

Germer Scheerer, A-#: 78660016,  
February 10, 2001, Doc 62



By JOHN SACK

# iNSIDE the BUNKER

The people who believe that the  
**Holocaust**

did not happen meet regularly, in secret, to exchange theories and research. Are they anti-Semites, or are they just horribly mistaken? The author went to find out. The last thing he expected was to like them.

Photographs by JEFF RIEDEL

« CHARLES "CHUCK" PROVAN "Be fruitful and multiply," says Genesis, and Chuck Provan, whose parents sent him to Bob Jones University, has fairly belabored the biblical verse. Missing from the photograph are Matthias and Nathanael, kids number one and two; Provan's friends no longer ask him, "What are you raising? A baseball team?" since Provan has just delivered (without any doctor's help) his tenth, whose name is Gideon. All are unplanned. "Whatever shows up, we accept it," says Provan. "If God can make them, then God can feed them. And my own problem isn't too little food. It's too much." ¶ A man given to fierce obsessions, Provan once wrote a booklet called *The Bible and Birth Control*. (As you might have guessed, he was for the former, against the latter.) Another obsession was the American pilots in Manila at the start of World War II, and another was the Holocaust and whether it really happened. Provan always believed the Germans had operated death camps, but he believed the toll was vastly exaggerated. He thought the number of Jews who died was one to one and a half million. Then, with the help of his children, he had a revelation in December 1990 and soon concluded that the number who died was seven to seven and a half million. "Provan is a congenital liar," one Holocaust denier wrote of this sudden apostate. "Never have I come across anyone dopier than Provan."



The people who say the Holocaust didn't happen asked me to speak at their recent international conference. The invitation surprised me, for I am a Jew who's written about the Holocaust and (for chrissakes, I feel like adding) certainly hasn't denied it. To my eyes, however, the invitation, which came from the Institute for Historical Review in Orange County, California, the central asylum for the delusion that the Germans didn't kill any Jews and that the Holocaust is, quote unquote, the Hoax of the Twentieth Century, was not just a wonderment; it was also a golden opportunity, a golden-engraved temptation. We journalists usually sit at the outer edge of occasions: behind the bar in courtrooms, far off the floor of Congress, well out of passing or pitching range at football or baseball games. We are the beggars at banquet halls, waiting for the brass bell and the two-second bite, and the institute offered me what every journalist hungers for: the feast of unhampered access. Its letter was a safe-conduct pass to a country so fogbound that you and I can't discern it. Who are the Holocaust deniers? What are they like behind closed doors? And why are they motionless stones as avalanches of evidence crash onto them, roaring, *You're wrong, you're wrong*? I'd been invited to mingle with them like a mole in Hitler's Eagle's Nest and then ascend to a lectern to tell them off, and I wrote the institute saying that, yes, I'd come.

I flew on a Friday to John Wayne Airport in Orange County and called up the institute, asking, "Where will the conference be?" Until then I hadn't known, for the institute feared that I might divulge it to the Jewish Defense League, a group the FBI has called active terrorists, and that the league might initiate violence. It had done so at other conferences to other speakers. One had been punched, punched by a fist also holding a cherry pie, one had been beaten up, and one had been beaten up in Paris, Vichy, Lyon, and Stockholm. A man who's older than me—I'm seventy—this last man had been maced, thrown to the ground, and kicked in the head because of his imprudent belief that the Holocaust didn't take place. For six weeks his jaw had been wired and he'd eaten through a soda straw. All three men, the leading lights of denial, would speak at this weekend's conference, and the institute didn't want to see their freedom of speech or their bodies imperiled by Jews who conducted chants of "Nazis!" "Neo-Nazis!" or "Anti-Semites!" or by Jews who threw punches. On the phone, an institute employee told me where the conference was but said, "Don't tell anyone."

Knowing where to go, I took a courtesy van to a palm-filled hotel with a Japanese footbridge over a rambling pool, the sun glinting off its rippling water. A few deniers (who'd also called up the institute and been told, "Don't tell") were down in the open-air lobby, making hollow jokes about the threat, possibly imminent, possibly not, of the Jewish Defense League. "I'm checking everything out," a man from Adelaide, Australia, laughed to me.

"Should I have concerns about my security here?" a tall and broad-shouldered man from New York, an Italian, asked me.

"Are you concerned about it?"

"Now that I'm out of the closet, yes. The people around me say I should be. Do you think my life's in jeopardy here?"

"We'll soon find out," I said. "The Jewish Defense League is right here in California and, I'm sure, know we're around."

"Hch," said the man from New York.

By six o'clock the lobby was full. The deniers (by Saturday there'd be 140) were about three quarters men and one quarter women. Most were white, but one was African-American. One was bald, but none were razor-shaved skinheads. Many wore beards, one a white bushy one like Santa Claus's. Most wore

