collection Archives Gallimard/Julliard, 1973, p. 40).

For this first entry, 2 September, I have cited three versions. For the following dates, I shall content myself with citing a single version: the official version of the State Museum of Oswiecim (Auschwitz), as it appeared in *Auschwitz vu par les SS* (Auschwitz seen by the SS). I intentionally confine myself only to what the official historians habitually cite in their works and only to what, in the eyes of the authorities of the State Museum of Auschwitz, would tend to prove that Dr. Kremer had participated in the "gassings" of human beings.

- 5 September 1942: This noon was present at a special action in the women's camp ("Moslems") - the most horrible of all horrors. *Hscf.* Thilo, military surgeon, is right when he said today to me we were located here in "*anus mundi*" [anus of the world]. In the evening at about 8 p.m. another special action from Holland. Men compete to take part in such actions as they get additional rations then - 1/5 litre vodka, 5 cigarettes,

100 grams of sausage and bread. Today and tomorrow (Sunday) on duty.

On the next day, Dr. Kremer said that he had had an excellent lunch. On numerous occasions, his diary contains like remarks about food. Historians often cite these remarks to show the cynicism of the doctor; they say that the atrocities of the "gas chambers" did not hurt his appetite. Dr. Kremer mentions a special action of Sunday, 6 September at 8 in the evening, then on the evening of 9 September, then on the morning of 10 September, then in the nights of the 23rd and the 30th. He then writes:

– 7 October 1942: Present at the 9th special action (new arrivals and women "Moslems") [...]

– 12 October 1942: [...] was present at night at another special action with a draft from Holland (1600 persons). Horrible scene in front of the last bunker! This was the 10th special action.

– 18 October 1942: In wet and cold weather was on this Sunday morning present at the 11th special action (from Holland). Terrible scenes when 3 women begged to have their poor lives spared. 8 November 1942: This night took part in 2 special actions in rainy and murky weather (12th and 13th) [...] Another special action in the afternoon, the 14th so far, in which I had participated [...]

Dr. Kremer is wrong in his reckoning. He has forgotten that on 5 September there had been not one but two special actions, which made a total of 15 special actions for his stay at Auschwitz. This stay lasted 81 days, on only 76 of which was he on duty (because of a five-day leave).

The notes in the Polish edition say that the dates of these special actions coincided with the dates of the arrival of transports of deportees.

2. EXTRACTS FROM THE SPONTANEOUS CONFESSIONS OF JOHANN PAUL KREMER IN THE POLISH COURT IN 1947, SELECTED AND PRESENTED BY THAT COURT

Here is what one can read in *KL Auschwitz vu par the SS*, p. 214, note 50:

In the official record of his questioning of 18 August 1947 at Cracow, Kremer stated as follows: "On 2 September 1942, at 3 a.m. I was already assigned to take part in the action of gassing people. These mass murders took place in small cottages situated outside the Birkenau camp in a wood. These cottages were called 'bunkers' (*Bunker*) in the SS men's slang. All SS surgeons on duty in the camp took turns participating in the gassings, which were called '*Sonderaktion*.' My part as surgeon at the gassing consisted in remaining in readiness near the bunker. I was brought there in a car. I sat in front with the driver and an SS hospital orderly (*SDG*) sat in the back of the car with an oxygen apparatus to revive SS men employed in the gassing, in case any of them should succumb to the poisonous fumes. When the transport with people who were destined for gassing arrived at the railway ramp, the SS officers selected from among the arrivals persons fit to work and the rest – old people, all children, women with children in arms and other persons not deemed fit to work – were loaded upon lorries and driven to the gas-chambers. I used to follow behind the transport till we reached the bunker [Faurisson note: the word is in the singular]. Here people were first driven to barracks where the victims undressed and then went

naked to the chambers. Very often no incidents occurred, as the SS men kept people quiet, maintaining that they were to bathe and be deloused. After driving all of them into the gas chamber the door was closed and an SS man in a gasmask threw the contents of a *Cyklon* tin through an opening in the side wall. The victims' shouting and screaming could be heard through that opening and it was clear that they fought for their lives [*Lebenskampf*]. These shouts were heard for a very short time. I should say for some minutes but I am unable to give the exact span of time."

Note 51 on page 215 of *KL Auschwitz vu par les SS* gives another extract from the same interrogation transcript. Here is how Dr. Kremer is supposed to have explained his entry of 5 September 1942 about the "Moslem" women and the *anus mundi*:

Particularly unpleasant had been the action of gassing emaciated women from the women's camp. Such individuals were generally called "*Muselmänner*" ("Moslems"). I remember taking part in the gassing of such women in daylight. I am unable to state how numerous that group had been. When I came to the bunker [Faurisson note: "bunker" is in the singular] they sat clothed on the ground. As the clothes were in fact worn out camp clothes they were not let into the barracks but undressed in the open. I could deduce from the behavior of these women that they realized what was awaiting them. They begged the SS men to be allowed to live, they wept, but all of them were driven to the gas chamber and gassed. Being an anatomist I had seen many horrors, had to deal with corpses, but what I then saw was not to be compared with anything seen ever before. It was under the influence of these impressions that I had noted in my diary, under the date of 5 September 1942: "The most horrible of all horrors. Hauptsturmführer Thilo was right when he said to me today that we were located here in 'anus mundi.' I had used this expression because I could not imagine anything more sickening and more horrible."

In his entry for 12 October 1942, Dr. Kremer mentioned a special action concerning 1600 persons who had come from the Netherlands: in the margin next to that mention he wrote the name of Hössler, who at that time was one of the SS men responsible for the camp at Birkenau. Here is how Dr. Kremer is supposed to have explained his entry for 12 October (see p. 224, note 77):

In connection with the gassing action described by me in my diary under the date 12 October 1942. I have to explain that about 1600 Dutchmen were gassed then. This is an approximate number which I had put down after hearing it mentioned by others. This action was conducted by SS officer Hössler. I remember how he had tried to drive the whole group into one bunker. He was successful except for one man whom it was not possible to squeeze inside the bunker by any means. This man was killed by Hössler with a pistol shot. I therefore wrote in my diary about horrible scenes in front of the last bunker and I mentioned Hössler's name in connection with this incident.

For his entry of 18 October 1942 Dr. Kremer is supposed to have furnished the following explanation (see p. 226, note 83):

During the special action described by me in my diary under the date of 18 October 1942, three women from Holland refused to enter the gas chamber and begged for their lives. They were young and healthy women, but

their begging was of no avail. The SS men taking part in the action shot them on the spot.

3. DR. KREMER PERSISTED IN THESE CLAIMS AT HIS TRIAL IN MÜNSTER IN 1960

In 1977 the University of Amsterdam published its seventeenth volume of *Justiz und NS- Verbrechen* (Justice and Nazi crimes). There we find the text of the decision rendered against Dr. Kremer on 29 November 1960. On pages 19 and 20, the court sought to describe the operation of "gassing," as well as the part that the accused was supposed to have personally played in that operation. The court speaks of a single "gas chamber." It involved a farm comprising several separate structures near the Birkenau camp. An SS medical orderly went up on the roof and dumped some Zyklon through several specially fitted shafts ("*durch Einwurfschächte*"). He wore a gas mask. The doors of the "gas chamber" were all airtight. From outside, they heard the victims cry out. The court continued:

When there was no more sign of life, the defendant was taken back to his lodging by the Health Service car. The gas chambers were opened a short moment afterwards. [Faurisson note: Please note here that this opening is said to have been done a *short moment after* the death of the victims]. The bodies were removed by prisoners and were destroyed by cremation. During the events described above [Faurisson note: The court here alludes to Kremer's description of the arrival of the victims, their disrobing, etc.] the accused was seated in the Health Service car, which was standing in the immediate vicinity of the gas chambers. Whether he had left his car and whether he had taken an active part in the murderous action could not be proved. The accused was in the car, however, in accordance with the mission that he had been assigned, ready for any accident involving the SS man certified by the Health Service who was handling the Zyklon B poison; he would help him immediately with the oxygen inhalator. He [the accused] himself admitted that in all good faith. But in fact no accident ever happened.

4. IN 1964 AT THE FRANKFURT TRIAL DR. KREMER AGAIN PERSISTED IN HIS CLAIMS

On June 1964, Dr. Kremer, then eighty years old, took the stand in Frankfurt as a witness for the prosecution against the former Auschwitz guards. In order to try to know exactly what he said on that day, we must rely on pages 72-73 of Hermann Langbein's book *Der Auschwitz Prozess: Eine Dokumentation* [The Auschwitz Trial: A Documentation] [Vienna: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1965], 1027 p.). Unfortunately Hermann Langbein is the secretary of the International Concentration Camp Committee and his works all show a biased and partisan spirit. Bernd Naumann's book says almost nothing on the deposition of Dr. Kremer (*Auschwitz* [Frankfurt: Athenäum, 1965], 552 p.). Thus, here is Hermann Langbein's version of how Dr. Kremer's deposition on the question of the "gas chambers" went; I reproduce the text in its entirety:

Judge: Where did the gassings take place?

Kremer: Some old farms had been transformed into a bunker [Faurisson note: The German text indeed gives the singular: *Alte Bauernhäuser waren als Bunker ausgebaut*] and provided with a sliding door for secure closing. Upstairs was located a dormer window. The people were brought in undressed. They entered quietly;

only some of them balked; they were taken aside and shot. The gas was released by an SS soldier. For that he went up on a ladder.

Judge: And there were some special rewards for those who participated in such an action?

Kremer: Yes, that was the custom; a little schnaps and some cigarettes. They all wanted them. They were allotted the goods. I myself also received such goods – this was quite automatic.

Co-Plaintiff's Counsel Ormond: You wrote in your diary that the SS soldiers strove with each other for service on the ramp [for the arrival of the convoys].

Kremer: That is humanly quite understandable. This was war, was it not, and the cigarettes and schnaps were rare. When someone was eager for cigarettes... They collected the goods and then they went off to the canteen with their bottles.

Dr. Kremer's testimony on the "gassings" at Auschwitz is limited to these few questions and answers. Here, in conclusion, is Langbein's commentary:

The man who described the process of gassing with these bland and indifferent words is the former university professor Dr. Johann Paul Kremer of Münster. He had already been convicted in Poland and in Germany for his participation in mass murders. At Frankfurt he left the witness stand smiling softly.

5. EXTRACTS FROM THE DIARY: MY EXPLANATIONS AND MY COMMENTARIES

I note first that these extracts contain neither the word "gassing" nor the expression "gas chamber."

Dr. Kremer's diary was a private one. The doctor expressed himself freely in it. He frankly expressed his horror of the camp. He does not mince words. He compares what he sees to a vision from Dante. One can therefore think that, had he seen the virtual human slaughterhouses that the "gas chambers" would have been, he would have mentioned that absolute horror. Wouldn't Dr. Kremer, being a scientist, at least have noted some precise physical details about these abattoirs, which, in the history of science, would have been an amazing invention? But let us begin at the beginning. Did Dr. Kremer in fact write what they say he wrote? The answer to that question is no, absolutely not. His text has been gravely distorted. This is indeed the work of a forger. As an example I am going to reproduce the text of Georges Wellers's version, but I am going to insert in it, in capital letters in italics, what he has omitted, and I am going to insert in place of *Sonderaktion* and of extermination, which are misinterpretations, the two words that are appropriate; I will also put them in capital letters. Here, then, is the text translated from the original German (see document NO-3408 in the National Archives, Washington):

– 2 September 1942: This morning, at 3 o'clock, I was present *OUTSIDE* for the first time at a *SPECIAL ACTION*. Compared to that, Dante's Inferno appears *TO ME ALMOST LIKE* a comedy. It is not without reason that Auschwitz is called *THE* camp of *THE ANNIHILATION!*

Every text must be scrupulously respected, especially a text supposed to serve as the basis for a shocking demonstration and for a terrible accusation. The deletion of the word *OUTSIDE* is very serious. Why, after the time has been specified, has the indication of the place been concealed? The German text says: *DRAUSSEN*. Dr. Kremer was not in a closed place, as a gas chamber

would have been. He was "outside," "on the outside." Undoubtedly that detail is not very clear, and perhaps it meant "outside of the camp proper," but that possibility must not be concealed. For *Sonderaktion*, Wellers has kept the German word; in appearance, this is evidence of scrupulousness and care; in reality, it is a clever trick. As a matter of fact, this word, at least for a French reader, has a sound that is disturbing, Germanic, barbaric, and can only conceal horrible things. But there is even more: just before citing that entry by Dr. Kremer, Wellers, in his article in *Le Monde*, wrote: "[Kremer] had participated in the selection for the gas chambers (*Sonderaktion*)." In other words, Wellers pushes on his reader the following lie: In his diary, Dr. Kremer said in so many words: "This morning, at three o'clock, I was present at a selection for the gas chambers."

We see very clearly now that it was nothing of the kind. Dr. Kremer was content to speak of a "special action." What is one to understand by this expression? To some people who, like me, doubt the existence of the homicidal "gas chambers," it is absurd to answer, as Wellers does, by immediately positing their existence as an accepted fact. Suppose someone does not believe in the existence of flying saucers. To such a person one cannot rightly retort that such things exist because, in some police report, it is stated: "A witness declares that he saw something strange in the sky" – "Witnesses noted some unusual phenomena in the sky." Thus, for the time being, the only honest – if not very clear – translation of *Sonderaktion* can only be "special action." I shall return later to the probable meaning of this word about which, for the moment, we have no right to speculate.

Dr. Kremer did not write next: "Compared to that, Dante's *Inferno* seemed to be a comedy," but: "Compared to that, Dante's *Inferno* seemed *TO ME ALMOST LIKE* a comedy." Here, Wellers's suppression of three words is perhaps not all that important, but it helps in its modest way to do violence to the meaning of the text, always with a view to producing the same effect. There is a shade of difference between "seemed like," where one senses a softening, and "seemed to be," which is more affirmative. Dr. Kremer did not transform an impression personal to him into an impression common to a whole group of people. In other words, he did not state: "Dante's *Inferno* appeared here to everyone around me like a comedy"; if he had, one might suppose that he had been present at an unquestionably Dantesque scene. In reality, he contented himself with a personal confidence, writing in effect: "Dante's *Inferno* here appeared *TO ME*, who had just arrived (that impression is personal to me, yet others can perhaps share it) *ALMOST LIKE* a comedy." In other words, the scene is certainly horrible for this doctor, who has just, for the first time in his life, arrived in a concentration camp, but, all the same, not horrible to the point for him to decree that, in comparison with this scene, those of Dante's *Inferno* are obviously a comedy to everybody.

But Georges Wellers has subjected the Kremer text to something far more serious. Kremer did not say that Auschwitz was "called an extermination camp," which, in the original German, would have been: "*genannt Vernichtungslager*." In reality, we read in the original German: "*genannt DAS Lager DER Vernichtung*" ("called *THE* camp of *THE* annihilation"). Had Wellers respected the presence of the two articles and had he assigned to

"*Vernichtung*" the meaning of "extermination," which is indispensable to his exterminationist thesis, he would have obtained the following sentence: "It is not without reason that Auschwitz is called the camp of the extermination." Thus constructed, the sentence sounds bizarre both in German and in French. To us, this fact must signify that a word in the text has without doubt been badly translated. That word, as will be seen later on, is "*Vernichtung*." The context will reveal to us that this word is not to be translated here as "extermination" (a meaning it can very well have in other contexts), but as "annihilation." There is here no extermination, murder, assassination, killing or massacre; there are not the results of an act, an action or a will; there is nothing here about a "camp where they exterminate," there is no "extermination camp" (an expression invented by the victors, some years after 1942, to designate camps allegedly endowed with "gas chambers"). What there is here, in reality, is an annihilation; men and women are reduced to wasting away; they are annihilated, reduced to nothing by the epidemics and notably by that illness the name of which, "typhus" (in Greek τυφος) signifies precisely: torpor, stupor, a kind of lethargy, a rapid destruction of the faculties, sometimes to the point of death. Auschwitz is not "an extermination camp" (an anachronistic expression, and we know that anachronism is one of the most reliable signs of the presence of a falsehood), but the camp, yes, indeed, the camp par excellence of general annihilation. Without doubt, the moment he assumed his post at Auschwitz, this newcomer, Dr. Kremer, had heard his colleagues say: "You know, this camp, they call it the camp of annihilation. Watch out for typhus! You yourself are at risk of contracting it and dying from it."

And at the end of his entry for 2 September 1942, Dr. Kremer puts an exclamation point. That punctuation indicates the doctor's emotion. If one conceals it, as does Wellers, the phrase takes on another tone: one might believe that the doctor was cruel and cynical. One could perhaps believe that Dr. Kremer thought coldly: "The Auschwitz camp is called an 'extermination camp.' So it is. It is indeed. Let us take things as they are." In reality, he was overwhelmed. Due to lack of time, I cannot devote myself to the criticism of the texts given by Léon Poliakov, by Serge Klarsfeld, by the authorities of the Auschwitz State Museum, by the official translation of document NO-3408, etc. I would merely like to point out an especially serious fact. It concerns the German courts. The court at Münster, which tried Dr. Kremer in 1960, quite simply skipped over the word *draussen* when it reproduced the entry of 2 September 1942. It accumulated other serious dishonesties. Here is an example: to incriminate Dr. Kremer overwhelmingly, it had recourse to the "Calendar of Events at Auschwitz" as compiled by the communist authorities in Poland. It is strange enough for a court in the Western world to show confidence in a document drawn up by Stalinists. But there is more. The courts established that, for most of the convoys that arrived in the camp, the Poles in their "Calendar" indicated with extraordinary precision the number of persons "gassed." Since we know that, according to the standard exterminationist literature those who were "gassed" were not the subject of any accounting, any tallying, an honest man could only read with astonishment in the "Calendar" that, from the time when Dr. Kremer arrived at

Auschwitz, they had, on such and such a day, "gassed" 981 persons and, on another day, 1594 other persons. Also, the court at Münster used a cynical subterfuge. It reproduced numerous citations of the "Calendar" in its record and, while making clear that the "Calendar" was its source, each time the "Calendar" used the word "vergast" ("gassed"), the court substituted for that clumsy word the word "umgebracht" ("killed"). Thus readers of the verdict at Münster are deceived. Someone who might find the mention of "981 gassed" or "1594 gassed" suspicious will easily accept a of "981 dead" or "1594 dead."

Finally, two remarks about the entries other than that of 2 September: (1) The expression *anus mundi* would not be appropriate, it seems to me, to scenes of "gassings," but rather to a repugnant and nauseating scene of groups of those fallen prey to disgusting diseases, to dysentery, etc. (2) When Dr. Kremer says that he was present at a special action in rainy, cold weather or in gray and rainy autumn weather, it is probable that those actions took place outside in the open air, and not in a gas chamber.

6. THE TRUTH OF THE TEXTS: AUSCHWITZ AS PREY TO EPIDEMICS DURING THE SUMMER OF 1942

It is sufficient to read the diary with a certain minimum of good faith in order to see the evidence. Here is, in summary, the complementary information that the diary provides: Dr. Kremer came to Auschwitz to replace a sick physician there. Typhus had ravaged not only the camp, but also the German-Polish city of Auschwitz. The German troops as well as the internees were stricken. There were typhus, malaria, dysentery, subtropical heat, swarms of flies and dust in the air. The water was dangerous to drink. Diarrhea, vomiting, stomach aches made the atmosphere stink. The sight of people reduced to nearly nothing by typhus was demoralizing. In that hell, Dr. Kremer himself contracted what he called "the Auschwitz disease." However, he underwent several vaccinations, at first against exanthematic typhus, then against abdominal typhus (a name which, in itself, would suggest a rather good explanation of the term *anus mundi*).

The principal bearer of typhus is the louse. On 1 September 1942 Kremer wrote: "In the afternoon was present at the gassing of a block with Zyklon B against lice." Zyklon B is stabilized hydrocyanic acid. This product is still used throughout the entire world today. Many documents prove to us that the disinfection procedure was a delicate one and could require the presence of a physician for providing medical help, should the need arise, to the qualified personnel in charge of carrying out the gassing of barracks and, when the places had been ventilated for twenty-one hours, with testing to verify the disappearance of the cyanide before the occupants were allowed to re-enter. On 10 October 1942, the situation was so serious that there was a general quarantine of the camp. The wife of Obersturmführer (or Sturmbannführer) Cäsar died of typhus. The entire city of Auschwitz was laid up, etc. It suffices to refer to the text of the diary. For more details of that epidemic of 1942 one can also consult the calendar of the *Hefte von Auschwitz*. In the *Anthology of the International Auschwitz Committee, Volume I*, part two, page 196 (in the French edition), we read that the SS Dr. Popiersch, head physician of the garrison and of

the camp, died of typhus on 24 April 1942 (four months before Dr. Kremer's arrival). In volume II, part one, published in 1969, we read on pages 129 and 209 (note 14) that the Polish physician Dr. Marian Ciepielowski, of Warsaw, also died of typhus while caring for the Soviet prisoners of war.

Dr. Kremer's work at Auschwitz seems to have been principally devoted to laboratory research, to dissections, to anatomical studies. But it was sometimes necessary for him to be present at corporal punishments and executions. He was not present at the arrival of the convoys but, once those fit for work had been separated from those unfit for work, he would arrive, by car with a driver, from his hotel in town (room 26 at the Station Hotel). What happened next? Did he lead people to "gas chambers" or to disinfection? Below we shall see what he is purported to have said, first in 1947 to the Polish communists, second, to the court at Münster in 1960 and third, to the court at Frankfurt in 1964.

7. THE TRUTH OF THE TEXTS: NO "GASSING."

We shall recall that, for 12 October 1942, Dr. Kremer wrote in his diary:

[...] Was present at night at another special action with a draft from Holland (1600 persons). Horrible scene in front of the last bunker! This was the 10th special action. Likewise, for 18 October he wrote:

In wet and cold weather was on this Sunday morning present at the 11th special action (from Holland). Terrible scenes when 3 women begged to have their poor lives spared.

These two texts are easy to interpret. The "last bunker" could only be the bunker of barracks number 11; it was located at the end of the Auschwitz camp (the original camp), and not at or near Birkenau, which was 3 km away. The executions took place in what was called the courtyard of block 11. It is there that the "black wall" is located. Usually, persons who had been condemned to death were transported to a concentration camp for execution. That was probably the case with the three women who had arrived from the Netherlands. I suppose it would be easy to find their names and the reasons for their conviction, either in the archives at Auschwitz or in those of the Historical Institute in Amsterdam. In either case, these three women were shot.

The Poles have been terribly embarrassed by this reference to the "last bunker." By a sleight of hand they have converted this bunker, which in the diary is in the singular, into... peasant farmhouses that had allegedly been transformed into "gas chambers" and were situated near Birkenau. Here the absurdities pile up. What is the doctor supposed to have done? *Nothing*. He remained seated in his car, at a distance. And what did he see of a "gassing" of human beings? *Nothing*. What can he tell us about what took place after the alleged "gassing"? Nothing, since he left by car with his driver (and the medical orderly?). He has nothing to say about either the installation, or the killing procedure, or the personnel employed in the killing, or of the precautions taken by them in entering an incredibly dangerous place. It is not Dr. Kremer who will tell us how people could enter this dreadful place "a short moment" after the alleged victims had stopped crying out. Nor will Dr. Kremer be able to inform us by what secret means some thousands of bodies, saturated with cyanide, lying amidst vapors of hydrocyanic acid, could be dragged out, with bare hands

(although hydrocyanic acid poisons by contact with skin, without gas masks (although the gas is overwhelmingly toxic), while eating and smoking (although the gas is inflammable and explosive). It is Rudolf Höss, in his voluntary confessions to the same Polish court, who recounted all those astonishing things. Let's be fair about this. Let's suppose that the members of the *Sonderkommando* ("special detachment") in fact did possess gas masks, fitted with a particularly strong filter, the J filter, against hydrocyanic acid. I'm afraid we have got no further ahead. I have here, in front of me, the translation of a passage from a U.S. Army technical manual dating from 1941 (*The Gas Mask*, Technical Manual No. 3-205, War Department, 9 October 1941, prepared under the direction of the chief of the Chemical Warfare Service, [Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1941], 144 p.) The following appears on page 55 (I have put the most important words in capitals):

It should also be remembered that a man may be overcome by the absorption of hydrocyanic gas through the skin; a concentration of 2 percent hydrocyanic acid gas being sufficient to thus overcome a man in about 10 minutes. Therefore, EVEN IF ONE WEARS A GAS MASK, exposure to concentrations of hydrocyanic gas of 1 percent by volume or greater should be made only in case of necessity and then FOR A PERIOD NO LONGER THAN 1 MINUTE AT A TIME. In general, places containing this gas should be well ventilated with fresh air before the wearer of the mask enters, thus reducing the concentration of hydrocyanic gas to low fractional percentages.

Dr. Kremer's voluntary confessions, with the closing of the gas chambers done "with a sliding door for secure closing" make us laugh. The requirement that a homicidal gas chamber using hydrocyanic acid be totally airtight would have been impossible to satisfy with a sliding door. But how could Dr. Kremer, who never left his car, describe that door as if he had seen it? And the SS man who released the gas – how did he do it? Did he release "the contents of a box of Zyklon through an opening in the wall" (version of the confession of 1947)? Or "by some shafts (*Einwurfschächte*)" (version of 1960)? Or even through a "dormer window" that he reached "above" while climbing "by a ladder" (1964 version)? Everything in these confessions is empty and vague. One can simply deduce from them with certainty two quite probable things:

– Dr. Kremer convoyed persons who were led into certain barracks in order to undress (and undoubtedly they next went on to disinfection or to the showers);

– Dr. Kremer was present at some gassings of buildings or of barracks in order to disinfect them with Zyklon B.

In the course of defending himself by combining these two actual experiences, he constructed for his accusers, or his accusers constructed for him, the shabby and absurd account of the "gas chambers." A very characteristic point of false testimonies on the homicidal "gassings" is the following: the accused says that he was at a certain distance from the place of the crime; the best that can be found is that of a defendant who says that he had been forced to release the Zyklon through a hole in the roof of the "gas chamber," or even one who "had helped push" the victims into the "gas chamber."

That ought to remind us of those unfortunates who in the Middle Ages were accused of having met the devil on such and such a day, at such and such an hour, in such

and such a place. They would have been able to deny that fiercely. They might even have gone so far as to say: "You know very well that I could not have met the devil for one excellent reason, namely, that the devil does not exist." They would have condemned themselves with such responses. There was only one way out: to play their accusers' game, to admit that the devil was incontestably there, but... at the top of the hill, while they themselves, down below, heard the horrible noise (sobs, groans, cries, din) of the devil's victims. It is shameful that, in the middle of the twentieth century, there are so many judges and lawyers who will admit as evidence the bewildering confessions of so many defendants without ever having had the least curiosity to ask them what they had actually seen, with their own eyes; without posing them technical questions; without going on to compare the most obviously contradictory explanations. In the defense of the legal profession, I must unfortunately note that even intelligent technicians and well-informed chemists as well can imagine that almost any small place may easily be transformed into a homicidal "gas chamber." None of those people has had the opportunity of visiting an American gas chamber, or they would grasp the enormity of their error. The first Americans who thought about executing a man by gas also imagined it would be easy. It was when they actually tried to do it that they found out they risked gassing not only the condemned prisoner but also the governor and employees of the penitentiary. It took many years to perfect a reliable gas chamber.

As for Dr. Kremer's "special actions," they are easy to understand. These were simply what, in the vocabulary of the French army, are designated by the pompous name "*missions extraordinaires*." I believe the American equivalent is "special assignments." A "special assignment" does not necessarily imply a transfer of personnel. It denotes a sudden task that interrupts the habitual course of duties. Dr. Kremer, for example, worked chiefly in the laboratory but, from time to time, he was needed for other duties: reception of a transport to be led to disinfection, triage in the hospital of the sick, of those with contagious conditions, etc. Like a good soldier and a methodical man, he noted each of those duties in his diary; probably he earned a supplementary allowance each time he performed them, as did the SS volunteers who cleaned the railway cars at the arrival of each convoy. In any case, if Auschwitz appeared like a hell to him, it was not at all because of frightful crimes like the executions of crowds of human beings in the enclosures allegedly turned into "gas chambers," but due to the typhus, malaria, dysentery, the infernal heat, the flies, the lice, the dust. One can determine as much by even a slightly attentive reading of the text of his diary. Which is what I, for my part, did first. And then one day I came by chance upon the proof, the material proof, that this was indeed the correct interpretation.

8. TEXTUAL CONFIRMATION OF THE CORRECTNESS OF THE REVISIONIST INTERPRETATION OF DR. KREMER'S DIARY

On page 42 of *Justiz und NS-Verbrechen* we learn that in the trial at Münster, in 1960, Dr. Kremer had called a witness in his defense. That witness was a woman whose name began with Gla (German law authorizes that, in a public document, certain names be revealed only in abbreviated form.) The name was very probably that of

Miss Glaser, the daughter of Dr. Kremer's housekeeper, of whom he speaks several times in the diary. The witness brought to court several postcards and letters that the doctor had sent her during his stay at Auschwitz. She said that the doctor "had not been in agreement with what took place at Auschwitz" and that he had been eager to leave the camp. Miss Gla[ser] then put into evidence a letter that Dr. Kremer had sent her, dated 21 October 1942. Its content is of extreme importance, which apparently eluded the tribunal. This letter proves that, when Dr. Kremer spoke of the Auschwitz camp as a hell, it was because of typhus and the other epidemics, just as I have said above. Here are Dr. Kremer's words in the letter:

I don't really know for certain, but I expect, however, that I'll be able to be in Münster before 1 December, and thus finally turn my back on this hell of Auschwitz where, in addition to the typhoid, and so on, typhus has once again broken out strongly...

Here, therefore, is that "Dante's Inferno" of the entry of 2 September 1942! Professor of medicine Johann Paul Kremer had seen the horrors of a formidable epidemic wiping out internees and guards at Auschwitz; he had seen no monstrous "gassing" operations exterminating crowds of human beings.

9. THE HUMAN CHARACTER OF DR. KREMER

In considering his life and reading his diary, we perceive that Dr. Kremer was not at all a brute, or a fanatic, or a cynical man. He was human, too human; he was a free spirit but perhaps with no great courage. He had early on become something of a "confirmed bachelor," attached above all to his profession. His biography is sketched in the first pages of Volume 16 of *Justiz und NS-Verbrechen*. Johann Paul Kremer was born in 1883 near Cologne of a father who, having been a miller, became a farmer. He did his advanced studies at the Universities of Heidelberg, Strasbourg and Berlin. He earned a doctorate in philosophy and a doctorate in medicine. Kremer worked in succession at the Charité Hospital in Berlin, at the hospital of Berlin-Neukölln, at the surgical clinic of the University of Bonn, at the anatomical institute of the same university; finally, he became associate lecturer at the University of Münster, where he taught courses up until 1945 (when he was 62 years old). Those courses dealt with the doctrine of heredity, sports medicine, X-rays and, above all, anatomy. In 1932, at the age of 48, he joined the National Socialist German Workers Party. In 1936, at the age of 52, he was made SS-Sturmmann (roughly, private first class). In 1941, at the age of 57, he was promoted to Untersturmführer (second lieutenant) in the Waffen-SS. He served his active duty only during university vacations. In 1942 he spent two months at Dachau as a physician attached to the SS hospital; he had no contact with the camp internees. In 1941 he published a paper on heredity which seems to have brought him some worries with regard to the official authorities. In August 1942 he was serving at the SS hospital in Prague when, suddenly, he received an assignment to Auschwitz to replace a doctor who had fallen ill. Kremer was at Auschwitz from 30 August to 18 November 1942, after which time he resumed his activity at the anatomical institute of the city of Münster. At the time he was 58 years old. He served as president of the Disciplinary Commission of North Westphalia of the Union of National Socialist Doctors. In 1943 he was named lieutenant in the reserves of the Waffen-SS. Here is how

he was evaluated: "Calm personality, correct; sure of himself, energetic; above average in general culture; excellent understanding of his speciality. Lengthy education as surgeon and anatomist; since 1936, associate lecturer at the University of Münster."

On 12 August 1945, Kremer was arrested at his home in Münster by the British occupying forces (the "automatic arrest" of former SS men). During the arrest they seized his diary. He was interned at Neuengamme, then handed over to the Poles. Kremer was imprisoned at Stettin, then in fourteen Polish prisons in succession, and finally in Cracow prison. The preliminary investigation of the case was carried out by the famous judge Jan Sehn, to whom we owe the interrogations of Rudolf Höss and the latter's (no doubt "voluntary") confession. In 1947, at the age of nearly 64, Kremer was freed for good conduct and because of his advanced age and poor health. He returned to his home in Münster, where he was arrested by order of a German court, then freed on bail. At the time he was receiving a pension of DM 70 per week. He had married in 1920, at the age of 37, but he separated from his wife after two months, since she suffered from schizophrenia. He was to obtain a divorce only in 1942, twenty years later. Dr. Kremer had no children. A housekeeper looked after him. Unless I am mistaken, he was never at the front and never fired a shot except, doubtless, in training. From the age of fifteen and a half he kept a diary. I have not read the part of his diary that predates the Second World War.