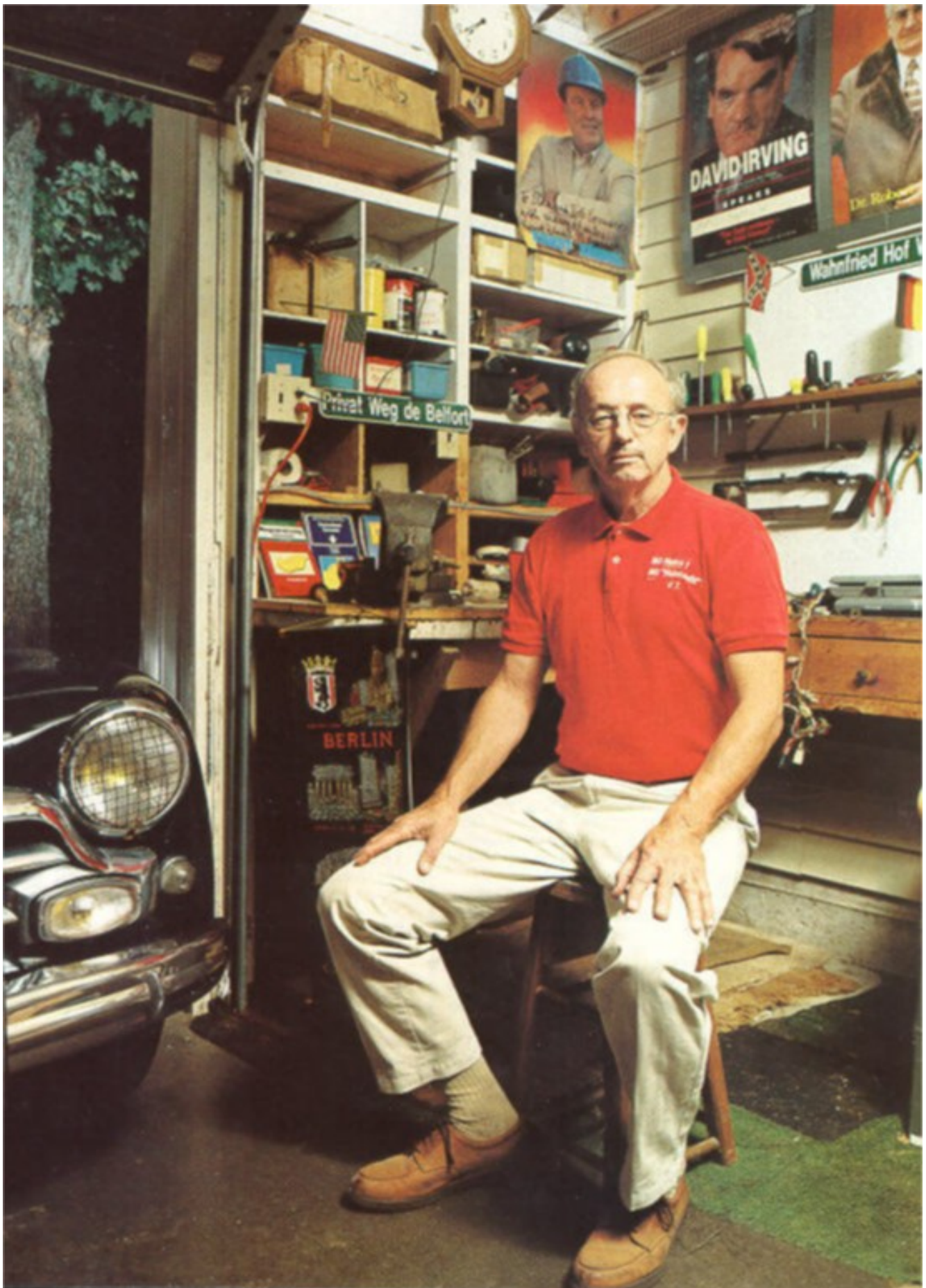
slacks and short-sleeved shirts, but a few wore jackets, blazers, or business suits, one a safari suit, and one a white suit like Mark Twain's. Two wore T-shirts that said, NO HOLES? NO HOLOCAUST! a text whose exegesis I'd get on Saturday. The conversations I heard were about nutrition ("I was raised on raw milk") and about paddle wheelers ("You know, like in *Show Boat*. You haven't seen it? I suggest you rent it"). All in all, the deniers that day and that weekend seemed the most middling of Middle Americans. Or better: Despite their take on the Holocaust, they were affable, open-minded, intelligent, intellectual. Their eyes weren't fires of unapproachable certitude, and their lips weren't lemon twists of astringent hate. Nazis and neo-Nazis they didn't seem to be.

Nor did they seem anti-Semites. I'm sure many anti-Semites say the Holocaust didn't happen (even as they take delight that it really did), but I don't believe I met any that weekend. The only debatably anti-Semitic comment that I heard was on Friday night, when I dined in the downstairs restaurant with a prominent denier in a NO HOLES? NO HOLOCAUST! shirt, an Alabama man whose name is Dr. Robert Countess. A gangling scholar of classical Greek and classical Hebrew, he had taught history at the University of Alabama and had retired to a farm outside of Huntsville, where he plays major league Ping-Pong and collects old Peugeot's; he has twenty-two, some dating back to the Crash. While scarcely cranky, he had a cranky-sounding voice, and in the open-air restaurant he was practically grinding gears as he discoursed on the Septuagint and as I, not Countess, brought up the Jewish sacred scrolls, the Talmud. "What's called the Talmud," Countess lectured—"talmud being the participle form of *lamad*, in Hebrew, *learn*—developed in Babylonia as rabbis reflected on certain passages in the Torah. Some of these rabbis engaged in a syncretism, a bringing together, of Babylonian paganism with the religion of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. So if you read much of the Talmud, and Elda will tell you her favorite story—"

"No," said Elda, Countess's wife, who was dining with us.

"It's unbelievable, but it's in the Talmud," said Countess.

**DR. ROBERT COUNTESS** » Columbus discovered America. Luther posted his Theses. Watt invented the steam engine. Hitler invaded Poland. In 1987, Dr. Robert Countess was teaching the second half of a survey course on world history at the University of Alabama, Huntsville, when he became intrigued by *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century*, a Holocaust-didn't-happen book by Arthur Butz. He made it required reading for his students, and he ordered fifteen copies from the Institute for Historical Review. A few days later there came a call from the institute. "Why did you order so many copies?" "I'm assigning it in History 102." "What does the chairman of the history department say?" "Nothing. I'm the professor, and I can teach the class as I choose." "Do you know this is a first?" Other professors, like one at Indiana, had assigned or lectured about this book, and all had been fired or disciplined for doing so. ¶ In time Countess was on the institute's board of directors. He believes that Hitler wanted the Jews out of Europe but that he didn't order their extermination, that the Germans had no homicidal gas chambers at any of their concentration camps, and that the number of Jews who died from all causes in World War II wasn't six million but somewhere between several hundred thousand and one and a half million.







"No, no. I don't want to tell it," said Elda, embarrassed.

"Go ahead and tell it," Countess entreated.

"Well," said Elda, blushing, "it's in the Talmud that if a Jewish man's repairing the roof, and if his sister-in-law is down below, and if he falls onto her and she becomes pregnant—"

"He falls off the roof in such a way—" Countess said, laughing.

"Can you picture it? Then the child won't be a bastard," said Elda. The tale would be anti-Semitic rubbish if it weren't indeed in the Talmud (in Yevamot, and again in Bava Kamma) and if the Countesses were just amused and not also appalled. "You and I laugh about this," said Countess, "but I sit in stark amazement saying, Jews aren't stupid people! How can they go along with this?"

"The answer is, We don't," I explained. By bedtime on Friday, my impression of the Countesses was like my impression of UFO devotees. Everyone in America believes in one or another ridiculous thing. Me, I belong to the International Society for Cryptozoology, and I firmly believe that in Lake Tele, in the heart of the Congo, there is a living, breathing dinosaur. Admittedly, this is trivial compared with Holocaust denial, but fifteen years ago I even went to the Congo to photograph it. I didn't—I didn't even see it—but I still believe in it. Other people believe more momentous things, and the Countesses and the

✱ **ERNST ZÜNDEL** Born in Germany, starting school at the end of World War II, trained as a graphic artist and photo retoucher, Zündel emigrated to Canada at age nineteen and quickly encountered culture shock. In movies and on TV, the Germans he saw were travesties of the Germans he'd known. A "documentary" on World War II showed Germans landing by submarine in Hudson Bay and, disguised as Mennonites, going south to make mischief in Manitoba. Zündel says he felt in Canada like a Jew in 1930s Germany, and he led pickets at movie theaters protesting what he saw as German hatred. ¶ In the 1960s he read a book called *The Auschwitz Lie*, by Thies Christophersen, and became an outspoken denier. Though he hadn't been tried, the Canadian postal service refused to deliver mail to or accept mail from him. Then Canada took him to criminal court on a charge of "spreading false news," an English law from the twelfth century. He was sentenced to fifteen months, but the supreme court of Canada voided this. Then he was tried again and sentenced to nine months, but the supreme court reversed this, too. Now, twelve years later, Zündel, who lives in Toronto, is on trial before the Canadian Human Rights Commission. His crime: exposing the Jews to hatred or contempt. He is pictured with Ingrid Rimland, a friend and supporter who runs the Zündel site on the Internet from a secret location in Tennessee.

other deniers believe that the Holocaust didn't happen. Like me in the Congo, they're wrong, wrong, wrong, but to say that emphatically isn't to say (as some people do) that they're odious, contemptible, despicable. To say that they're rats (as does Deborah Lipstadt, the author of *Denying the Holocaust*) is no more correct than to say it of people who, in their ignorance, believe the less pernicious fallacy that Oswald didn't kill Kennedy.

**The conference started** on Saturday. In the center of the lobby stood a Kentia palm and in concentric circles around it were peace lilies, crotons, bird-of-paradise flowers, and happy conferencegoers. Young and old, they talked like any Americans at any professional conference; they talked of the weather, their homes, their children ("One is a lawyer, another a businessman. For their sake I'm still in the closet"). On the hour, more and more were wearing the NO HOLES? NO HOLOCAUST! shirts in red, green, and gray as they seated themselves on bridge chairs to listen to speakers in the shuttered darkness of the garden ballroom. "It's one heck of a nice conference," I heard someone say.

Now about "No holes? No Holocaust!"—the first thing to know is that no one at that palm-filled hotel would deny that Hitler hated the Jews, that Hitler sent them to concentration camps, and that Hitler said, "I want to annihilate the Jews" as hundreds of thousands died in (as one denier called them) godforsaken hellholes like Auschwitz. It may surprise you, but no one at that hotel would deny that hundreds of thousands of Jews died of typhus, dysentery, starvation, and exhaustion at Auschwitz or that their corpses went to the constant flames of five crematoriums night and day. These deniers even call this the Holocaust. What they deny is that some of the Jews died of something other than natural causes, that some went to rooms that the Germans poured cyanide (or at four other camps, carbon monoxide) into. The Jews, say the Holocaust deniers, weren't *murdered*, and the Germans didn't deliberately murder them.