On 29 November 1960, Dr. Kremer, aged 76, was sentenced to ten years in prison, but the ten years were considered as served. In consideration of his advanced age, his civil rights were suspended for only five years. He was ordered to pay court costs, stripped of his post as lecturer, his title of professor and, I believe, of his two doctorates. On 4 June 1964 Kremer took the witness stand in the "Frankfurt Trial" to testify against the "Auschwitz guards." I doubt that this old man of eighty testified willingly against his compatriots in the hysterical atmosphere of that famous witch trial. His "voluntary confessions" to the Polish communists were thus, to the end of his life, to cling to his skin like the tunic of Nessus. So it was that, beginning in 1945, this professor's existence had become an ordeal. Here is a man who had devoted his life to relieving the sufferings of his fellow men: after the ordeal of a lost war he was officially made into a sort of monster who had, it seemed, all of a sudden devoted two and a half months of his life to great massacres of human beings in line with a truly satanic industrial method. Dr. Kremer's diary is dull in style (at least the part of it that I have read), but when one considers the destiny of that diary and its author, one cannot help but think of it as a work which, far more than certain other highly valued historical or literary testimonies, is profoundly disquieting. I think often of that old man. I think sometimes also of his tormentors. I do not know what became of Dr. Kremer. If he were still alive today he would be ninety-seven years old. I hope that one day a scholar will write a biography of this man, and that to do so he will visit the city of Münster (Westphalia) where there are certainly still a few people who knew – allow me to restore him his titles – Professor Doctor Johann Paul Kremer.

Dr. Kremer certainly did not have National Socialist convictions. On 13 January 1943 he wrote in his diary: "There is no Aryan, Negroid, Mongoloid or Jewish

science, only a true or a false one." On the same date, he wrote this as well:

[...] I had never even dreamed there existed anything like "a gagged science." By such maneuvers, science has received a mortal blow and has been banished from the country! The situation in Germany today is no better than in the days when Galileo was forced to recant and when science was menaced by tortures and the stake. Where, for Heaven's sake, is this situation going to lead us to in the twentieth century!!! I could almost feel ashamed to be a German. And so I shall have to end my days as a victim of science and a fanatic for truth.

In reality, he was to end his days as a victim of the political lie and as a poor man forced to lie.

For 1 March 1943, we read in his diary:

Went today to shoemaker Grevsmühl to be registered and saw there a leaflet sent to him from Kattowitz by the Socialist Party of Germany. The leaflet said that we had already liquidated 2 million Jews, by shooting or gassing. The exterminationist historians do not use the argument that this entry seems to offer them. On reflection, that is understandable. Everyone knows quite well that a thousand rumors of German atrocities circulated during the war. The socialist opposition made use of them, as did all of Hitler's opponents. In this kind of leaflet one says anything and everything. That is the rule for this type of literature. Dr. Kremer made no comment on the leaflet. Perhaps he believed what its author stated. That is even probable, since he took the trouble to note it. That is precisely what is interesting about this incident. Dr. Kremer must certainly not have been a very good Nazi, or otherwise his shoemaker would not have run the risk of letting him read a secret leaflet, especially one "sent to him from Kattowitz". This last detail proves that Dr. Kremer was not afraid of confiding very delicate information to his diary.

On 26 July 1945, or about two and a half months after the German surrender, Dr. Kremer witnessed the distress of his countrymen. Their distress wrung from him nearly the same words as had the horrors of Auschwitz. I present in italics those words in the quotation that follows:

The *weather* is still *very hot and dry*. The corn ripens before its time, *gnats are pestering us more and more*, the foreigners* are still greatly worrying the *starving, needy and homeless inhabitants*. People are *crowded into goods trains like cattle* pushed hither and thither, while at night they try to find shelter in the *stench of dirty and verminous bunkers*. *Quite indescribable* is the fate of these poor refugees, driven into uncertainty by *death, hunger and despair*.

* (The Polish authorities here have altered the original German text, which spoke not of "foreigners" but of "Russians, Poles and Italians.")

The fact that immediately after this passage Dr. Kremer spoke of the gathering of berries does not mean that he was insensitive to the suffering of his countrymen. Anyone who keeps a diary passes in this way, without transition, from the serious to the trifling. After the death of a person dear to him Goethe noted something to the effect: "Death of Christiane!! I slept well. I feel better." And this "better" referred to health – his own health – which up until then had caused him some concern. As for Kafka, I believe I recall that on the very day of a similarly trying event he had gone to the swimming pool.

I am not quite sure of these details and I propose to verify them some day.

10. FORCED CONFESSIONS

We all know that forced confessions are common coin, especially in time of war. GI's in Korea, as in Vietnam, did not fail to confess "voluntarily" to the worst absurdities. People often believe that "voluntary confessions" are a speciality of the Communist world. This ignores the fact that the French, British and Americans made great use of torture towards, for example, the vanquished of the last war. As regards what the French did, I have carried out an investigation of an almost surgical precision on the summary executions in a whole small region of France at the time of the Liberation in 1944. It is absolutely impossible to have my manuscript published, given the scandal that it would cause, which would have repercussions, I can assure you, right up to the Presidency of the Republic, which is opposed (imagine it!) to the exhumation of persons who were executed by units of the *Maquis*. Those people were sometimes tortured. But experience has also taught me that it is necessary to distrust some tales of physical torture. There are perverted people who take real pleasure in inventing all sorts of such stories.

In [*The Hoax of the Twentieth Century*](#), on pages 233-236 [2003 edition], Dr. Butz presents a profound and evocative analysis of forced confessions and torture. His brilliant intelligence, not to say his genius, dictates to him sometimes, as you well know, observations of such great pertinence that one is astonished and ashamed not to have made them oneself. Here is an example, dealing with physical torture; it is not lacking in humor:

Finally we should observe that almost none of us, certainly not this author, has ever experienced torture at the hands of professionals bent on a specific goal, and thus we might suspect, to put it quite directly, that we simply do not know what we are talking about when we discuss the possibilities of torture. (page 236)

It is, I think, easy to obtain forced confessions from a man whom one holds at one's mercy. Physical torture is not absolutely necessary. I mean to say that it is not absolutely necessary to strike the victim. It is sufficient sometimes to shout and to threaten. Seclusion and prolonged isolation, as was the case with Aldo Moro, can create a feeling of panic and lead to a sort of madness. One will be ready to sign any kind of declaration in order to get out of the isolation. If an officer refuses to confess, he can be threatened with the loss of his men, and vice versa. He will be threatened with the loss of his wife and children. I am sure that all physical or mental resistance can be wiped out by very simple means. For example, captors will offer their prisoner conditions of lodging worthy of a decent hotel and give him as much as he wishes to eat, but nothing to drink. Or the prisoner will get enough to eat and to drink, but they will light his cell day and night so brightly (see the example of Nuremberg) that he will no longer be able to sleep. Very quickly he will become a human rag, prepared to mutter any kind of confession.

One fearful effect of torture is to bring the victim closer to his torturer. The panting victim detaches himself mentally from those whom he ought to love in order to attach himself to the one whom he ought to fear and hate. He no longer wishes to have anything in common with those whose ideas he shares: he comes to hate those ideas and those people because those ideas,

finally, have caused him too much suffering and those people – his friends – appear to him as a living reproach. In contrast, there is everything to expect from the torturer. He possesses power, which always, in spite of everything, confers a certain prestige. The gods are on his side. It is he who has the solution to all your sufferings. The torturer is going to propose this solution to you, although, if he wished, he could kill you on the spot or torture you without respite.

This torturer, who proposes that you sign a simple sheet of paper on which some words are written: he is good. How can you resist him when you feel yourself so weak and so alone? This torturer becomes irresistible when, instead of demanding from you a confession that is precise and totally contrary to the truth, he proposes to you a sort of compromise: a vague confession based on a partial truth. From 1963 to 1965, at the Frankfurt trial, the judge had as his first concern not the truth, since he thought that the truth had already been revealed completely, but the measurement of *the degree of repentance* of each defendant! On page 512 of Hermann Langbein's book, cited above, we see the judge show his preoccupation with discerning to what degree defendant Pery Broad was conscious of having done evil: the judge declared in all candor: "You see, an awareness of one's wrongdoing plays a large part in these proceedings." How many times must the German defendants have heard that remark from the mouths of their jailers, their investigating magistrates, and especially from their lawyers! After that, how could an intelligent and sensible man like Pery Broad refuse to tell the stupid story about an anonymous SS man whom he is supposed to have noticed one day, from a distance, in the process of releasing a mysterious liquid through the opening in the roof of... the "gas chamber" of Auschwitz (the original camp)? Pery Broad probably knew that no one would come and ask him, among other questions:

But how could you know that that was the roof of a "gas chamber" and not of a morgue? Did you enter the place? If you did, can you tell us how it was arranged? Was it not mad of the Germans to have placed a "gas chamber" just beneath the windows of the SS hospital and beneath the windows of the administrative building where you found yourself that day? With the ventilation, the flow of hydrocyanic vapor would therefore have been in the direction of the SS men in the hospital, or of those in your building. Isn't that so?

Such are the questions that the court did not put to Pery Broad. It would be inhuman to blame Pery Broad, Dr. Kremer, Rudolf Höss and other SS men for their absurd forced confessions. One must be astonished at the laughable number of those confessions when one thinks of the hundreds of SS men from the concentration camps who were imprisoned by the Allies. Of all those who were hanged or shot or who committed suicide, how many left confessions? A handful on the subject of the alleged "gas chambers." In regard to other subjects, perhaps there are more numerous confessions. I am inclined to believe that the Poles and the Soviets must have obtained a multitude of confessions; the SS men had to accuse each other, as all the men of the same lost cause were more or less obliged to do. If there were very few confessions from the SS men concerning the "gas chambers," it was not due to the courage of the SS men – since, once again, it seems to me that no one can truly resist a torturer who is something of a psychologist – but quite

simply because, on this subject, their torturers did not know very well what precisely to make them state. Without any material reality on which to construct their lies about the "gas chambers" – those slaughterhouses which in fact never existed – the torturers were reduced to inventing some poorly defined things and some stereotypes that they attributed to such men as Rudolf Höss, Pery Broad and Johann Paul Kremer.

11. A PRACTICAL CONCLUSION

In conclusion, if in your presence an exterminationist should base his argument for the reality of the "gas chambers" of Auschwitz (or of any other camp) on the claim of confessions, here, in my opinion, is the conduct to follow:

Ask if he will first enumerate those confessions one by one;

Ask him to point out the confession that, in his opinion, is the most convincing;

Agree to read that one confession in the language (accessible to you) and in the form that, again, is chosen by him;

Compare the allegedly original text of that confession with the text that the exterminationist has provided;

Decipher the text line by line and word by word, without making it say either more or less than it actually says; note carefully what the author of the confession alleges that he personally saw, heard or did; a traditional trick of the German courts has consisted, as was the case in the Kremer trial at Münster in 1960, in slipping a weak confession that the defendant made into a very long presentation about "gassing" in such a way that the reader will believe that the whole report comes from the defendant; the reader imagines that the defendant made a detailed report of the events. Nothing of the kind; the text need only be "scoured" of all the additions that the judge made to it: then one can conclude that the testimony is nearly as inconsistent as it is brief and vague.

See if the confession stands up, if it is coherent, if it breaks no law of physics or chemistry; be very materialistic, as if you were studying a miracle from Lourdes; try to see the places where the action is said to have occurred; see what remains of them; some ruins can be very instructive; seek out the plans of the places or the buildings.

Determine, if possible, whether the text of the confession is in the handwriting of the man who confessed; find out whether that text is in his mother tongue or another language; the Allies usually made the Germans sign texts drawn up in French (Josef Kramer) or in English (Rudolf Höss), and they would add, with full peace of mind, that they guaranteed that the text had been very faithfully translated for the accused into his own language (and they proceeded thus in the absence of any lawyer);

Seek to know who obtained the confession, when and how; ask yourself: upon whom did the man who confessed depend for his food and drink, and his sleeping quarters?

I don't think I have to add any other recommendations (for example, as to the material or documentary authenticity of the text to be studied). You understand that I am setting out a method of investigation that is elementary and not at all original. It is a routine method that one would apply automatically in ordinary criminal matters, but, unfortunately, when it comes to crimes that are exceptional by their supposed nature, the historians

as well as the judges, very far from redoubling prudence and holding to a tried and tested method, display an incredible rashness. Good method – whether it is a question of an investigation, an analysis, etc. – always consists in “beginning with the beginning.” In fact, experience has taught me that often nothing is more difficult and less spontaneous than “to begin with the beginning.” It was only after years of research on the “gas chambers,” and after having pronounced the words “gas chambers” perhaps several thousand times, that one fine day I woke up with the question: “What do these words really mean? What material reality do they really relate to?” To ask those questions was to find in them, very quickly, an answer. That answer you know: it is that the homicidal “gas chambers” of the Germans existed only in sick minds. It is high time that the entire world woke up and realized this. Germany, in particular, ought to wake up from this dreadful nightmare. It is high time a truthful history of the Second World War were written.

NOTES

I reproduce here the text of the entry of 2 September 1942 (Diary of Johann Paul Kremer) after the photocopy of the original as found in the National Archives in Washington (Doc. #NO-3408). Some exterminationist works reproduce the photograph of this entry among other entries from the diary. But the reader has little chance of deciphering each word of Dr. Kremer’s German handwriting. He will be inclined to trust the printed reproduction offered to him, for example, in the margin; this is the case with *KL Auschwitz, Arbeit Macht Frei*, published by the International Auschwitz Committee, 96 p. (not dated). On page 48 there appears a photograph of a manuscript page of the diary on which are found three entries relating to five dates (1 through 5 September 1942). In the margin, one discovers the alleged printed reproduction of the single entry of 2 September. That reproduction appears in French, English and German. In French and English the text is outrageously distorted. In German, it was very difficult to distort the text in a similar way, since the photocopy of the manuscript was available to the reader. But we must have unlimited trust in the exterminationists’ ability to falsify texts that embarrass them. The International

Auschwitz Committee found a solution thanks to a typographical trick. After the word *Sonderaktion* the editors printed, in the same typeface, the following parenthesis, as if it were from Dr. Kremer: “*So wurde die Selektion und das Vergasen genannt*” (“Thus did they refer to selection and gassing”). Either the reader, as is highly probable, will not notice the difference between the manuscript text and the printed text and will thus believe the sentence to be a confidence imparted by Dr. Kremer (something that will appear all the more normal since, according to an exterminationist myth, the Nazis spent their time inventing and using a coded language in order to cover up their crimes); or else the reader will see the difference between the texts and the authors will then plead a simple, and innocent, typographical error. Serge Klarsfeld, as I’ve said above, has used this fallacious page in his “Memorial of the deportation of the Jews of France”. Thus are historical tricks spread and perpetuated. Here is the original manuscript text in its authentic form:

Zum 1. Male draussen um 3 Uhr früh bei einer Sonderaktion zugegen. Im Vergleich hierzu erscheint mir das Dante’sche Inferno fast wie eine Komödie. Umsonst wird Auschwitz nicht das Lager der Vernichtung genannt! Finally, here is the text of the passage from the letter of 21 October 1942 addressed to Miss Gla[ser], which I reproduce with its errors in punctuation and spelling.

[...] Definitiven Bescheid habe ich allerdings noch nicht erwarte jedoch, dass ich vor dem 1. Dezember wieder in Münster sein kann and so endgültig dieser Hölle Auschwitz den Rücken gekehrt habe, wo ausser Fleck usw. sich nunmehr auch der Typhus mächtig bemerkbar macht...

[Prof. Robert Faurisson: An Introduction to Holocaust ...](#)



[▶ 1:58:07](#)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=kjuH-8w1Y5w

Feb 2, 2014 - Uploaded by RadioIslamTV

Six months suspended sentence required against Faurisson for Holocaust denial

The Monde.fr with AFP | 17.06.2015 at 4:25 • Updated 06/17/2015 at 8:49

The prosecution requested six-month suspended sentence and 10,000 euro fine against Robert Faurisson, Tuesday, June 16, for Holocaust denial that the defendant claimed at the helm of the Paris Criminal Court.

Mr. Faurisson, 86, was prosecuted for his comments in an interview-portrait entitled “A man Faurisson”, broadcast on two particular websites whose perpetrators were also continued.

“I will continue to break the law”

Asked about the statements in question (“I do not believe in the Nazi gas chambers,” “the alleged gas chamber” or “total farce”), Mr. Faurisson repeated:

“There existed no camp extermination, it existed in concentration camps, labor camps, and there was no extermination, that is quite clear.”

Denouncing the Gaysot law against the challenge of the Jewish genocide, described as “law for me, lex Faurissonia” he firmly told: “I know I break the law, I will continue to violate the law, to resist the unjust force of the law, you can send me to jail. ”” My writings revisionists are already seven volumes, they will be 10, ”he added.