Tens of thousands of witnesses disagree. Jews who once stood at the railroad depot at Auschwitz say that the Germans told them, "Go right," and told their mothers, fathers, and children, "Go left," and say that they never saw those mothers, fathers, and children again. I and the rest of the world believe that the Jews who went left went to cyanide chambers, but the deniers believe they went to other parts of Auschwitz or, by train, to other concentration camps. "Part of the Jews remained in Auschwitz," a speaker (another scholar, a man who speaks seventeen languages, including Chinese) said at the ballroom lectern one day. "The rest were transported farther. Many opted to stay in the Soviet Union." Tens of thousands of witnesses saw the cyanide chambers, too, saw the lilac-colored cyanide pellets cascade onto the Jews, but almost all of these witnesses died in five minutes, without being able to testify to it. A few indeed testified, among them two Auschwitz commandants. One said that children under twelve and people over fifty-five were cyanided daily, and one said, "At least 2,500,000 victims were executed by gassing," then backed off to 1,200,000. Some doctors at Auschwitz testified. One doctor said, "When the doors were opened, bodies fell out," and one doctor said, "*The Inferno*, by Dante, is in comparison almost comedy." Some Jews who toted bodies to the crematoriums testified. One said, "We found heaps of naked bodies, doubled up. They were pinkish and in places red. Some were covered with greenish marks, and saliva ran from their mouths. Others were bleeding from the nose. There was excrement on many of them," and one said,

"We were met by the sight of the dead bodies lying higgledy-piggledy. I was petrified."

To this abundant evidence the Holocaust deniers say—and they're right—that one Auschwitz commandant confessed after he was tortured and that the other reports are full of bias, rumors, exaggerations, and other preposterous matters, to quote the editor of a Jewish magazine five years after the war. The deniers say, and again they're right, that the commandants, doctors, SS, and Jews at Bergen-Belsen, Buchenwald, and a whole alphabet of camps testified after the war that there were cyanide chambers at those camps that all historians today refute.

The deniers also say that at Auschwitz the witnesses said that the Germans poured cyanide pellets through holes in the chamber roofs—even said that the Germans joked as they poured, "*Na, gib Ihnen schön zu fressen*"—Well, give them something good to eat. It's there that the NO HOLES? NO HOLOCAUST! on the T-shirts comes in. The roofs at Auschwitz still stand (or, rather, lie collapsed, for the Germans blew up the buildings in November 1944 so the world wouldn't know), and, the deniers say, you can't find holes in those former roofs for the Germans to pour the cyanide through.

Myself, I'd call this one of life's mysteries, like why there are holes in Swiss cheese and not in cheddar, but everyone in the palm-filled hotel made a tremendous deal of it. One speaker there was David Irving, the British World War II historian, a man with a statesman's bearing, a statesman's elegant pinstripe suit, and a member of Parliament's elocution, a man who strung together his clear definitions, crisp distinctions, and withering innuendos in parse-perfect sentences, like graduated pearls. He had just sued, for libel, the author and publisher of *Denying the Holocaust*. The trial was in London last year. Irving lost, but not before he invoked the "No holes? No Holocaust!" argument. On the stand, a witness for the author and publisher cited some Auschwitz witnesses, and Irving, acting as his own attorney, leaped like a crouching lion. "Professor," said Irving, a granite-featured, imposing man, "we are wasting our time, really, are we not? There were never any holes in that roof. There are no holes in that roof today. They [the Germans] cannot have poured cyanide capsules through that roof. You yourself have stood on that roof and looked for those holes and not found them. Our experts have stood on that roof and not found them. The holes were never there. What do you say to that?"

"The roof is a mess. The roof is absolutely a mess," said the professor. "The roof is in fragments."

"You have been to Auschwitz how many times?"

"Sometimes twice or three times yearly."

"Have you frequently visited this roof?"

"Yes, I have been there, yes."

"Have you never felt the urge to go and start scraping where you know those holes would have been?"

"The last thing I'd ever have done is start scraping away."

"How much does an air ticket to Warsaw cost? £100? £200?"

"I have no idea."

"If," said Irving triumphantly, "you were to go to Auschwitz with a trowel and clean away the gravel and find a reinforced concrete hole, I would abandon my action immediately. That would drive such a hole through my case that I would have no possible chance of defending it."

Not quite flying to Auschwitz, the author, the publisher, or the professor apparently called up the Auschwitz Museum, for the museum told the *Times* of London that it had started

searching for the fabulous holes. A two-mile drive. A trowel. A camera. That's what the search entailed, but it's now nine months later and the museum hasn't found them.

-----

**But lo! Someone did.** Not someone from the Auschwitz Museum, but Charles "Chuck" Provan, a letterhead printer in Monongahela, Pennsylvania, and another scheduled speaker here in California. A man of childlike enthusiasms, a roly-poly, red-bearded, merry man, a man with a brandy-glass-shaped face, he'd been an earnest denier until he had an epiphany in December 1990. Provan was home in Monongahela, reading from *The Confessions of Kurt Gerstein*, an SS man who confessed he was at the concentration camp in Belzec, Poland, and who said, "I see everything! The mothers, their babies at the breast, the little naked children, the men and women, naked. They enter into the death chamber, pushed by the leather whips of the SS. Pack well, that is what [the] captain ordered. Seven to eight hundred persons on twenty-five square meters. More than half are children..."

For forty-five years, the *Confessions* had been the laughingstock of the Holocaust deniers. What? Seven to eight hundred people on twenty-five square meters? Thirty people on one square meter, three people on one square foot? "Impossible," "Incredible," "Nonsensical," wrote the jeering deniers. "It is feasible if one uses a scrap press, but in that case gassing would be superfluous." Even mainstream historians fudged the *Confessions'* figures, writing at best inaccurately and at worst unscrupulously of 170 to 180 people or of a hundred square meters. For forty-five years, no one had troubled himself to see if seven to eight hundred people *could* fit on twenty-five square meters until Provan, in Monongahela, read these words in the *Confessions*: "More than half are children." Well, if I've got one thing, thought Provan, it's children, and he put down the book and took his five children and one big baby doll into an upstairs bedroom. "What are you doing?" asked Mrs. Provan.