A President who asked him if “there were no gas chambers at Auschwitz or elsewhere, that’s what you mean,” he replied “absolutely” before saying “amazed”

that only two prior convictions included in its criminal record, because "[he has] at least twelve."

"Second killing"

The prosecutor, considering the facts "perfectly formed" denounced "hate context that continues to spread these revisionist", which are "an insult, an insult, a second killing" to the victims or their descendants. She also claimed 5,000 euros fine against each of the two defendants accused of having posted the videos.

The defense of Mr. Faurisson, recognizing "the offense constituted and recognized," argued the acquittal on technical points of law. The defender of the first defendant continued to have put the story online, and also author of the film, pleaded acquittal, ensuring that he had been released by someone else involved in the realization following a dispute. He also pleaded the second acquittal in the name of "freedom to publish a free work out a free man." The judgment will be delivered on 15 September.

Six mois de prison avec sursis requis contre Faurisson pour négationnisme

Le Monde.fr avec AFP | 17.06.2015 à 04h25 • Mis à jour le 17.06.2015 à 08h49

Le parquet a requis six mois de prison avec sursis et 10 000 euros d'amende contre Robert Faurisson, mardi 16 juin, pour des propos négationnistes que le prévenu a revendiqué à la barre du tribunal correctionnel de Paris.

M. Faurisson, 86 ans, était poursuivi pour ses propos dans un portrait-entretien intitulé « Un homme, Faurisson », diffusé notamment sur deux sites internet dont les responsables présumés étaient également poursuivis.

« Je continuerai d'enfreindre la loi »

Interrogé sur les propos en cause (« *je ne crois pas aux chambres à gaz nazies* », « *la prétendue chambre à gaz* », ou encore « *totale bouffonnerie* »), M. Faurisson a répété : « *Il n'a existé aucun camp d'extermination, il a existé des camps de concentration, des camps de travail, et il n'y a pas eu d'extermination, c'est tout à fait clair.* »

Dénonçant la loi Gayssot réprimant la contestation du génocide juif, qualifiée de « *loi pour moi, lex Faurissonia* », il a asséné : « *Je sais que j'enfreins la loi, je continuerai d'enfreindre cette loi, de résister à la force injuste de la loi, vous pouvez m'envoyer en prison.* » « *Mes écrits révisionnistes font déjà 7 volumes, ils en feront 10* », a-t-il ajouté.

A la présidente qui lui demandait s'« *il n'y a pas eu de chambres à gaz à Auschwitz ni ailleurs, c'est bien ce que vous voulez dire* », il a répondu « *parfaitement* », avant de se dire « *stupéfait* » que seules deux condamnations préalables figurent à son casier judiciaire, car « *[il en a] au moins douze* ».

« Deuxième mise à mort »

La procureure, estimant les faits « *parfaitement constitués* », a dénoncé « *le contexte de haine qui continue à se répandre par ces propos révisionnistes* », qui sont « *une insulte, une injure, une deuxième mise à mort* » pour les victimes ou leurs descendants. Elle a par ailleurs réclaté 5 000 euros d'amende contre chacun des deux prévenus accusés d'avoir mis en ligne les vidéos.

La défense de M. Faurisson, tout en reconnaissant « *le délit constitué et reconnu* », a plaidé la relaxe sur des points techniques de droit. Le défenseur du premier prévenu poursuivi pour avoir mis le reportage en ligne, et par ailleurs auteur du film, a plaidé la relaxe, assurant qu'il avait été diffusé par quelqu'un d'autre impliqué dans

la réalisation suite à un différend. Celui du second a aussi plaidé la relaxe, au nom de la « *liberté de publier une œuvre libre sur un homme libre* ». Le jugement sera rendu le 15 septembre.

En savoir plus sur http://www.lemonde.fr/police-justice/article/2015/06/17/six-mois-de-prison-avec-sursis-requis-contre-faurisson-pour-negationnisme_4655586_1653578.html#jOp3i3mWbIXgG5X.99

http://www.lemonde.fr/police-justice/article/2015/06/17/six-mois-de-prison-avec-sursis-requis-contre-faurisson-pour-negationnisme_4655586_1653578.html

Sechs Monate Haft, auf Bewährung, gegen Faurisson wegen Holocaust-Leugnung gefordert

Le Monde.fr mit AFP | 17.06.2015

Die Staatsanwaltschaft hat am Dienstag, den 16. Juni, gegen Robert Faurisson sechs Monate Haft, auf Bewährung, und eine Geldstrafe von 10.000 Euro wegen Holocaust-leugnender Äußerungen gefordert, für die der Angeklagte vor dem Gericht der Strafkammer von Paris die Verantwortung übernommen hat. Herr Faurisson, 86, war wegen seiner Äußerungen in einem Portrait-Film mit dem Titel „Ein Mann, Faurisson“

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y2Xac42L4Bg>

angeklagt worden, der u.a. auf zwei Internet-Seiten veröffentlicht worden war, deren angenommene Verantwortliche ebenfalls angeklagt waren.

„Ich werde weiterhin das Gesetz brechen“

Zu den fraglichen Äußerungen befragt („*Ich glaube nicht an die Nazi-Gaskammern*“, „*Die angebliche Gaskammer*“ oder auch „*Vollkommener Blödsinn*“) antwortete Herr Faurisson: „*Es hat kein einziges Vernichtungslager gegeben. Es hat Konzentrationslager gegeben und Arbeitslager, aber es hat keine Vernichtung gegeben, das ist vollkommen klar.*“

Das Gayssot-Gesetz verurteilend, das das Bestreiten des jüdischen Vernichtung verurteilt, das er als „*Gesetz für mich, lex Faurissonia*“ bezeichnete, stellte er klar: „*Ich weiß, daß ich das Gesetz breche. Ich werde weiter dieses Gesetz brechen, mich der ungerechten Macht des Gesetzes widersetzen. Sie können mich ins Gefängnis werfen.*“ „*Meine revisionistischen Schriften haben bereits sieben Bände, es werden zehn werden*“, ergänzte er.

Der Vorsitzenden Richter, die ihn fragte, ob „*in Auschwitz und anderswo es keine Gaskammern gegeben hat, das ist es doch, was Sie sagen wollen?*“, antwortete er mit „*Genau so ist es*“, bevor er sich „*verwundert*“ zeigte, daß nur zwei Verurteilungen auf seinem Strafregister bestünden, denn „*[es gab] mindestens zwölf*“.

„Zweite Ermordung“

Die Staatsanwältin, die die Tatsachen als „*vollständig erwiesen*“ betrachtete, verurteilte „*den Kontext des Hasses, der weiterhin durch diese revisionistischen Äußerungen verbreitet wird*“, die „*eine Beleidigung, eine Verleumdung, eine zweite Ermordung*“ für die Opfer und

deren Nachkommen darstellen. Sie hat außerdem 5.000 Euro Strafzahlungen gegen jeden einzelnen der beiden Angeklagten gefordert, die die Videos ins Netz gestellt haben sollen.

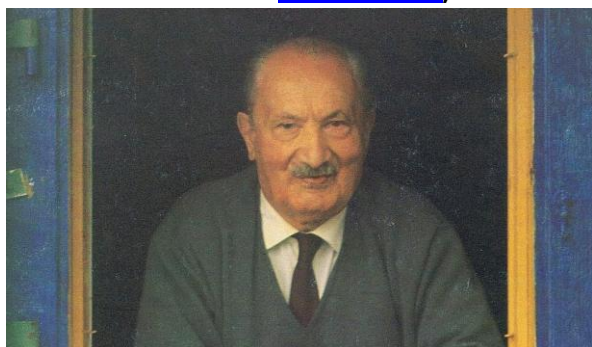
Die Verteidigung von Herrn Faurisson, gleichwohl „den festgestellten und anerkannten Straftatbestand“ anerkennend, hat wegen rechtstechnischer Punkte auf Freispruch plädiert. Der Verteidiger des ersten Angeklagten, der wegen der Veröffentlichung des

Dokumentarfilms im Netz verfolgt wird, und nebenbei Autor des Films [Paul-Eric Blanrue], hat auf Freispruch plädiert, versichernd, daß dieser durch jemanden anderes, der an der Herstellung beteiligt war, nach einer Auseinandersetzung veröffentlicht worden war. Der des zweiten Angeklagten hat auch auf Freispruch plädiert, im Namen der „Freiheit, ein Werk veröffentlichen zu dürfen über einen freien Mann“. Das Urteil wird am 15. September gesprochen werden.

HATING MODERNITY, HATING THE JEWS: A RECKONING WITH HEIDEGGER

Why the German thinker's anti-human ideas live on.

TIM BLACK, DEPUTY EDITOR, *Spiked*, 6 MARCH 2015



That Martin Heidegger is still frightening the liberals is hardly a surprise. His thought, which blustered and bloomed in interwar Germany, always drew deep on the catastrophic-cum-redemptive impulses of that most excitedly destructive of historical moments. The intellectual air in which Heidegger breathed was thick with heady pessimism. While Oswald Spengler was issuing his downbeat prognosis, *The Decline of the West*, Max Weber, surveying the 'disenchantment of the world', was waxing disappointedly about people's post-faith entrapment in the 'iron cage of rationality'. But, as shown by the appeal of the war-worshipping Ernst Junger or the democracy-challenging Carl Schmitt, there was something else in the air, too: revolution, be it of the Bolshevik or, in Heidegger's case, conservative, anti-capitalist, anti-liberal, anti-modern variety. For liberal democratic society, the end was most definitely felt to be nigh.

This apocalyptic yearning remained opaque in Heidegger's opus *Being and Time*, published in 1927. But by the time of Heidegger's year-long rectorship of the University of Freiburg in 1933, it was clearly National Socialist. He spoke in praise of Nazi icon Leo Schlageter, a swastika often adorned his lapel, and each one of his famous lectures was prefaced by a whole-hearted Heil Hitler. What's more, through his virulently anti-Semitic wife, he informed his one-time mentor, the Jewish philosopher Edmund Husserl, that he agreed with the 'hard new law, rational from Germans' point of view', which excluded Jews from university teaching. He may have retreated from the frontline of Nazi politics in 1934, but his card-carrying commitment, which lasted until the bitter end in 1945, was as unstinting as his friendship with Eugene Fischer, director of the Berlin Institute for Racial Hygiene.

All of which would have been unremarkable if Heidegger's work wasn't so remarkable. 'The secret king of thought', Hannah Arendt called him. Her assessment is not far off the mark. His vision of the possibility of an authentic existence ran through French postwar existentialism; his 'destruktion' of Western metaphysics inspired any number of structuralisms, post- or otherwise; and, more broadly, his probing, elusive critique of modernity seduced large swathes of the intellectual left, emboldened the resolutely conservative, and revitalised the elusively theological. For thinkers as diverse as the French Communist Louis Althusser, the proto-neoconservative Leo Strauss, the countercultural inspiration Herbert Marcuse, or the godly Emmanuel Levinas, Heidegger was the devil in their detail.



But with the immense debt owed to Heidegger's thought has come a ceaseless reckoning with his politics. Between 1945 and 1948, *Les Temps Modernes*, edited by Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, and de Beauvoir, dwelt, defensively, on the relation between Heidegger's thought and the advent of Nazism. A few years later, the French journal *Critique* pursued the same question. In the mid-1980s, Victor Farias's muckraking *Heidegger et le Nazisme* reignited the controversy, and Hugo Ott's soberly scathing *Martin Heidegger: A Political Life*, published in the mid-1990s, fanned the flames. More recently, with Emmanuel Faye's assiduously researched *Heidegger: The Introduction of Nazism into Philosophy* to the fore, the question of whether this massively influential thinker was also a massively Nazi thinker has been asked with increasing urgency.

Now, with the German-language publication of several volumes of Heidegger's **Schwarze Hefte** (the 'Black Notebooks') from the 1930s and 1940s (he carried on writing them up until the 1970s), the focus on Heidegger's putative Nazism, and especially his anti-Semitism, has intensified. Which is hardly surprising given the frequency with which Heidegger bemoans 'Jewry's temporary increase in power', and their 'tenacious aptitude for calculating and profiteering and intermingling' in a series of entries from the late 1930s and early 1940s. So unvarnished, not to mention banal, is Heidegger's anti-Semitism, that earlier this year the University of Freiburg philosopher Günter Figal resigned as chair of the Martin Heidegger Society. 'After reading the **Schwarze Hefte**, especially the anti-Semitic passages, I do not wish to be such a representative any longer', Figal said. 'These statements have not only shocked me, but have turned me around to such an extent that it has become difficult to be a co-representative of this [society].'

Heidegger has not been without a defence. **Philosophers Jonathan Rée and Bernard-Henri Lévy** have been quick to point out that although Heidegger may have been a nasty man, his thought still demands attention. Others, such as **Domenico Losurdo**, defend Heidegger against the wilful self-incrimination of the **Schwarze Hefte** by pointing out that his Nazism has long been public knowledge. And, to an extent, his defenders have a point. Heidegger's thought *is* too significant to be **ad hominem** out of the canon. And Heidegger's commitment to Nazism was as plain as the Hitler-era tache on his face. After all, in a lecture from 1935, Heidegger spoke plainly of 'the inner truth and greatness of National Socialism'. And, more disconcertingly, in a 1949 lecture, which would be reworked in 1953 as **The Question Concerning Technology**, he asserted: 'Agriculture is now a motorised food industry – in essence the same as the manufacturing of corpses in gas chambers and extermination camps, the same as blockading and starving of nations, the same as the manufacture of hydrogen bombs.' Just in case you missed that: Heidegger thought that mechanised food production is, 'in essence' (a favourite Heidegger move), equivalent to the systematic extermination of Jewry.

But in an important way, the eternally recurring Heidegger controversy always misses the point. There is no doubt he was a Nazi. There is no doubt he was an unapologetic anti-Semite, right to the last. He was 'a small man', lamented George Steiner. But the point at issue, the point that we must grapple with, is the relationship between his anti-Semitism and the thought that has entranced so many.

Because make no mistake, Heidegger is one of the most compelling and formidable thinkers of the twentieth century. In **Being and Time** he offered nothing less than a philosophical refutation of philosophy, and, more than that, he offered a vision of what it is to be, of how we come to know the world, of how it comes to appear and mean something to us (in short, we come to know the world not through the contemplation of a world apart from us. Rather, we come to know it through our dealings with it, through the way we use things, through our everyday praxis). But he offered something else, too, something that was to resonate so profoundly with successive generations of intellectuals in Europe and

elsewhere. He offered a critique – a critique of modernity, of Western civilisation. He not only showed how we come to think about and use the world around us – he condemned how we come to think about and use the world around us.

For Heidegger, Western civilisation, from Plato and Aristotle onwards, has forgotten the question of being, the **Seinsfrage**. 'The being for whom being is a question', as he put it in **Being and Time**, has taken to accepting easy answers. Why? Because we have inherited this metaphysical idea that man is a rational animal, a **zoon politikon**, and, as such, we have tended to view the world instrumentally, as something which we can know and use for our ends. Man is assumed to be the measure of all things. And as humanity has 'grown up both into and in a traditional way of interpreting itself', with each generation advancing the course of Western metaphysics, extending this way of seeing and using the world, so we have lost ourselves, have forgotten to ask what it is to be. The modern age is merely the latest, most dangerous instalment in this history of ontological forgetfulness. Technological and instrumental, rational and calculating, the modern way is assumed to be the only way. Even our language has been reduced 'to being an instrument of domination over beings', as Heidegger put it in the **Letter on Humanism** (1946). Heidegger continued this criticism of humanist instrumentalism in **The Question Concerning Technology**: '[We put] to nature the unreasonable demand that it supply energy which can be extracted and stored as such.' We no longer let beings be – we enslave everything to our ends. And that, argues Heidegger, goes for other humans, too. We are 'subservient' to 'enframing' – subservient, that is, to the rational, technological, calculating imperatives of modernity. We have become, like all other beings, a mere means for rational, technological, calculating ends. "'Life" is a business', notes Heidegger in **Being and Time**, 'whether or not it covers its costs'.

And this is where the **Schwarze Hefte** are revealing. Heidegger's anti-Semitism is not incidental to his critique of modernity and the instrumental reason which is destined to hold us in its thrall. It is essential. For Heidegger, Jews, alongside Bolsheviks, are the agents of modernity, and, as such, they are the harbingers of our destruction, the 'type of humanity' that has assumed 'the world-historical "task" of uprooting all beings from Being'. Jews, he continues, belong to 'the metaphysics of the West'. They have helped to spread both 'empty rationality' and 'a capacity for calculation', and they are intent on realising 'a rootless, homogeneous, technological mass society'.

What the **Schwarze Hefte** show, then, is that Heidegger's anti-Semitism was entwined with his anti-modernity. His critique of the modern world, which was so attractive to so many, always went hand in hand with his critique of the Jews, which has proved discomfiting for so many. But his anti-Semitism can't be ignored. Only when this association is grasped, only when Heidegger's identification of Jewry with everything that he loathes about the modern world – its rootlessness, its instrumentalism, and, yes, its human-centredness – becomes clear, does his initially shocking suggestion that the Jews effectively brought the Holocaust on themselves make sense. If the systematic extermination of Jewry is presented as the logical endpoint of humanity's rootless,

technological, calculative trajectory (our 'destiny'), then the Jews, as the agents of rootless, technological calculative rationality, are indeed the architects of their own downfall.

It's a revealing moment for those accustomed today to rehearsing platitudes about how meaningless, unfulfilling and destructive the modern world is. Environmentalists and avowed lefties love to spew out sub-Heideggerian theses on the irrational rationality of economic development, of people's duped immersion in an unsustainable way of life, and of our impending climate-driven comeuppance. But is there not another echo of Heidegger's thought in that strange, obsessive antipathy towards Israel which is so prevalent among the right-on and left-leaning? If there's a stench of anti-modernity among too many of today's self-styled radicals, is there not also a whiff of that peculiar brand of Heidegger-style anti-Semitism, too? Strangely enough, then, the Heidegger case sheds light on a contemporary species of anti-Semitism. It's not the biological version, in which certain races are deemed superior to others. It's not even the 'Jews control the world' one, although that persists. No, it's the sense that at some level, Jews, in the form of Israel, embody modernity, embody, that is, the very things – the cruel rationality, the uprootedness, the technological ambition, the comfort with capitalism – that so many just love to loathe. Hating Jews, then, still goes hand in hand with an intense disillusionment with modernity.

Heidegger's champions are right. He needs to be read today regardless of the revelations in black. But he needs to be read, not because he is right, but because his thinking is, in a sense, our thinking. He needs to be read because his profound rejection of modernity has proved too resonant to be ignored. He needs to be read because his stripe of anti-Semitism is in the process of being rehabilitated. He needs to be read because he needs to be reckoned with.

Tim Black is deputy editor of *spiked*.

Gesamtausgabe. 4 Abteilungen / Überlegungen XII - XV: (Schwarze Hefte 1939-1941), by Martin Heidegger, (ed) Peter Trawny, is published by Klostermann, Vittorio. (Order this book from [Amazon\(UK\)](#).)

20 Comments

[Carl Barrier](#) • 15 hours ago

Heidegger, like all great philosophers, should be read for the questions he asks. And what greater question is there than that of being? What is? What is it to be? But anyone who seeks answers from a philosopher is a fool.

'The fool doth think he is wise, but the wise man knows himself to be a fool.' [As You Like It]

[Anonymous Coward](#) • 19 hours ago

"Because make no mistake, Heidegger is one of the most compelling and formidable thinkers of the twentieth century."

Many would disagree with this. Perhaps there could be an article about why Heidegger isn't so great as a philosopher?

[Marc Anonymous Coward](#) • 11 hours ago

The most important thing for the way to understand is Heidegger's philosophical anthropology and how it continues to shape contemporary intellectual and cultural critiques of liberalism. The skeptics need a more clear articulation of the specific critique of liberalism, universalism, and globalism following from his philosophical anthropology (Heidegger did not use these terms exactly but they are there in his work). There have been a number of conservative critics of liberal universalism since the Enlightenment, but Heidegger's particular articulation has proved more timely, well pointed to the contemporary world, and wields subterranean influence

throughout a lot of thinking today in politics, cultural criticism, and the humanities. No doubt reading Heidegger's own dense and coded writing is not something critics want to invest time in, but for those familiar with Heidegger the marks of his philosophy are visible throughout contemporary literature. There is a very good book which approaches Heidegger critically while taking seriously the deep challenge his philosophy presents to liberalism: "Martin Heidegger: Paths Taken, Paths Opened (20th Century Political Thinkers)" by Gregory Bruce Smith (Rowman & Littlefield, 2006). If you are interested in understanding Heidegger's challenge to liberalism while concerned for the future of liberalism then read Smith's book.

[Tim Hoddy](#) • 17 hours ago

"No, it's the sense that at some level, Jews, in the form of Israel, embody modernity, embody, that is, the very things – the cruel rationality, the uprootedness, the technological ambition, the comfort with capitalism – that so many just love to loathe.

"Jews, in the form of Israel" **do not** embody modernity to most people

Rather a "dangerous game" to perpetuate the conflation of Israel with Jews and Jewishness.

This is all a rather contrived way to identify those who argue against Israel's policies as anti-semites.

[Pat Davers](#) • 19 hours ago

Congratulations Tim for for finding the most elaborate way yet devised of saying "anyone who is critical of Israel is an anti-semite"

[Reconstruct Pat Davers](#) • 19 hours ago

Bizarre. And possibly hysterical?

[Pat Davers Reconstruct](#) • 17 hours ago

Thanks for the endorsement. Actually the first three quarters of the review go over the interesting but not particularly novel idea in which for a certain kind of anti-modernist intellectual (Heidegger being one, t s Eliot, also reviewed here, being another) the cosmopolitan "Jew" represents all that is wrong with the world. That would be ok as far as it goes. However this is Spiked and Spiked has an agenda, or rather agendas, one of which is to oppose those who oppose Israel, and to hold up the latter state as a beacon of modernity in an endarkened part of the world. To this end the reviewer had to tack on an extra section, in which he implies critics of Israel are essentially anti-Semites and because some of these critics might also be Greens or anti-capitalists, then they must all be anti-modern to boot!

Now that really is bizarre!

[Reconstruct Pat Davers](#) • 17 hours ago

Look, this was a reasonably lengthy article, in which Israel gets a word-check count of . . . just one. And yet you interpret the whole point of the article as simply 'an elaborate way of saying 'anyone who is critical of Israel is an anti-semite'.

That's bizarre enough. But then you go and justify it (what? the whole article?) as being designed simply to further Spiked's agenda.

In fact, Pat, this is an article about Heidegger, his philosophy, its roots and its legacy. It really isn't about Israel, or about you.

And that's the problem. The fact that you obviously quite genuinely do believe what you've written suggests to me that your views on Israel are bordering on the obsessive. I think perhaps you may hate Israel just a little bit more than is necessary.

[Pat Davers Reconstruct](#) • 17 hours ago

I could possibly be described as "obsessive" on quite a number of political issues but Israel is not one of them. To be honest I see the whole Israel Palestine issue as largely intractable and thus tend not to give it much thought. I certainly don't hate Israel.

However I stand by my contention that the main point of this review was to criticise Israel's critics - after a rather lengthy preamble!

[Tim Hoddy Pat Davers](#) • 16 hours ago

"However I stand by my contention that the main point of this review was to criticise Israel's critics - after a rather lengthy preamble!"

That is exactly how it seems to me too.

[Tim Hoddy](#) [Pat Davers](#) • 14 hours ago

Well... It's a conclusion that I suspect most people would come to as, indeed, you did yourself.

It may be true that Israel is mentioned just once in the piece; but the article gives me the impression that the writer started with this conclusion and yet chose to support this conclusion in the most convoluted and tangential way possible.

Very odd!

[Marc](#) • 11 hours ago

The most important thing for the way to understand is Heidegger's philosophical anthropology and how it continues to shape contemporary intellectual and cultural critiques of liberalism. The skeptics need a more clear articulation of the specific critique of liberalism, universalism, and globalism following from his philosophical anthropology (Heidegger did not use these terms exactly but they are there in his work). There have been a number of conservative critics of liberal universalism since the Enlightenment, but Heidegger's particular articulation has proved more timely, well pointed to the contemporary world, and wields subterranean influence throughout a lot of thinking today in politics, cultural criticism, and the humanities. No doubt reading Heidegger's own dense and coded writing is not something critics want to invest time in, but for those familiar with Heidegger the marks of his philosophy are visible throughout contemporary literature. There is a very good book which approaches Heidegger critically while taking seriously the deep challenge his philosophy presents to liberalism: "Martin Heidegger: Paths Taken, Paths Opened (20th Century Political Thinkers)" by Gregory Bruce Smith (Rowman & Littlefield, 2006). If you are interested in understanding Heidegger's challenge to liberalism while concerned for the future of liberalism then read Smith's book.

[Piero Lumiere](#) • 12 hours ago

"But is there not another echo of Heidegger's thought in that strange, obsessive antipathy towards Israel which is so prevalent among the right-on and left-leaning?" is hardly the same, as saying that ALL critics of Israel, are anti-semites.

"No, it's the sense that at some level, Jews, in the form of Israel, embody modernity, embody, that is, the very things – the cruel rationality, the uprootedness, the technological ambition, the comfort with capitalism – that so many just love to loathe. Hating Jews, then, still goes hand in hand with an intense disillusionment with modernity." Note the qualification: "at some level", and the association of Jewish people with modernity, by various anti-modernists, predates the state of Israel, hence, "still", and "echo".

Tim Black has written about Heidegger

before: <http://www.spiked-online.com/r...>

As has another Spiked writer, James

Heartfield: <http://www.metamute.org/commun...>

Here's another view of Heidegger's

notebooks: <http://standpointmag.co.uk/fea...>

[Carl Barjer](#) [Piero Lumiere](#) • 9 hours ago

In 2009, Black seems to dismiss Heidegger's Nazism as an irritant, a distraction from his philosophically significant work ("the least troublesome part of his cultural legacy". It's H's 'anti-humanism' that Black takes umbrage with. In 2015, H's 'anti-Semitism' is something we should take seriously, as somehow central to his critique of modernity. Previously, he made a point of Being and Time preceding Nazism; now, he identifies a supposed 'apocalyptic yearning' in Being and Time, latent and awaiting release in a later explosion of anti-Semitic vilification? Black claims Sartre's 'existentialism' is the same as Heidegger's. That suggests a profound missing the point, when it comes to both philosophers intent. Sartre sought to centre 'being' in human terms. But Heidegger saw it as something abstract, basic; existence as (a part of) nature. 'Humanism', which Sartre supports, Heidegger scorns. Being and Nothingness seems superficial and surface orientated; c/w the depths of inquiry present in Being and Time. Heidegger harks back to supposed primordial Being; Sartre seems fixated on present beings. To quote Heidegger, from Heartfield's piece, on Being and Nothingness:

"Why should I read such shit?"

After reading the thankfully intelligent and well informed "another view" presented by Judith Wolfe, I might ask the same of Black's and Heartfield's articles! She treads a well worn path, particularly promulgated by Heidegger's 'apologists'. It covers his seemingly staggering naivety about the nature of National Socialism (more akin to P G Wodehouse than Lord Haw Haw) coupled with a massively exaggerated sense of his own work's significance (in contrast, this time, to Wodehouse), outside those rarefied towers of academe. Why aren't people seeking authenticity, after reading Being and Time, he wonders? All they're doing is debating it! National Socialism, in the early 1930s, offered a possible reawakening of the supposed greatness of the German spirit, mankind's best hope for salvation.

Given that German philosophy - most notably, broadly speaking, phenomenology - had left others floundering in it's wake in the last 2 centuries or so, Heidegger may've had some grounds for this, intellectually speaking. But as for German nation and it's 'spirit' in a more general sense, perhaps Nietzsche was more prescient?

'Only the utter worthlessness of our German culture-its "idealism"-can to some extent explain how it was that precisely in this matter I was so backward that my ignorance was almost saintly. For this "culture" from first to last teaches one to lose sight of realities and instead to hunt after thoroughly problematic, so-called ideal goals, as, for instance, "classical culture"-as if we were not doomed from the start in our endeavor to unite "classical" and "German" in one concept! [...] German intellect is indigestion; it can assimilate nothing.'

Too little emphasis is given by Black to the fact that Heidegger assumed the rectorship of Freiburg University on a wave of optimism about National Socialism as a movement for cultural and spiritual renewal - which valued intellectual development - but resigned in disillusionment early the next year, when a very different 'blood and soil' 'anti-intellectualism was exposed as the Nazi's real intention.

[Carl Barjer](#) • 14 hours ago

Sadly, despite such evidence to the contrary in his writing, it's Nietzsche, rather than Heidegger, who's been more connected to Nazism in many more minds. Heidegger may've chosen to marry an anti-Semite; but Nietzsche was could hardly choose his anti-Semitic sister. A sister who, when Nietzsche lost his marbles, took over his estate, promoted Nietzsche as a proto-Nazi, and ended her days a proud follower of Hitler.

Nietzsche parted ways with Wagner, whom he once revered, when the latter's Christian anti-Semitism reared it's vile head. Heidegger criticized Nietzsche as 'the last metaphysician'; yet it was Heidegger's Being that fell back into the very metaphysical thinking he claimed to have surpassed. Nietzsche, however, recognized an emptiness at the heart of (human) being: when man stares into the abyss, the abyss stares back at him. Our task as beings, should we be up to it, is to act as a rope bridge over the abyss, to the over-man ('superman') on the other side. But, whereas Heidegger may've retained nostalgia for some purer, ancient conception of Being - to be-in the world in an authentic, pre-modern way - a way to be authentic (living towards death); Nietzsche saw being as something we, and all animals, create themselves. Life is a constant struggle to become - to be - and it ends in failure. What distinguishes the overman from the human is his acceptance of his weakness, of his lusts, his penchant for destruction, for intoxication, violence, and the ultimately doomed nature of any project he aims (to high) to achieve. Life's greatest achievers are also it's greatest failures; in that they aim high, so their fall is greater.

Heidegger's yearning for a more authentic, pre-modern being, lead him idealize National Socialism and Hitler of all people (however much he later distanced himself the increasingly evident degraded, decadent, depraved reality of Nazism). It was Nietzsche who had his mock-prophet (Zarathustra) warn his followers against doing so:

beware, I may be deceiving you. To find me, you must first reject me. IE: become what YOU are, rather than try to be or follow what others are.

'He'll build a glass asylum

With just a hint of mayhem
He'll build a better whirlpool
We'll be living from sin, then we can really begin
'Please Savior, Savior, show us
Hear me, I'm graphically yours
'Someone to claim us, someone to follow.
Someone to shame us, some brave Apollo.
Someone to fool us, someone like You.
We want You big brother, big brother '

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=555xltr9Zo>
[disqus vMOaARNhA2](#) • 18 hours ago

Ay up! The RCP is trying to 'Have An Idea!' Classic RCP 'ideas' in the past have included: Soviet Russia was a stunted workers management state, or something like that... (The Soviet Union Demystified) and 'Lets prove that ITV is a propaganda arm of western liberal militarism by appealing to the High Court- Because we are sure to get a fair hearing there! (Yugoslavia)

A couple of intellectual classics, and now followed by:
'Lets prove that Jews are instruments of modernity'.

Both Sean Collins in his piece on Netanyahu's speech in America and this piece argue that 'at some level, Jews, in the form of Israel, embody modernity,' so the left hate them. I think we will probably be hearing quite a bit more of this guff in the coming weeks. Frank will probably be up next....

Considering what the RCP managed to achieve for the Serbs and the Soviets, if I was a 'modernist' Jew who had these intellectual giants guarding my back, I would be more than a little worried....

<http://www.smashwords.com/book...>
[Chris Tyson](#) • 18 hours ago

Interesting article. I can understand what it is to be Husserl or even Kierkegaard or Sartre for that matter, but I can't understand what it is to Heidegger. The former thinkers speak from the position of the oppressed or the outsider, but Heidegger is in a position of power. The oppressed seeks freedom from the oppressor. The oppressor having conquered is left with no purpose. The former come to terms with their lack of freedom, the latter struggles to find something meaningful to do.

[Peem Birrell](#) • 18 hours ago

>>But by the time of Heidegger's year-long rectorship of the University of Freiburg in 1933 A University of Mining and Technology? Think you mean Freiburg...

[Margit Appleton](#) • 19 hours ago

I like the connection to today's Israel hatred as an epigonal Heidegger residue. Would just want to point out that it's not factually correct that Heidegger habitually wore the NS-party pin on his lapel. He didn't.

[austrartsua](#) • 16 hours ago

Heidegger seems to me like the kid who sucked at maths in highschool. He gets an F and decides, "who cares about technology anyway, its just a way for the man to dominate nature. I don't want to be good at maths, the numbers have rights too. We cannot push them around at our will". Nevertheless his bush-league anti-modernism will live on because it resonates with people (idiots). We will indeed be contending with anti-mods and misanthropes for as long as there is a modernity to defend.

http://www.spikedonline.com/review_of_books/article/hating-modernity-hating-the-jews-a-reckoning-with-heidegger/16748#.VPrB1fmUeT8



The Point of No Return

Jeffrey Goldberg, *The Atlantic*, September 2010

For the Obama administration, the prospect of a nuclearized Iran is dismal to contemplate— it would create major new national-security challenges and crush the president's dream of ending nuclear proliferation. But the view from Jerusalem is still more dire: a nuclearized Iran represents, among other things, a threat to Israel's very existence. In the gap between Washington's and Jerusalem's views of Iran lies the question: who, if anyone, will stop Iran before it goes nuclear, and how? As Washington and Jerusalem study each other intensely, here's an inside look at the strategic calculations on both sides—and at how, if things remain on the current course, an Israeli air strike will unfold.