"An experiment: How many kids can fit in a gas chamber."

"You shouldn't use the kids like that. It's sorta gruesome."

"Aw, it won't hurt them," said Provan in his down-home voice, and he had the kids strip to their underwear. He packed them into a corner, then with two dressers corralled them into a square of sixteen by sixteen inches. Then, setting them free, he used an electronic calculator to calculate to his astonishment that he could fit 891 children into the gas chamber at Belzec. Tears came to Provan's eyes, for he saw the *Confessions* differently now. Its author, he saw, wouldn't say something so impossible, incredible, nonsensical, something no one would believe for a half century, if he himself hadn't witnessed it. Gerstein, the SS man, had seen Jews die at Belzec ("One hears them weeping, sobbing"), and the Holocaust had indeed happened.

Provan did two more experiments even as Mrs. Provan, a sort of Cesare Cremonini—the colleague of Galileo's who wouldn't look into Galileo's telescope—told him, "You shouldn't." In one, he used five kids, three mannequins, and one doll, and in the other, five kids, three adults—a printer, a minister, and an Italian woman who said, "You're nuts, but I'll do it"—all with their clothes on, and the doll, and he calculated that seven hundred fathers, mothers, children, and babies would fit in the chamber at Belzec. And last March, he used the same scientific method on the "No holes? No Holocaust!" hypothesis, going with some of his children (he had nine by now) to one collapsed chamber at Auschwitz. The witnesses there had said the holes were alongside the central columns, and Provan used a forty-dollar metric measuring tape to find where the columns had been and found—well, whaddya

know?—those celebrated holes. No longer were they twenty-five by twenty-five centimeters, as the witnesses had said. Now, with the roof blown up, they were larger, and Provan photographed them, came home to Monongahela, wrote up a monograph, printed it at his print shop, and printed a cover that, in gold letters, with the exclamation point demoted to a question mark, said, NO HOLES? NO HOLOCAUST? He then flew to Orange County and appeared at the palm-filled hotel on Saturday afternoon.

Not even washing up, he sat with childlike delight on a flowery lobby love seat by the Kentia palm, handing his two dozen spiral-bound copies to the illuminati of Holocaust denial. If he expected encomiums, he misunderstood human nature, which clings to established beliefs as though to a life preserver without which we'd sink to the jet-black depths of the Mindanao Trough. "You have a bent toward evil," the chief denier from Australia, a man of German ancestry, told Provan. "You slander the German people. You believe in the Holocaust." "But Charles, if I may call you Charles, bring me the *pudding*," said the chief denier alive, a Frenchman who coined the "No holes? No Holocaust!" motto. "Bring me the holes of twenty-five by twenty-five centimeters."

"Oh, I can't," said Provan.

"Where do you see a square of twenty-five by twenty-five?"

"Oh, not anymore. But this hole is big enough to have held it."

"But you don't have a square of twenty-five centimeters."

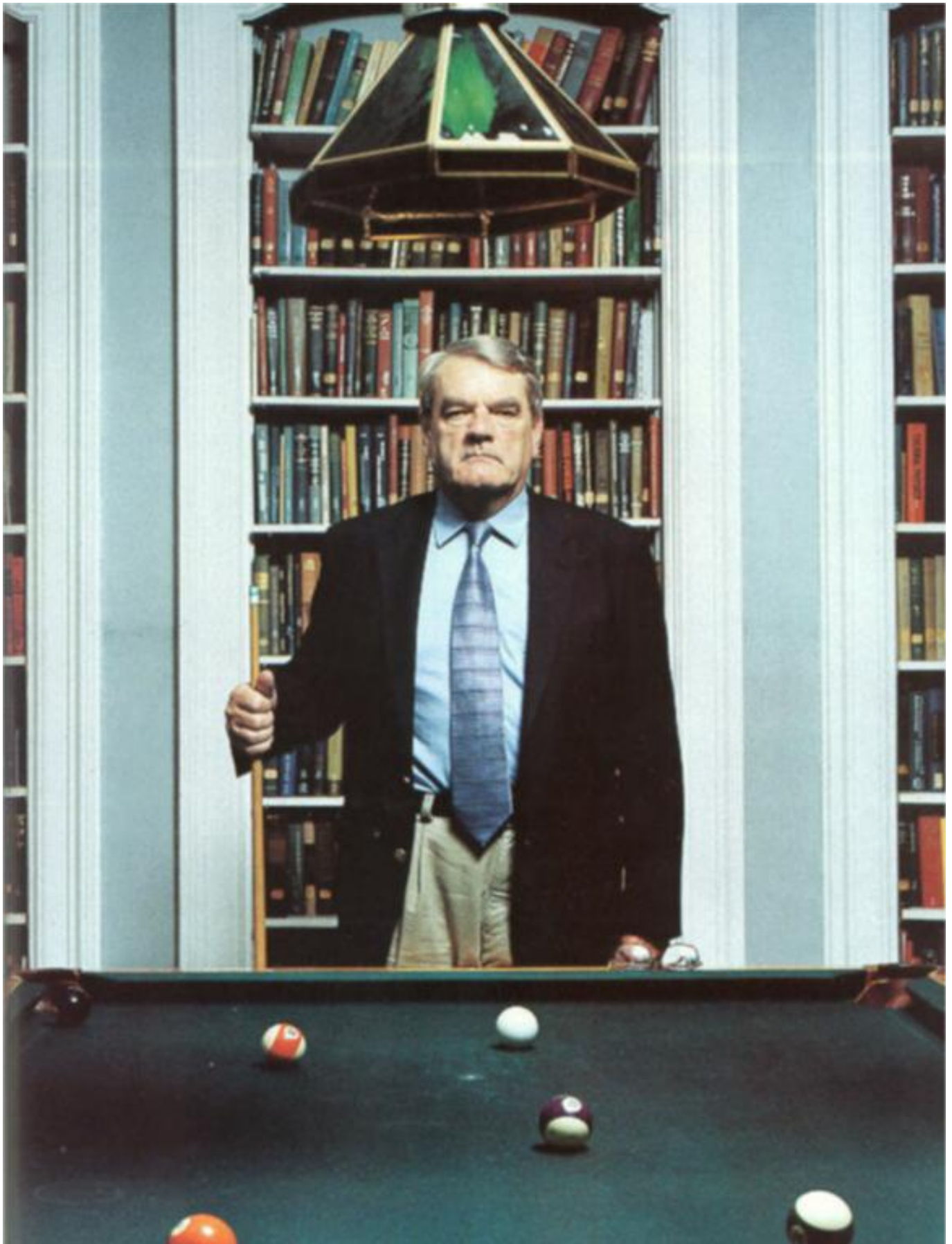
"I admit that."