It is possible that at some point in the next 12 months, the imposition of devastating economic sanctions on the Islamic Republic of Iran will persuade its leaders to cease their pursuit of nuclear weapons. It is also possible that Iran's reform-minded Green Movement will somehow replace the mullah-led regime, or at least discover the means to temper the regime's ideological extremism. It is possible, as well, that "foiling operations" conducted by the intelligence agencies of Israel, the United States, Great Britain, and other Western powers — programs designed to subvert the Iranian nuclear effort through sabotage and, on occasion, the carefully engineered disappearances of nuclear scientists — will have hindered Iran's progress in some significant way. It is also possible that President Obama, who has said on more than a few occasions that he finds the prospect of a nuclear Iran "unacceptable", will order a military strike against the country's main weapon and uranium-enriched facilities.

But none of these things—least of all the notion that Barack Obama, for whom initiating new wars in the Middle East is not a foreign-policy goal, will soon order the American military into action against Iran—seems, at this moment, terribly likely. What is more likely, then, is that one day next spring, the Israeli national-security adviser, Uzi Arad, and the Israeli defense

minister, Ehud Barak, will simultaneously telephone their counterparts at the White House and the Pentagon, to inform them that their prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, has just ordered roughly one hundred F-15Es, F-16Is, F-16Cs, and other aircraft of the Israeli air force to fly east toward Iran—possibly by crossing Saudi Arabia, possibly by threading the border between Syria and Turkey, and possibly by traveling directly through Iraq's airspace, though it is crowded with American aircraft. (It's so crowded, in fact, that the United States Central Command, whose area of responsibility is the greater Middle East, has already asked the Pentagon what to do should Israeli aircraft invade its airspace. According to multiple sources, the answer came back: do not shoot them down.)

In these conversations, which will be fraught, the Israelis will tell their American counterparts that they are taking this drastic step because a nuclear Iran poses the gravest threat since Hitler to the physical survival of the Jewish people. The Israelis will also state that they believe they have a reasonable chance of delaying the Iranian nuclear program for at least three to five years. They will tell their American colleagues that Israel was left with no choice. They will not be asking for permission, because it will be too late to ask for permission.

When the Israelis begin to bomb the uranium-enrichment facility at Natanz, the formerly secret enrichment site at Qom, the nuclear-research center at Esfahan, and possibly even the Bushehr reactor, along with the other main sites of the Iranian nuclear program, a short while after they depart en masse from their bases across Israel—regardless of whether they succeed in destroying Iran's centrifuges and warhead and missile plants, or whether they fail miserably to even make a dent in Iran's nuclear program—they stand a good chance of changing the Middle East forever; of sparking lethal reprisals, and even a full-blown regional war that could lead to the deaths of thousands of Israelis and Iranians, and possibly Arabs and Americans as well; of creating a crisis for Barack Obama that will dwarf Afghanistan

in significance and complexity; of rupturing relations between Jerusalem and Washington, which is Israel's only meaningful ally; of inadvertently solidifying the somewhat tenuous rule of the mullahs in Tehran; of causing the price of oil to spike to cataclysmic highs, launching the world economy into a period of turbulence not experienced since the autumn of 2008, or possibly since the oil shock of 1973; of placing communities across the Jewish diaspora in mortal danger, by making them targets of Iranian-sponsored terror attacks, as they have been in the past, in a limited though already lethal way; and of accelerating Israel's conversion from a once-admired refuge for a persecuted people into a leper among nations.

If a strike does succeed in crippling the Iranian nuclear program, however, Israel, in addition to possibly generating some combination of the various catastrophes outlined above, will have removed from its list of existential worries the immediate specter of nuclear-weaponized, theologically driven, eliminationist anti-Semitism; it may derive for itself the secret thanks (though the public condemnation) of the Middle East's moderate Arab regimes, all of which fear an Iranian bomb with an intensity that in some instances matches Israel's; and it will have succeeded in countering, in militant fashion, the spread of nuclear weapons in the Middle East, which is, not irrelevantly, a prime goal of the enthusiastic counter-proliferator who currently occupies the White House.

I AM NOT ENGAGING in a thought exercise, or a one-man war game, when I discuss the plausibility and potential consequences of an Israeli strike on Iran. Israel has twice before successfully attacked and destroyed an enemy's nuclear program. In 1981, Israeli warplanes bombed the Iraqi reactor at [Osirak](#), halting—forever, as it turned out—Saddam Hussein's nuclear ambitions; and in 2007, Israeli planes destroyed a North Korean-built reactor in Syria. An attack on Iran, then, would be unprecedented only in scope and complexity.

I have been exploring the possibility that such a strike will eventually occur for more than seven years, since my first visit to Tehran, where I attempted to understand both the Iranian desire for nuclear weapons and the regime's theologically motivated desire to see the Jewish state purged from the Middle East, and especially since March of 2009, when I had an extended discussion about the Iranian nuclear program with Benjamin Netanyahu, hours before he was sworn in as Israel's prime minister. In the months since then, I have interviewed roughly 40 current and past Israeli decision makers about a military strike, as well as many American and Arab officials. In most of these interviews, I have asked a simple question: what is the percentage chance that Israel will attack the Iranian nuclear program in the near future? Not everyone would answer this question, but a consensus emerged that there is a better than 50 percent chance that Israel will launch a strike by next July. (Of course, it is in the Israeli interest to let it be known that the country is considering military action, if for no other reason than to concentrate the attention of the Obama administration. But I tested the consensus by speaking to multiple sources both in and out of government, and of different political parties. Citing the extraordinary sensitivity of the subject, most spoke only reluctantly, and on condition of anonymity.) They were not part of some public-relations campaign.) The reasoning offered by Israeli decision makers was uncomplicated: Iran is, at most, one to three years away from having a breakout nuclear capability (often understood to be the capacity to assemble more than one missile-ready nuclear device within about three months of deciding to do so). The Iranian regime, by its own statements and actions, has made itself Israel's most zealous foe; and the most crucial component of Israeli national-security doctrine, a tenet that dates back to the 1960s, when Israel developed its own nuclear capability as a response to the Jewish experience during the Holocaust, is that no regional adversary should be allowed to achieve nuclear parity with the reborn and still-besieged Jewish state.

In [our conversation before his swearing-in](#), Netanyahu would not frame the issue in terms of nuclear parity—the Israeli policy of *amimut*, or opacity, prohibits acknowledging the existence of

the country's nuclear arsenal, which consists of more than 100 weapons, mainly two-stage thermonuclear devices, capable of being delivered by missile, fighter-bomber, or submarine (two of which are said by intelligence sources to be currently positioned in the Persian Gulf). Instead, he framed the Iranian program as a threat not only to Israel but to all of Western civilization.

"You don't want a messianic apocalyptic cult controlling atomic bombs," he said. "When the wide-eyed believer gets hold of the reins of power and the weapons of mass death, then the world should start worrying, and that's what is happening in Iran." Israel, Netanyahu told me, is worried about an entire complex of problems, not only that Iran, or one of its proxies, would destroy Tel Aviv; like most Israeli leaders, he believes that if Iran gains possession of a nuclear weapon, it will use its new leverage to buttress its terrorist proxies in their attempts to make life difficult and dangerous; and he fears that Israel's status as a haven for Jews would be forever undermined, and with it, the entire *raison d'être* of the 100-year-old Zionist experiment.

IN OUR CONVERSATION, Netanyahu refused to discuss his timetable for action, or even whether he was considering military preemption of the Iranian nuclear program. But others familiar with his thinking helped me understand his worldview. Netanyahu's belief is that Iran is not Israel's problem alone; it is the world's problem, and the world, led by the United States, is duty-bound to grapple with it. But Netanyahu does not place great faith in sanctions—not the relatively weak sanctions against Iran recently passed by the United Nations Security Council, nor the more rigorous ones being put in place by the U.S. and its European allies. Those close to him say that Netanyahu understands, however, that President Obama, with whom he has had a difficult and intermittently frigid—though lately thawing—relationship, believes that stringent sanctions, combined with various enticements to engage with the West, might still provide Iran with what one American administration official described to me as "a dignified off-ramp for Tehran to take."

But, based on my conversations with Israeli decision-makers, this period of forbearance, in which Netanyahu waits to see if the West's nonmilitary methods can stop Iran, will come to an end this December. Robert Gates, the American defense secretary, said in June at a meeting of NATO defense ministers that most intelligence estimates predict that Iran is one to three years away from building a nuclear weapon. "In Israel, we heard this as nine months from June—in other words, March of 2011," one Israeli policy maker told me. "If we assume that nothing changes in these estimates, this means that we will have to begin thinking about our next step beginning at the turn of the year."

The Netanyahu government is already intensifying its analytic efforts not just on Iran, but on a subject many Israelis have difficulty understanding: President Obama. The Israelis are struggling to answer what is for them the most pressing question: are there any circumstances under which President Obama would deploy force to stop Iran from going nuclear? Everything depends on the answer.

The Israelis argue that Iran demands the urgent attention of the entire international community, and in particular the United States, with its unparalleled ability to project military force. This is the position of many moderate Arab leaders as well. A few weeks ago, in uncommonly direct remarks, the ambassador of the United Arab Emirates to the United States, Yousef al-Otaiba, told me—in a public forum at the Aspen Ideas Festival—that his country would support a military strike on Iran's nuclear facilities. He also said that if America allowed Iran to cross the nuclear threshold, the small Arab countries of the Gulf would have no choice but to leave the American orbit and ally themselves with Iran, out of self-protection. "There are many countries in the region who, if they lack the assurance the U.S. is willing to confront Iran, they will start running for cover towards Iran," he said. "Small, rich, vulnerable countries in the region do not want to be the ones who stick their finger in the big bully's eye, if nobody's going to come to their support."

Several Arab leaders have jokingly suggested that America's standing in the Middle East depends on its willingness to confront Iran. They argue self-interestedly that an aerial attack on a handful of Iranian facilities would not be as complicated or as messy as, say, invading Iraq. "This is not a discussion about the invasion of Iran," one Arab foreign minister told me. "We are hoping for the pinpoint striking of several dangerous facilities. America could do this very easily."

The Israeli national-security adviser, Uzi Arad, once told me that the prime minister will sometimes, in the course of briefing foreign visitors on the importance of taking action against Iran's nuclear program, say jokingly: "Let me tell you a secret. The American military is bigger than Israel's."

Barack Obama has said any number of times that he would find a nuclear Iran "unacceptable." His [most stalwart comments on the subject](#) have been discounted by some Israeli officials because they were made during his campaign for the presidency, while visiting Sderot, the town in southern Israel that had been the frequent target of rocket attacks by Hamas. "The world must prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon," he said. "I will take no options off the table in dealing with this potential Iranian threat. And understand part of my reasoning here. A nuclear Iran would be a game-changing situation, not just in the Middle East, but around the world. Whatever remains of our nuclear nonproliferation framework, I think, would begin to disintegrate. You would have countries in the Middle East who would see the potential need to also obtain nuclear weapons."

But the Israelis are doubtful that a man who positioned himself as the antithesis of George W. Bush, author of invasions of both Afghanistan and Iraq, would launch a preemptive attack on a Muslim nation.

"We all watched his speech in Cairo," a senior Israeli official told me, referring to the June 2009 speech in which Obama attempted to reset relations with Muslims by stressing American cooperativeness and respect for Islam. "We don't believe that he is the sort of person who would launch a daring strike on Iran. We are afraid he would see a policy of containing a nuclear Iran rather than attacking it."

This official noted that even Bush balked at attacking Iran's nuclear facilities, and discouraged the Israelis from carrying out the attack on their own. (Bush would sometimes mock those aides and commentators who advocated an attack on Iran, even referring to the conservative columnists Charles Krauthammer and William Kristol as "the bomber boys," according to two people I spoke with who overheard this.)

"Bush was two years ago, but the Iranian program was the same and the intent was the same," the Israeli official told me. "So I don't personally expect Obama to be more Bush than Bush."

If the Israelis reach the firm conclusion that Obama will not, under any circumstances, launch a strike on Iran, then the countdown will begin for a unilateral Israeli attack. "If the choice is between allowing Iran to go nuclear, or trying for ourselves what Obama won't try, then we probably have to try," the official told me.

Which brings us to a second question, one having to do with the nature of the man considering military action: would Netanyahu, a prime minister with an acute understanding of the essential role America plays in securing the existence of Israel (Netanyahu is a graduate of both Cheltenham High School, outside Philadelphia, and MIT, and is the most Americanized prime minister in Israel's history, more so even than the Milwaukee-raised Golda Meir), actually take a chance on permanently alienating American affection in order to make a high-risk attempt at stopping Iran? If Iran retaliates against American troops in Iraq or Afghanistan, the consequences for Israel's relationship with America's military leadership could be catastrophic. (Of course, Netanyahu would be risking more than his relationship with the United States: a strike on Iran, Israeli intelligence officials believe, could provoke all-out retaliation by Iran's Lebanese subsidiary, Hezbollah, which now possesses, by most intelligence estimates, as many as 45,000 rockets—at least three times as many as it had in the summer of 2006, during the last round of fighting between the group and Israel.)

"The only reason Bibi [Netanyahu] would place Israel's relationship with America in total jeopardy is if he thinks that Iran represents a threat like the Shoah," an Israeli official who spends considerable time with the prime minister told me. "In World War II, the Jews had no power to stop Hitler from annihilating us. Six million were slaughtered. Today, 6 million Jews live in Israel, and someone is threatening them with annihilation. But now we have the power to stop them. Bibi knows that this is the choice."

Numerous Israeli commentators and analysts have pointed out to me that Netanyahu is not unique in his understanding of this challenge; several of the prime ministers who preceded him cast Iran's threat in similarly existential terms. Still, Netanyahu is different. "He has a deep sense of his role in Jewish history," Michael Oren, Israel's ambassador to the United States, told me. To understand why Netanyahu possesses this deep sense—and why his understanding of Jewish history might lead him to attack Iran, even over Obama's objections—it is necessary to understand Ben-Zion Netanyahu, his 100-year-old father.

BEN-ZION NETANYAHU—his first name means "son of Zion"—is the world's foremost historian of the Spanish Inquisition and a onetime secretary to Vladimir Jabotinsky, the founder of the intractable, "revisionist" branch of Zionism. He is father to a tragic Israeli hero, Yonatan Netanyahu, who died while freeing the Jewish hostages at Entebbe in 1976; and also father to Benjamin, who strives for greatness in his father's eyes but has, on occasion, disappointed him, notably when he acquiesced, in his first term as prime minister in the late 1990s, to American pressure and withdrew Israeli forces from much of the West Bank city of Hebron, Judaism's second-holiest city. Benjamin Netanyahu is not known in most quarters for his pliability on matters concerning Palestinians, though he has been trying lately to meet at least some of Barack Obama's demands that he move the peace process forward.

"Always in the back of Bibi's mind is Ben-Zion," one of the prime minister's friends told me. "He worries that his father will think he is weak."

Ben-Zion Netanyahu's most important work, *The Origins of the Inquisition in 15th-Century Spain*, upended the scholarly consensus on the roots of that bleak chapter in Jewish history. He argued that Spanish hatred of Jews was spurred by the principle of *limpieza de sangre*, or the purity of blood; it was proto-Nazi thought, in other words, not mere theology, that motivated the Inquisition. Ben-Zion also argued that the Inquisition corresponds to the axiom that anti-Semitic persecution is preceded, in all cases, by carefully scripted and lengthy dehumanization campaigns meant to ensure the efficient eventual elimination of Jews. To him, the lessons of Jewish history are plain and insistent.

Ben-Zion, by all accounts, was worshipped by his sons in their childhood, and today, the 60-year-old Benjamin, who has been known to act in charmless ways, conspicuously upholds the Fifth Commandment when discussing his father. At a party marking Ben-Zion's 100th birthday, held this past March at the Menachem Begin Heritage Center in Jerusalem, before an assembly that included the president of Israel, Shimon Peres, Benjamin credited his father with forecasting the Shoah and, in the early 1990s, predicting that "Muslim extremists would try to bring down the Twin Towers in New York." But he also told stories in a warmer and more personal vein, describing a loving father who, though a grim and forbidding figure to outsiders, enjoys cowboy movies and played soccer with his sons.

After a brief debate between Ben-Zion and another prominent academic about competing interpretations of the Inquisition—"It is an unusual 100th-birthday commemoration when a debate about the Inquisition breaks out," said Menachem Begin's son, Benny, who is a minister-without-portfolio in Netanyahu's cabinet—Ben-Zion rose to make valedictory remarks. His speech, unlike his son's, was succinct, devoid of sentiment, and strikingly unambiguous.