"This cannot convince me," the Frenchman said.

The angriest denier was David Irving, the British historian who'd said in London that a photograph of a hole would drive such a metaphorical hole in his case that he couldn't defend it. Irving, who isn't allowed at Auschwitz and may have been jealous of an amateur's access, sat at the open-air downstairs restaurant in front of a Caesar salad. On spotting Provan, he turned black, and his words came like chisel chips. "I'm hopping mad," Irving said. "If I were an SS man and somebody said, 'Knock some holes in that ceiling, will you? We're going to start putting cyanide in,' I'd make those holes in the middle of some empty area. I wouldn't put them—bang, bang, bang, bang—next to the load-bearing pillars. What were the load-bearing pillars for? Just cosmetic purposes?" Provan, twenty years younger, stood like a boy called down to the principal's office, looking abashed, and Irving continued, "The Germans spend God knows how many hundreds of thousands of pounds building this? And then they allow some jerk with a sledgehammer to punch holes [continued on page 138]"

**DAVID IRVING** > The trial in London a year ago was called the trial of the century by newspapers in Jerusalem. The plaintiff was David Irving, a renowned World War II historian and the best-selling author of thirty books, including *Hitler's War*. The defendant was Deborah Lipstadt, a professor at Emory University, who wrote in *Denying the Holocaust* that Irving had knowingly distorted history in pursuit of a revisionist agenda. Irving was suing her for libel, but to the Jerusalem papers, something much more momentous was at issue: Did the Holocaust happen or didn't it? ¶ Irving lost. Not only that, but the judge called him a racist and an anti-Semite. Interestingly, Irving is one of the least extreme Holocaust deniers, a phrase he says he finds odious. He believes that at concentration camps like Chelmno, the Germans did indeed have gas chambers where they murdered thousands of Jews. He also believes that at Auschwitz the Germans had experimental chambers and that the number of Jews who died in the Holocaust was four million at most, maybe less. ¶ A Brit who normally lives in London, Irving is now in Key West, Florida, finishing volume two of *Churchill's War*.







## Inside the Bunker

[continued from page 104] next to the load-bearing pillars? I'm having lunch," said Irving abruptly, and he attacked his salad without a whit of his ardent convictions voided by Provan's photographs. Of course, the deniers would say it's Provan and I whose convictions weren't voided by Irving, and it may be a hundred years before we know whose views prevail. "We have won," an SS man told Primo Levi at Auschwitz. "There may be suspicions, but there will be no certainties, because we'll destroy the evidence together with you."

**Provan, the only speaker** (other than me) who believed that the Holocaust happened, spoke in the ballroom later on. He spoke about a Jewish coroner at Auschwitz and not about his "No holes? No Holocaust?" monograph or his one other epoch-making discovery. In the cyanide chambers at Auschwitz, there are no cyanide stains, and the deniers, though they've never worn a T-shirt saying NO CYANIDE? NOBODY DIED! call this another proof that what we call cyanide chambers were, in fact, innocuous morgues. But according to Provan, the chambers have no stains because the Germans painted their walls.

Sixteen other speakers spoke on Saturday, Sunday, and Monday, for this was a holiday weekend, and I counted six who'd run afoul of the law because of their disbelief in the Holocaust and the death apparatus at Auschwitz. To profess this in anyone's earshot is illegal not just in Germany but in Holland, Belgium, France, Spain, Switzerland, Austria, Poland, and Israel, where denying the Holocaust can get you five years while denying God can get you just one. One speaker, David Irving, had been fined \$18,000 for saying aloud in Germany that one of the cyanide chambers at Auschwitz is a replica built by the Poles after the war. A replica it truly is, but truth in these matters is no defense in Germany. Another speaker, a Frenchman, had been fined in France, and another speaker, a German, had been sentenced to fourteen months in Germany but, his landlord evicting him, his wife deserting him, had fled to England. Another speaker, an Australian, had come from seven months in a German jail for writing in Australia (alas, on the Internet, which Germans in Germany can read) that there were no cyanide chambers at Auschwitz. In his defense, he'd called an expert witness, but the man couldn't testify or he'd be jailed, too, the victim of the selfsame law. The fifth speaker was a Swiss, a man whom I'd once roomed with (I'd met many deniers previously) and fed the kangaroos with in South Australia. He'll go to jail for three months in Switzerland for questioning the Auschwitz cyanide chambers.