"Our party this evening compels me to speak of recent comments made about the continued existence of the nation of Israel and the new threats by its enemies depicting its upcoming destruction," Ben-Zion began. "From the Iranian side, we hear

pledges that soon—in a matter of days, even—the Zionist movement will be put to an end and there will be no more Zionists in the world. One is supposed to conclude from this that the Jews of the Land of Israel will be annihilated, while the Jews of America, whose leaders refuse to pressure Iran, are being told in a hinted fashion that the annihilation of the Jews will not include them.”

He went on, “The Jewish people are making their position clear and putting faith in their military power. The nation of Israel is showing the world today how a state should behave when it stands before an existential threat: by looking danger in the eye and calmly considering what should be done and what can be done. And to be ready to enter the fray at the moment there is a reasonable chance of success.”

Many people in Likud Party circles have told me that those who discount Ben-Zion’s influence on his son do so at their peril. “This was the father giving his son history’s marching orders,” one of the attendees told me. “I watched Bibi while his father spoke. He was completely absorbed.” (One of Netanyahu’s Knesset allies told me, indelicately, though perhaps not inaccurately, that the chance for movement toward the creation of an independent Palestinian state will come only after Ben-Zion’s death. “Bibi could not withdraw from more of Judea and Samaria—the biblical names for the West Bank—and still look into his father’s eyes.”)

On Iran, Benjamin Netanyahu frames the crisis in nearly the same world-historical terms as his father. “Iran has threatened to annihilate a state,” Netanyahu told me. “In historical terms, this is an astounding thing. It’s a monumental outrage that goes effectively unchallenged in the court of public opinion. Sure, there are perfunctory condemnations, but there’s no *j’accuse*—there’s no shock.” He argued that a crucial lesson of history is that “bad things tend to get worse if they’re not challenged early.” He continued, “Iranian leaders talk about Israel’s destruction or disappearance while simultaneously creating weapons to ensure its disappearance.”

ONE OF THE MORE melancholic aspects of the confrontation between Iran and Israel is that Persian and Jewish civilizations have not forever been adversaries; one of the heroes of the Bible is the Persian king Cyrus, who restored the Jews to the land of Israel from their Babylonian captivity 2,500 years ago. (A few years after Harry Truman granted recognition to the reborn state of Israel in 1948, he declared, “I am Cyrus.”)

Iran is the home of an ancient Jewish community—Jews have lived there since the Babylonian exile, a millennium before Muhammad’s followers carried Islam to Persia. And in the modern era, Iran and Israel maintained close diplomatic ties before the overthrow of the shah in 1979; Israel’s support of the shah obviously angered his enemies, the newly empowered mullahs in Tehran, but this is insufficient to explain the depth of official Iranian hatred of Israel and Jews; something else must explain the sentiment expressed by Mohsen Rezai, the former commander of Iran’s Revolutionary Guard Corps, who said in 1991—14 years before the rise of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the Iranian politician most associated in the West with the regime’s flamboyant anti-Semitism—“The day will come when, like Salman Rushdie, the Jews will not find a place to live anywhere in the world.”

The answer might be found in a line of Shia Muslim thinking that views Jews as ritually contaminated, a view derived in part from the Koran’s portrayal of Jews as treasonous foes of the Prophet Muhammad. As Robert Wistrich recounts in his new history of anti-Semitism, [A Lethal Obsession](#), through the 17th and 18th centuries Shia clerics viewed Jews variously as “the leprosy of creation” and “the most unclean of the human race.” I once asked Ali Asghar Soltanieh, a leading Iranian diplomat who is now Iran’s ambassador to the International Atomic Energy Agency, why the leadership of Iran persistently described Israel not as a mere regional malefactor but as a kind of infectious disease. “Do you disagree?” he asked. “Do you not see that this is true?”

In [a speech in June](#), Ahmadinejad, the Iranian president, explained Middle East history this way: “Sixty years ago, by means of an artificial and false pretext, and by fabricating

information and inventing stories, they gathered the filthiest, most criminal people, who only appear to be human, from all corners of the world. They organized and armed them, and provided them with media and military backing. Thus, they occupied the Palestinian lands, and displaced the Palestinian people.” The “invented story” is, of course, the Holocaust. Ahmadinejad’s efforts to deny the historical truth of the Holocaust have the endorsement of high officialdom: the Iranian foreign minister, Manouchehr Mottaki, said in 2005, “The words of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad on the Holocaust and on Israel are not personal opinion, nor isolated statements, but they express the view of the government.”

The Iranian leadership’s own view of nuclear dangers is perhaps best exemplified by a comment made in 2001 by the former Iranian president Ali Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani, who entertained the idea that Israel’s demise could be brought about in a relatively pain-free manner for the Muslim world. “The use of an atomic bomb against Israel would destroy Israel completely while [a nuclear attack] against the Islamic countries would only cause damages,” Rafsanjani said.

It is this line of thinking, which suggests that rational deterrence theory, or the threat of mutual assured destruction, might not apply in the case of Iran, that has the Israeli government on a knife’s edge. And this is not a worry that is confined to Israel’s right. Even the left-wing Meretz Party, which is harsh in its condemnation of Netanyahu’s policies toward the Palestinians, considers Iran’s nuclear program to be an existential threat.

Israeli policy makers do not necessarily believe that Iran, should it acquire a nuclear device, would immediately launch it by missile at Tel Aviv. “On the one hand, they would like to see the Jews wiped out,” one Israeli defense official told me. “On the other hand, they know that Israel has unlimited reprisal capability”—this is an Israeli euphemism for the country’s second-strike nuclear arsenal—“and despite what Rafsanjani and others say, we think they know that they are putting Persian civilization at risk.”

The challenges posed by a nuclear Iran are more subtle than a direct attack, Netanyahu told me. “Several bad results would emanate from this single development. First, Iran’s militant proxies would be able to fire rockets and engage in other terror activities while enjoying a nuclear umbrella. This raises the stakes of any confrontation that they’d force on Israel. Instead of being a local event, however painful, it becomes a global one. Second, this development would embolden Islamic militants far and wide, on many continents, who would believe that this is a providential sign, that this fanaticism is on the ultimate road to triumph.

“You’d create a great sea change in the balance of power in our area,” he went on. An Iran with nuclear weapons would also attempt to persuade Arab countries to avoid making peace with Israel, and it would spark a regional nuclear-arms race. “The Middle East is incendiary enough, but with a nuclear-arms race, it will become a tinderbox,” he said.

Other Israeli leaders believe that the mere threat of a nuclear attack by Iran—combined with the chronic menacing of Israel’s cities by the rocket forces of Hamas and Hezbollah—will progressively undermine the country’s ability to retain its most creative and productive citizens. Ehud Barak, the defense minister, told me that this is his great fear for Israel’s future.

“The real threat to Zionism is the dilution of quality,” he said. “Jews know that they can land on their feet in any corner of the world. The real test for us is to make Israel such an attractive place, such a cutting-edge place in human society, education, culture, science, quality of life, that even American Jewish young people want to come here.” This vision is threatened by Iran and its proxies, Barak said. “Our young people can consciously decide to go other places,” if they dislike living under the threat of nuclear attack. “Our best youngsters could stay out of here by choice.”

Patriotism in Israel runs very high, according to numerous polls, and it seemed unlikely to me that mere fear of Iran could drive Israel’s Jews to seek shelter elsewhere. But one leading proponent of an Israeli attack on Iran’s nuclear facilities, Ephraim Sneh, a former general and former deputy defense

minister, is convinced that if Iran crossed the nuclear threshold, the very idea of Israel would be endangered. "These people are good citizens, and brave citizens, but the dynamics of life are such that if someone has a scholarship for two years at an American university and the university offers him a third year, the parents will say, 'Go ahead, remain there,'" Sneh told me when I met with him in his office outside of Tel Aviv not long ago. "If someone finishes a Ph.D. and they are offered a job in America, they might stay there. It will not be that people are running to the airport, but slowly, slowly, the decision-making on the family level will be in favor of staying abroad. The bottom line is that we would have an accelerated brain drain. And an Israel that is not based on entrepreneurship, that is not based on excellence, will not be the Israel of today."

Most critically, Sneh said, if Israel is no longer understood by its 6 million Jewish citizens, and by the roughly 7 million Jews who live outside of Israel, to be a "natural safe haven," then its *raison d'être* will have been subverted. He directed my attention to a framed photograph on his wall of three Israeli air force F-15s flying over Auschwitz, in Poland. The Israelis had been invited in 2003 by the Polish air force to make this highly symbolic flight. The photograph was not new to me; I had seen it before on a dozen office walls in the Israeli Defense Ministry in Tel Aviv. "You see those planes?" Sneh asked me. "That's the picture I look at all the time. When someone says that they will wipe out the Jews, we have to deny him the tools. The problem with the photograph is that we were too late."

To understand why Israelis of different political dispositions see Iran as quite possibly the most crucial challenge they have faced in their 62-year history, one must keep in mind the near-sacredness, in the public's mind, of Israel's nuclear monopoly. The Israeli national narrative, in shorthand, begins with *shoah*, which is Hebrew for "calamity," and ends with *tkumah*, "rebirth." Israel's nuclear arsenal symbolizes national rebirth, and something else as well: that Jews emerged from World War II having learned at least one lesson, about the price of powerlessness.

In his new book, [The Worst-Kept Secret: Israel's Bargain With the Bomb](#), Avner Cohen, the preeminent historian of Israel's nuclear program, writes that David Ben-Gurion, Israel's first prime minister, was nearly obsessed with developing nuclear weapons as the only guarantor against further slaughter. "What Einstein, Oppenheimer, and Teller, the three of them are Jews, made for the United States, could also be done by scientists in Israel, for their own people," Ben-Gurion declared. Cohen argues that the umbrella created by Israel's nuclear monopoly has allowed the Jewish state to recover from the wounds of the Holocaust.

But those wounds do not heal, Sneh says. "The Shoah is not some sort of psychological complex. It is an historic lesson. My grandmother and my grandfather were from Poland. My father fought for the Polish army as an officer and escaped in 1940. My grandparents stayed, and they were killed by the Polish farmer who was supposed to give them shelter, for a lot of money. That's why I don't trust the goyim. One time is enough. I don't put my life in the hands of goyim."

ONE MONDAY EVENING in early summer, I sat in the office of the decidedly non-*goyishe* Rahm Emanuel, the White House chief of staff, and listened to several National Security Council officials he had gathered at his conference table explain—in so many words—why the Jewish state should trust the non-Jewish president of the United States to stop Iran from crossing the nuclear threshold.

"The expression 'All options are on the table' means that all options are on the table," Emanuel told me before the meeting, in a tone meant to suggest both resolve and irritation at those who believe the president lacks such resolve. The group interview he had arranged was a kind of rolling seminar on the challenges Iran poses; half a dozen officials made variations of the same argument: that President Obama spends more time talking with foreign leaders on Iran than on any other subject.

One of those at the table, Ben Rhodes, a deputy national-security adviser who served as the lead author of the recent "National Security Strategy for the United States" as well as of

the president's conciliatory Cairo speech, suggested that Iran's nuclear program was a clear threat to American security, and that the Obama administration responds to national-security threats in the manner of other administrations. "We are coordinating a multifaceted strategy to increase pressure on Iran, but that doesn't mean we've removed any option from the table," Rhodes said. "This president has shown again and again that when he believes it is necessary to use force to protect American national-security interests, he has done so. We're not going to address hypotheticals about when and if we would use military force, but I think we've made it clear that we aren't removing the option of force from any situation in which our national security is affected."

There was an intermittently prickly quality to this meeting, and not only because it was hosted by Emanuel, whose default state is exasperation. For more than a year, these White House officials have parried the charge that their president is unwilling to face the potential consequences of a nuclear Iran, and they are frustrated by what they believe to be a caricature of his position. (A former Bush administration official told me that his president faced the opposite problem: Bush, bogged down by two wars and believing that Iran wasn't that close to crossing the nuclear threshold, opposed the use of force against Iran's program, and made his view clear, "but no one believed him.")

At one point, I put forward the idea that for abundantly obvious reasons, few people would believe Barack Obama would open up a third front in the greater Middle East. One of the officials responded heatedly, "What have we done that would allow you to reach the conclusion that we think that a nuclear Iran would represent a tolerable situation?"

It is undeniably true, however, that the administration has appeared on occasion less than stalwart on the issue. The French president, Nicolas Sarkozy, has criticized Obama as a purveyor of baseless hope. At the UN Security Council last September, [Sarkozy said](#), "I support the extended hand of the Americans, but what good have proposals for dialogue brought the international community? More uranium enrichment and declarations by the leaders of Iran to wipe a UN member state off the map," he said, referring to Israel.

Obama administration officials, particularly in the Pentagon, have several times signaled unhappiness at the possibility of military preemption. In April, the undersecretary of defense for policy, Michele Flournoy, [told reporters](#) that military force against Iran was "off the table in the near term." She later backtracked, but Admiral Michael Mullen, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, has also criticized the idea of attacking Iran. "Iran getting a nuclear weapon would be incredibly destabilizing. Attacking them would also create the same kind of outcome," he said in April. "In an area that's so unstable right now, we just don't need more of that."

The gathering in Emanuel's office was meant to communicate a number of clear messages to me, including one that was more militant than that delivered by Admiral Mullen: President Obama has by no means ruled out counterproliferation by force. The meeting was also meant to communicate that Obama's outreach to the Iranians was motivated not by naïveté, but by a desire to test Tehran's intentions in a deliberate fashion; that the president understands that an Iranian bomb would spur a regional arms race that could destroy his antiproliferation program; and that American and Israeli assessments of Iran's nuclear program are synchronized in ways they were not before. One official at the table, Gary Samore, the National Security Council official who oversees the administration's counterproliferation agenda, told me that the Israelis agree with American assessments that Iran's uranium-enrichment program is plagued with problems.

"The most essential measure of nuclear-weapons capability is how quickly they can build weapons-grade material, and from that standpoint we can measure, based on the IAEA reports, that the Iranians are not doing well," Samore said. "The particular centrifuge machines they're running are based on an inferior technology. They are running into some technical difficulties, partly because of the work we've done to deny them access to foreign components. When they make the parts

themselves, they are making parts that don't have quality control." (When I mentioned this comment to a senior Israeli official, he said, "We agree with this American assessment, but we also agree with Secretary Gates that Iran is one year away from crossing the nuclear threshold.")

Dennis Ross, the former Middle East peace negotiator who is currently a senior National Security Council official, said during the meeting that he believes the Israelis now understand that American-instigated measures have slowed Iran's progress, and that the administration is working to convince the Israelis—and other parties in the region—that the sanctions strategy "has a chance of working."

"The president has said he hasn't taken any options off the table, but let's take a look at why we think this strategy could work," he said. "We have interesting data points over the past year, about Iran trying to deflect pressure when they thought that pressure was coming, which suggests that their ability to calculate costs and benefits is quite real. Last June, when they hadn't responded to our bilateral outreach, the president said that we would take stock by September. Two weeks before the G-20—a meeting of the leaders of the world's 20 largest economies—the Iranians said they would talk, after having resisted talking until that point. They didn't do it because suddenly they saw the light; they did it because pressure was coming. They're able to think about what matters to them."

Ross went on to argue that the sanctions Iran now faces may affect the regime's thinking. "The sanctions are going to cut across the board. They are taking place in the context of Iranian mismanagement—the Iranians are going to have to cut [food and fuel] subsidies; they already have public alienation; they have division in the elites, and between the elites and the rest of the country. They are looking at the costs of trying to maintain control over a disaffected public. They wanted to head off sanctions because they knew that sanctions would be a problem. There is real potential here to affect their calculus. We're pursuing a path right now that has some potential. It doesn't mean you don't think about everything else, but we're on a path."

One question no administration official seems eager to answer is this: what will the United States do if sanctions fail? Several Arab officials complained to me that the Obama administration has not communicated its intentions to them, even generally. No Arab officials I spoke with appeared to believe that the administration understands the regional ambitions of their Persian adversary. One Arab foreign minister told me that he believes Iran is taking advantage of Obama's "reasonableness." "Obama's voters like it when the administration shows that it doesn't want to fight Iran, but this is not a domestic political issue," the foreign minister said. "Iran will continue on this reckless path, unless the administration starts to speak unreasonably. The best way to avoid striking Iran is to make Iran think that the U.S. is about to strike Iran. We have to know the president's intentions on this matter. We are his allies." (According to two administration sources, this issue caused tension between President Obama and his recently dismissed director of national intelligence, Admiral Dennis Blair. According to these sources, Blair, who was said to put great emphasis on the Iranian threat, told the president that America's Arab allies needed more reassurance. Obama reportedly did not appreciate the advice.)