In the United States, thank God, we have the First Amendment. But even in that shuttered ballroom in California, the sixth speaker couldn't say all he wanted to—couldn't, for example, say the Germans

didn't kill the Jews deliberately. A few hours earlier, he and I had debated this at a waffle breakfast, debated it in audible voices with no qualms of being arrested, indicted, or imprisoned by federal marshals. "But what about Eichmann?" I'd asked him. "He wrote that Hitler ordered the physical destruction of the Jews. He wrote about *Vergasungslager*, gassing camps."

"John. The man was in Israeli captivity."

"Well, what about *during* the war? Hans Frank, the governor general of Poland, said to exterminate all the Jews, without exception."

"He was only *quoted* as saying that, John."

"And what about Goebbels? He said a barbaric method was being employed against the Jews. And Himmler? He said the SS knew what a hundred, five hundred, one thousand corpses were like."

"John, I don't know. They might have said it," the sixth speaker told me. "But it isn't true that genocide was a German national policy." A few hours later, the speaker didn't dare repeat this up in the ballroom, for he's a Canadian citizen and his speech was carried live on the Internet in Canada, and if he said what he'd said over waffles, he'd have been prosecuted in Canada. Already he'd been tried twice as well as hit, beaten, bombed, engulfed by a \$400,000 fire, and told, "We'll cut your testicles off."

The man's name is Ernst Zündel. He's round-faced and red-faced like in a Hals, he's eternally jolly, and he was born in Calmbach, Germany. If you saw the recent movie about the Holocaust deniers, *Mr. Death*, he's the man in the hard hat who says, "We Germans will not go down in history as genocidal maniacs. *We. Will. Not.*" He has become a hero to anti-Semites and, like every denier, has been called anti-Semitic himself, but it's just as honest to say that the Jews who (along with God) oversee the Jewish community are in fact anti-Zündelic, anti-Countessic, anti-Irvingic, and, in one word, anti-denieric. The normal constraints of time, temperance, and truth do not obstruct some Jewish leaders from their nonstop vituperation of Holocaust deniers. "They're morally ugly. They're morally sick," said Elie Wiesel on PBS. They bombard us with disinformation, said Abraham Foxman, the national director of the Anti-Defamation League, on the op-ed page of *The New York Times*. "Holocaust deniers," said Foxman, spreading disinformation himself, "would have [us] believe there were no concentration camps." Myself, I disagree with these Jewish leaders. Most deniers, most attendees in their slacks and shorts at the palm-filled hotel, were like Zündel: people who, as Germans, had chosen to comfort themselves with the wishful thinking that none of their countrymen in the 1940s were genocidal maniacs.

I can sympathize with the Germans, for I've seen a bit of this wishful thinking among some Jews. Seven years ago, I ruefully reported in my book *An Eye for an Eye* that thousands of Jews who'd survived the Holocaust had rounded up Germans and beat, whipped, tortured, and murdered them—

## Inside the Bunker

German men, women, children, and babies—in concentration camps run by Jews. This little holocaust was corroborated by *60 Minutes* and *The New York Times* but not by Jewish leaders. They, pardon the expression, denied it, writing reviews whose titles were “The Big Lie” and “False Witness” and “Do Me a Favor—Don’t Read This Book.” If Jews feel pressed to deny what happened to sixty thousand Germans, then Jews might forgive the Germans, like Zündel, who choose to deny what happened to six million Jews.

Instead, Jewish leaders hound them. Astronomers don’t spill rivers of ink denouncing the UFO fanatics, whose theories are much less malignant but whose legions are much more numerous than the dozen dozen deniers at that international conference, their first in six slow-moving years. But for various reasons (for reparations, for the survival of Israel, or for real apprehensions that it could happen again), Jewish leaders want the Holocaust to be front and center in America’s consciousness. In this they’ve succeeded spectacularly. Americans who aren’t senior citizens think it was partly to save the Jews that we declared war on Germany, though that was no factor at all. Americans who don’t know if one hundred thousand, two hundred thousand, or one million of our own soldiers died (and surely don’t know that fifty million people died in China) know exactly how many Jews died in World War II. Once, said Michael Berenbaum, the former research director of the U. S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, “the Holocaust was a side story of World War II. Now one thinks of World War II as a background story [to] the Holocaust.” Among many ways Jewish leaders accomplished this was to tap out an SOS, an all-points alarm, whenever in any dark corner they spotted a knavish denier.

They may have adopted this from Jakob Böhme, a German mystic of Shakespeare’s time. Böhme once said, “Nothing becomes manifest without opposition, for if it has nothing to oppose it, it slowly moves away from itself and does not return.” Lest the Holocaust become unmanifest, lest the Holocaust move away from itself, Jewish leaders constantly point to the opposition, the bogeyman, the bugaboo, the otherwise ineffectual squad of Holocaust deniers. But there’s a double edge to Böhme’s sword: By opposing, opposing, opposing them in print, on the radio, and on TV, Jewish leaders make the deniers manifest, too. The deniers survive because they are being persecuted. They survive to spread their doctrine to the true Jew haters of the world.