In Israel, of course, officials expend enormous amounts of energy to understand President Obama, despite the assurances they have received from Emanuel, Ross, and others. Delegations from Netanyahu's bureau, from the defense and foreign ministries, and from the Israeli intelligence community have been arriving in Washington lately with great regularity. "We pack our thermometers and go to Washington and take everyone's temperature," one Israeli official told me.

The increased tempo of these visits is only one sign of deepening contacts between Israel and America, as Iran moves closer to nuclear breakout: the chief of staff of the Israeli army, Lieutenant General Gabi Ashkenazi, is said to speak now with his American counterpart, Admiral Mullen, regularly. Mullen recently made a stop in Israel that had one main purpose,

according to an Israeli source: "to make sure we didn't do anything in Iran before they thought we might do something in Iran."

Not long ago, the chief of Israeli military intelligence, Major General Amos Yadlin, paid a secret visit to Chicago to meet with Lester Crown, the billionaire whose family owns a significant portion of General Dynamics, the military contractor. Crown is one of Israel's most prominent backers in the American Jewish community, and was one of Barack Obama's earliest and most steadfast supporters. According to sources in America and Israel, General Yadlin asked Crown to communicate Israel's existential worries directly to President Obama. When I reached Crown by phone, he confirmed that he had met with Yadlin, but denied that the general traveled to Chicago to deliver this message. "Maybe he has a cousin in Chicago or something," Crown said. But he did say that Yadlin discussed with him the "Iranian clock"—the time remaining before Iran reached nuclear capability—and that he agreed with Yadlin that the United States must stop Iran before it goes nuclear. "I share with the Israelis the feeling that we certainly have the military capability and that we have to have the will to use it. The rise of Iran is not in the best interest of the U.S."

"I support the president," Crown said. "But I wish [administration officials] were a little more outgoing in the way they have talked. I would feel more comfortable if I knew that they had the will to use military force, as a last resort. You cannot threaten someone as a bluff. There has to be a will to do it."

On my last visit to Israel, I was asked almost a dozen times by senior officials and retired generals if I could explain Barack Obama and his feelings about Israel. Several officials even asked if I considered Obama to be an anti-Semite. I answered this question by quoting Abner Mikva, the former congressman, federal judge, and mentor to Obama, who famously said in 2008, "I think when this is all over, people are going to say that Barack Obama is the first Jewish president." I explained that Obama has been saturated with the work of Jewish writers, legal scholars, and thinkers, and that a large number of his friends, supporters, and aides are Jewish. But philo-Semitism does not necessarily equal sympathy for Netanyahu's Likud Party—certainly not among American Jews, who are, like the president they voted for in overwhelming numbers, generally supportive of a two-state solution, and dubious about Jewish settlement of the West Bank.

When I made these points to one senior Israeli official, he said: "This is the problem. If he is a J Street Jew, we are in trouble." J Street is the liberal pro-Israel organization established to counter the influence of AIPAC and other groups. "We're worried that he thinks like the liberal American Jews who say, 'If we remove some settlements, then the extremist problem and the Iran problem go away.'"

Rahm Emanuel suggested that the administration is trying to thread a needle: providing "unshakeable" support for Israel; protecting it from the consequences of an Iranian nuclear bomb; but pushing it toward compromise with the Palestinians. Emanuel, in our meeting, disputed that Israel is incapable of moving forward on the peace process so long as Iran looms as an existential threat. And he drafted the past six Israeli prime ministers—including Netanyahu, who during his first term in the late 1990s, to his father's chagrin, compromised with the Palestinians—to buttress his case. "Rabin, Peres, Netanyahu, Barak, Sharon, Olmert—every one of them pursued some form of a negotiated settlement, which would have been in Israel's own strategic interest," he said. "There have been plenty of other threats while successive Israeli governments have pursued a peace process. There is no doubt that Iran is a major threat, but they didn't just flip the switch on [the nuclear program] a year ago."

Emanuel had one more message to deliver: for the most practical of reasons, Israel should consider carefully whether a military strike would be worth the trouble it would unleash. "I'm not sure that given the time line, whatever the time line is, that whatever they did, they wouldn't stop" the nuclear program, he said. "They would be postponing."

It was then that I realized that, on some subjects, the Israelis and Americans are still talking past each other. The Americans consider a temporary postponement of Iran's nuclear program to be of dubious value. The Israelis don't. "When Menachem Begin bombed Osirak [in Iraq], he had been told that his actions would set back the Iraqis one year," one cabinet minister told me. "He did it anyway."

IN MY CONVERSATIONS with former Israeli air-force generals and strategists, the prevalent tone was cautious. Many people I interviewed were ready, on condition of anonymity, to say why an attack on Iran's nuclear sites would be difficult for Israel. And some Israeli generals, like their American colleagues, questioned the very idea of an attack. "Our time would be better spent lobbying Barack Obama to do this, rather than trying this ourselves," one general told me. "We are very good at this kind of operation, but it is a big stretch for us. The Americans can do this with a minimum of difficulty, by comparison. This is too big for us."

Successive Israeli prime ministers have ordered their military tacticians to draw up plans for a strike on Iran, and the Israeli air force has, of course, complied. It is impossible to know for sure how the Israelis might carry out such an operation, but knowledgeable officials in both Washington and Tel Aviv shared certain assumptions with me.

The first is that Israel would get only one try. Israeli planes would fly low over Saudi Arabia, bomb their targets in Iran, and return to Israel by flying again over Saudi territory, possibly even landing in the Saudi desert for refueling—perhaps, if speculation rife in intelligence circles is to be believed, with secret Saudi cooperation. These planes would have to return home quickly, in part because Israeli intelligence believes that Iran would immediately order Hezbollah to fire rockets at Israeli cities, and Israeli air-force resources would be needed to hunt Hezbollah rocket teams.

When I visited Major General Gadi Eisenkot, the general in charge of Israel's Northern Command, at his headquarters near the Lebanese border, he told me that in the event of a unilateral Israeli strike on Iran, his mission would be to combat Hezbollah rocket forces. Eisenkot said that the 2006 war between Hezbollah and Israel, which began when Hezbollah fighters crossed the border and attacked an Israeli patrol, was seen by the group's Iranian sponsors as a strategic mistake. "The Iranians got angry at Hezbollah for jumping ahead like that," Eisenkot said. American and Israeli intelligence officials agree that the Iranians are now hoping to keep Hezbollah in reserve until Iran can cross the nuclear threshold.

Eisenkot contended that the 2006 war was a setback for Hezbollah. "Hezbollah suffered a lot during this war," he said. Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, Hezbollah's leader, "lost a lot of his men. He knows he made a mistake. That is one reason we have had four years of quiet. What has changed in four years is that Hezbollah has increased its missile capability, but we have increased our capabilities as well." He concluded by saying, in reference to a potential Israeli strike on Iran, "Our readiness means that Israel has freedom of action."

Even if Israel's Northern Command successfully combated Hezbollah rocket attacks in the wake of an Israeli strike, political limitations would not allow Israel to make repeated sorties over Iran. "The Saudis can let us go once," one general told me. "They'll turn their radar off when we're on our way to Iran, and we'll come back fast. Our problem is not Iranian air defenses, because we have ways of neutralizing that. Our problem is that the Saudis will look very guilty in the eyes of the world if we keep flying over their territory."

America, too, would look complicit in an Israeli attack, even if it had not been forewarned. The assumption—often, but not always, correct—that Israel acts only with the approval of the United States is a feature of life in the Middle East, and it is one the Israelis say they are taking into account. I spoke with several Israeli officials who are grappling with this question, among others: what if American intelligence learns about Israeli intentions hours before the scheduled launch of an attack? "It is a nightmare for us," one of these officials told me. "What if President Obama calls up Bibi and says, 'We know what you're

doing. Stop immediately.' Do we stop? We might have to. A decision has been made that we can't lie to the Americans about our plans. We don't want to inform them beforehand. This is for their sake and for ours. So what do we do? These are the hard questions." (Two officials suggested that Israel may go on pre-attack alert a number of times before actually striking: "After the fifth or sixth time, maybe no one would believe that we're really going," one official said.)

Another question Israeli planners struggle with: how will they know if their attacks have actually destroyed a significant number of centrifuges and other hard-to-replace parts of the clandestine Iranian program? Two strategists told me that Israel will have to dispatch commandos to finish the job, if necessary, and bring back proof of the destruction. The commandos—who, according to intelligence sources, may be launched from the autonomous Kurdish territory in northern Iraq—would be facing a treacherous challenge, but one military planner I spoke with said the army would have no choice but to send them.

"It is very important to be able to tell the Israeli people what we have achieved," he said. "Many Israelis think the Iranians are building Auschwitz. We have to let them know that we have destroyed Auschwitz, or we have to let them know that we tried and failed."

There are, of course, Israeli leaders who believe that attacking Iran is too risky. Gabi Ashkenazi, the Israeli army chief of staff, is said by numerous sources to doubt the usefulness of an attack, and other generals I spoke with worry that talk of an "existential threat" is itself a kind of existential threat to the Zionist project, which was meant to preclude such threats against the Jewish people. "We don't want politicians to put us in a bad position because of the word *Shoah*," one general said. "We don't want our neighbors to think that we are helpless against an Iran with a nuclear bomb, because Iran might have the bomb one day. There is no guarantee that Israel will do this, or that America will do this."

After staring at the photograph of the Israeli air-force flyover of Auschwitz more than a dozen different times in more than a dozen different offices, I came to see the contradiction at its core. If the Jewish physicists who created Israel's nuclear arsenal could somehow have ripped a hole in the space-time continuum and sent a squadron of fighters back to 1942, then the problem of Auschwitz would have been solved in 1942. In other words, the creation of a serious Jewish military capability—a nuclear bomb, say, or the Israeli air force—during World War II would have meant a quicker end to the Holocaust. It is fair to say, then, that the existence of the Israeli air force, and of Israel's nuclear arsenal, means axiomatically that the Iranian nuclear program is not the equivalent of Auschwitz.

I put this formula to Ephraim Sneh, the former general and staunch advocate of an Israeli attack. "We have created a strategic balance in our favor," he said, "but Iran may launch a ballistic missile with a nuclear bomb, and this F-15 in the picture cannot prevent that."

This is a devilish problem. And devilish problems have sometimes caused Israel to overreach.

Benjamin Netanyahu feels, for reasons of national security, that if sanctions fail, he will be forced to take action. But an Israeli attack on Iran's nuclear facilities, successful or not, may cause Iran to redouble its efforts—this time with a measure of international sympathy—to create a nuclear arsenal. And it could cause chaos for America in the Middle East. One of the few people I spoke with in Israel who seemed to be at least somewhat phlegmatic about Iran's nuclear threat was the country's president, Shimon Peres, the last member of Israel's founding generation still in government. Peres sees the Iranian nuclear program as potentially catastrophic, to be sure. But he advocates the imposition of "moral sanctions" followed by economic sanctions, and then the creation of "an envelope around Iran of anti-missile systems so the missiles of Iran will not be able to fly." When I asked if he believed in a military option, he said, "Why should I declare something like that?" He indicated he was uncomfortable with the idea of unilateral Israeli action and suggested that Israel can afford to recognize its limitations, because he believes, unlike many Israelis, that

President Obama will, one way or another, counter the threat of Iran, not on behalf of Israel (though he said he believes Obama would come to Israel's defense if necessary), but because he understands that on the challenge of Iran, the interests of America and Israel (and the West, and Western-allied Arab states) naturally align.

Based on months of interviews, I have come to believe that the administration knows it is a near-certainty that Israel will act against Iran soon if nothing or no one else stops the nuclear program; and Obama knows—as his aides, and others in the State and Defense departments made clear to me—that a nuclear-armed Iran is a serious threat to the interests of the United States, which include his dream of a world without nuclear weapons. Earlier this year, I agreed with those, including many Israelis, Arabs—and Iranians—who believe there is no chance that Obama would ever resort to force to stop Iran; I still don't believe there is a great chance he will take military action in the near future—for one thing, the Pentagon is notably unenthusiastic about the idea. But Obama is clearly seized by the issue. And understanding that perhaps the best way to obviate a military strike on Iran is to make the threat of a strike by the Americans seem real, the Obama administration seems to be purposefully raising the stakes. A few weeks ago, Denis McDonough, the chief of staff of the National Security Council, told me, "What you see in Iran is the intersection of a number of leading priorities of the president, who sees a serious threat to the global nonproliferation regime, a threat of cascading nuclear activities in a volatile region, and a threat to a close friend of the United States, Israel. I think you see the several streams

coming together, which accounts for why it is so important to us."

When I asked Peres what he thought of Netanyahu's effort to make Israel's case to the Obama administration, he responded, characteristically, with a parable, one that suggested his country should know its place, and that it was up to the American president, and only the American president, to decide in the end how best to safeguard the future of the West. The story was about his mentor, David Ben-Gurion.

"Shortly after John F. Kennedy was elected president, Ben-Gurion met him at the Waldorf-Astoria" in New York, Peres told me. "After the meeting, Kennedy accompanied Ben-Gurion to the elevator and said, 'Mr. Prime Minister, I want to tell you, I was elected because of your people, so what can I do for you in return?' Ben-Gurion was insulted by the question. He said, 'What you can do is be a great president of the United States. You must understand that to have a great president of the United States is a great event.'"

Peres went on to explain what he saw as Israel's true interest. "We don't want to win over the president," he said. "We want the president to win."

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<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2010/09/the-point-of-no-return/308186/>

German Muslims and the Holocaust

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The southern German state of Bavaria is trying to resolve a vexing issue. Should Muslim high school students in all grades be required to visit former concentration camps, or the new Nazi documentation center in Munich, as part of their studies on the Holocaust?

It's a very German problem for a number of compelling reasons. The Holocaust was conceived and planned in Germany, so German leaders have a special responsibility to ensure that new generations will not be poisoned by murderous ideas. One of the ringleaders of the terrorist plot to attack the United States on September 11, 2001, Mohammed Atta, lived in Hamburg. Being a Muslim radical, Atta's worldview was clouded and perverted by antisemitic stereotypes and tropes.

Given Germany's Muslim population of four million, the authorities are duty bound to give the children of Muslim immigrants a rounded education that includes courses on modern German history.

As matters now stand in Bavaria, visits to former Nazi concentration camps and Munich's newly-built documentation center are mandatory for only upper-grade students. But Josef Schuster, the president of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, has suggested that ninth grade students should participate on such trips as well.

Schuster's laudable proposal has been greeted positively by Bavaria's minister of education, Ludwig Spaenle, who noted that students may "develop a clear position" against the horrors of Nazism by visiting these sites.

As reported by *The New York Times*, Bavaria's ruling party, the Christian Social Union, endorses the proposal in principle, but with two reservations. Firstly, Muslim students, most of whom are the sons and daughters of recent immigrants, need more time before they can start identifying with Germany's past. Secondly, obligatory trips to former concentration camps may not deter antisemitism, which has been on the rise in Germany of late. These arguments are not unreasonable, but they ultimately fall short of the mark.

Muslims in Germany, whether Arabs, Turks or Persians, are almost uniformly anti-Israel and thus susceptible to antisemitic

discourses and influences. **And far too many Muslims regard the Holocaust as the greatest hoax of the 20th century, a twisted notion usually advanced by neo-Nazis and Holocaust deniers.**

To some Muslims, Holocaust education represents de facto recognition of Israel. Last year, Mohammed Dajani Daoudi, a Palestinian professor at Al Quds University in East Jerusalem, organized a study trip to Auschwitz for his students. The visit, financed by the Berlin-based German Research Foundation, ended badly for Daoudi. Upon his return from Poland, he was roundly denounced and forced to resign.

Clearly, Muslim biases regarding Jews and the Holocaust must be addressed on a systematic basis. Germany, having made far-reaching amends for its central role in the Holocaust, can and must play an integral role in this historic endeavour.

As German president Joachim Gauck has correctly observed, Holocaust remembrance should transcend religion and ethnicity. No one, including Muslim teens, should be exempted. Visits to former concentration camps, or Munich's documentation center, could have a meaningful impact on German Muslims, whose minds have been warped by anti-Israel and anti-Jewish rhetoric and propaganda. Some of these individuals have joined Islamic State, which is attempting to establish a Sunni caliphate in the Middle East. Which is why Josef Schuster's proposal should be seriously considered and incorporated into Bavaria's educational policy.

<http://blogs.timesofisrael.com/german-muslims-and-the-holocaust/>

Fredrick Töben reflects:

The problem facing those who perpetrated 9/11 and its ongoing reverberations within the USA, and now direct the murderous ISIS program in the Middle East/North Africa and Europe: - how to maintain a global-one-world overarching Holocaust narrative at the expense of Germans' and Palestinians' wellbeing -