**My own speech** was on Monday afternoon. It was about *An Eye for an Eye*, which the Germans among the deniers wanted to hear about so they could share their parents’

guilt with the Jews, their parents’ victims. No longer did I want to tell the deniers off, but I did want to edify them (and I did) that I and the Jews in *An Eye for an Eye* devoutly believe that the Holocaust happened. But also I wanted to say something therapeutic, to say something about hate. At the hotel, I’d seen none of it, certainly less than I’d seen when Jews were speaking of Germans. No one had ever said anything remotely like Elie Wiesel, “Every Jew, somewhere in his being, should set aside a zone of hate—healthy, virile hate—for what persists in the Germans,” and no one had said anything like Edgar Bronfman, the president of the World Jewish Congress. A shocked professor told Bronfman once, “You’re teaching a whole generation to hate thousands of Germans,” and Bronfman replied, “No, I’m teaching a whole generation to hate *millions* of Germans.” Jew hatred like that German hatred, or like the German hatred I saw on every page of *Hitler’s Willing Executioners*, I saw absolutely none of, but I saw that some people, all Germans, had had to struggle to suppress it.

“The tone of the Jewish establishment,” said Zündel at another breakfast in the airy downstairs restaurant, “is so strident, offensive, grating, so denigrating of Germans, there’s going to be—” He stopped short.

“We are so sick of the Holocaust!” a German woman with us took up. “Gentiles have it thrown in their faces morning, noon, and night without relief. Do the Jewish people know that?”

“They convict us, imprison us, make us into outcasts,” said Zündel, who is now being prosecuted in Canada for, among other things, truthfully saying that Germans didn’t make soap out of Jews. “Teachers lose their jobs. Professors lose their tenure, and I say this isn’t good for the Jewish community.”

“I see dissatisfaction,” said the German woman, “that I shudder about. I think the Jewish community has to try to lessen it. This censorship! This terrorism!” In no way did her or Zündel’s jaw get twisted like a twisted rubber band into the outward contours of hate, but the woman’s quivered at the edges somewhat.

So at the lectern in the grand ballroom on Monday, I spoke about hate. “There are,” I said, “eighty-five thousand books about the Holocaust. And none has an honest answer to How could the *Germans* do it? The people who gave us Beethoven, the Ninth Symphony, the Ode to Joy, *Alle Menschen werden Brüder*, all men are brothers. How could the Germans perpetrate the Holocaust? This mystery, we’ve got to solve it, or we’ll keep having genocides in Cambodia, Bosnia, Zaire. Well,” I said, “what I report in *An Eye for an Eye* is Lola”—the heroine, the commandant of a terrible prison in Gleiwitz, Germany—“Lola has solved it. The Jews have solved it. Because in their agony, their despair, their insanity, if you will, they felt they became like the Germans—the Nazis—themselves. And if I’d been there,” I said,

“I’d have become one, too, and now I understand why. A lot of Jews, understandably, were full of hate in 1945; they were volcanoes full of red-hot hate. They thought if they spit out the hate at the Germans, then they’d be rid of it.

“No,” I continued. “It doesn’t work that way. Let’s say I’m in love with someone. I don’t tell myself, Uh-oh, I’ve got inside of me two pounds of love, and if I love her and love her, then I’ll use all of my love up—I’ll be all out of love. No, I understand and we all understand that love is a paradoxical thing, that the more we send out, the more we’ve got. So why don’t we understand that about hate? If we hate, and we act on that hate, then we hate even more later on. If we spit out a drop of hate, we stimulate the salivary glands and we produce a drop and a quarter of it. If we spit that out, we produce a drop and a half, then two drops, three, a teaspoon, tablespoon, a Mount Saint Helens. The more we send out, the more we’ve got, until we are perpetual-motion machines, sending out hate and hate until we’ve created a holocaust.” I then said emphatically, “You don’t have to be a German to become like that. You can be a Serb, a Hutu, a Jew—you can be an American. We were the ones in the Philippines. We were the ones in Vietnam. We were the ones in Washington, D. C., for ten thousand years the home of the Anacostia Indians. They had one of their campgrounds at what now is the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

“We all have it in us to become like Nazis,” I said. “Hate, as Lola discovered, is a muscle, and if we want to be monsters, all we have to do is exercise it. To hate the Germans, to hate the Arabs, to hate the Jews. The longer we exercise it, the bigger it gets, as if every day we curl forty pounds and, far from being worn out, in time we are curling fifty, sixty, we are the Mr. Universe of Hate, the Heinrich Himmler. We all can be hate-full people, hateful people. We can destroy the people we hate, *maybe*, but we surely destroy ourselves.”

**The people who say** the Holocaust didn’t happen applauded. Loud and long they applauded, and a number of German deniers stood up. Some asked questions about Auschwitz, like why did I think that Germans *meant* for Jews to die? But one from Berlin, named Wolfgang, later confessed to me, “I believe that Auschwitz became unsanitary. The Jews were worked very hard, I grant you that. They died. And they had to be gotten rid of. And after they died, the SS put them into crematoriums. I won’t deny that. And maybe to scare some, the SS told them, ‘You’re next, you’re going to go up in smoke.’ And maybe . . .”

The conference ended on Monday. No one was ever attacked by the Jewish Defense League. The deniers (revisionists, they call themselves) meet next in Cincinnati, and they have invited me to be the keynote speaker there. I’ve said yes. ■