
Book Reviews

Honest historical research sends Bronfman crowd into a rage

by Harley Schlanger

Eternal Guilt? Forty Years of German-Jewish-Israeli Relations

by Michael Wolffsohn

Columbia University Press, New York, 1993

225 pages, hardbound, \$34.50; paperbound, \$15

A renewed campaign of slander and defamation has been unleashed against leading opponents of whiskey magnate Edgar Bronfman, by the World Jewish Congress (WJC), which he heads, and the Office of Special Investigations (OSI) of the U.S. Department of Justice. The opening salvo was launched in Australia on Jan. 27 against the Citizens Electoral Councils, a political movement associated with Lyndon LaRouche. The authors of this assault are the notorious brothers Mark and Isi Leibler, who work directly under Bronfman. Their campaign of vilification has been run through media outlets controlled by British intelligence, such as Conrad Black's Hollinger Corp.'s newspaper *The Age*, and Rupert Murdoch's *Australian*. (See *EIR*, Feb. 9, "British Assets Upset at LaRouche Presence"; and Feb. 23, "Subject: Reckless Disregard for Truth.")

In mid-February, the campaign spread to Germany, with a vicious assault against famed Nazi-hunter Simon Wiesenthal on German television. The author of the attack, who accused Wiesenthal of "covering up" alleged war crimes of Austrian President Kurt Waldheim, is Eli Rosenbaum of the OSI, who formerly worked on the WJC legal staff. Rosenbaum's charges, which he first made in a poorly received book in 1993, which he is seeking unsuccessfully to have published in German, were thoroughly discredited during independent hearings convened by the Schiller Institute over Aug. 31-Sept. 1, 1995, to investigate key cases of systemic corruption inside the U.S. Department of Justice, including the jailing of LaRouche himself, "Operation Frühmenschen" targeting black elected officials, and the persecution of John Demjanjuk and Waldheim.

The attack on Wiesenthal coincided with a despicable, multi-pronged attack on German historian Michael Wolff-

sohn, author of several books which document the corruption of Edgar Bronfman and the WJC. Most notable among the charges made by Wolffsohn are Bronfman's role in attempting to prevent German reunification by propping up East German dictator Erich Honecker, and the WJC's covering for the operations of East Germany's murderous secret service, the Stasi.

Wolffsohn's late-1995 German book *Deutschland Acte (The Germany Dossier)*, which uses Stasi files to expose how the East German regime ran undercover anti-Semitic operations within West Germany, has come under intense attack from both Bronfmanite and Stasi circles. Wolffsohn, who is Jewish, has been called an "anti-Semitic Jew" by one Werner Bergmann, a (non-Jewish) professor at the Center for Anti-Semitism Research. Bergmann, who acknowledged he has not read Wolffsohn's book, charged the latter with "abusing his role as a Jew, for breaking taboos."

His blast against Wolffsohn was supplemented by a book review in the leftist Berlin daily *Tageszeitung*, a newspaper known for its defense of the Baader-Meinhof/Red Army Faction terrorists and as a conduit for Stasi propaganda. *Tageszeitung's* reviewer accused Wolffsohn of "provoking anti-Semitism," and called for him to be expelled from the German Association of Historians and the prestigious Association of Germany University Professors.

In a spirited rebuttal which appeared in the magazine *Focus*, Wolffsohn writes that his attackers accuse him of two crimes: first, that he writes of the similarities between Nazi and Communist totalitarianism; and second, that he identifies himself with federal Germany democracy, "and call myself therefore a German-Jewish patriot."

The first is "taboo" because it undermines the attempt of former East German leaders—today party heads and parliamentary caucus leaders in united Germany, such as Gregor Gysi, the chairman of the post-communist Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS)—to claim that they are true supporters of democracy, and can be trusted in a post-Kohl government. In fact, it is British interests associated with Margaret Thatcher which wish to see the PDS in the government, to destroy Germany as an industrial economy and eliminate it as a threat to British domination over Europe.

The second point is a direct challenge to Bronfman's pompous claim that he and his cohorts at the WJC represent the true interests of the Jews, and demolishes their argument that Germany has not yet undergone sufficient "denazification" to be trusted as a world leader. This point must infuriate Bronfman, as he acts as if it is his right to sit in judgment over Germany, that the German nation must submit itself to him and his cronies for approval.

It is these points which Wolffsohn explores in detail in *Eternal Guilt?* which originally appeared in Germany in 1988, in which he presents a critical evaluation of German-Jewish and German-Israeli relations.

German-Jewish relations since the war

Wolffsohn makes clear in the introduction that he identifies with the tradition of Diaspora Judaism of the late World Jewish Congress leader Nahum Goldmann. Born in Tel Aviv, Wolffsohn moved to Germany in 1954 at the age of seven, then back to Israel, serving in the Israeli Army from 1967-70. He said of his return to Israel, "I gave Zionism a fair chance: I went to Israel and tested my Israeliness, the hard way. I came to realize that I was and wanted to remain a Diaspora Jew—a German Diaspora Jew."

From the outset, he offers the same criticism of today's Jewish "leaders" that Goldmann had made of those of his day, singling out Heinz Galinsky and Edgar Bronfman by name: "We should not identify these Jewish representatives with all (or even the majority of) Jews, let alone with Judaism. Jews and Judaism are too important and multidimensional to leave them exclusively to Jewish representatives."

He makes it clear that he does not believe that there is a danger of a revival of anti-Semitism in Germany: The "silent majority of Germans broke its silence in late 1992. Its 'chain-of-lights' demonstrations against racism and anti-Semitism are silently eloquent symbols of flight, determination, and hope."

In reviewing German-Jewish relations from the end of World War II, he stresses two points: 1) that Konrad Adenauer's actions toward Israel, including restitution payments and arms sales (negotiated by Ben Gurion protégé Shimon Peres and Franz Josef Strauss) occurred despite pressure from the United States, which wished Germany to concentrate on rearmament; and that these actions helped preserve Israel at a point, after the Sinai crisis in 1956, when Israel was cut off by France and the U.S.; and 2) that most of the anti-Jewish actions in West Germany in the 1950s, such as the desecration of Jewish cemeteries in 1959, were the actions of "political rowdies, many of whom . . . we now know were in the pay of the East German regime and the U.S.S.R."

The whiskey baron and the dictator

From the beginning, East Berlin "rejected any sort of responsibility for the National-Socialist atrocities." East German propaganda, according to Wolffsohn, argued that West Germany was still pro-Nazi, and that Israel, by accepting aid from the Federal Republic, was working with the former

Nazis.

Beginning in 1987, East Germany began to alter its relationship with Diaspora Jews, turning to Bronfman and the WJC to accomplish this. He writes that this was for both political and economic reasons, as "The G.D.R. [East Germany] was seeking a dialogue with American Jews as a means of gaining access to the U.S. government."

On Oct. 17, 1988, Bronfman met with Honecker, telling him that he, Bronfman, "was aware that the Hitler fascists had subjected the majority of German Communists to the same sufferings as the Jews." Thus, Bronfman, allegedly speaking for all Jews, gave the WJC stamp of approval to communist propaganda line that, while anti-Semitism flourished in West Germany, the East zone bore no share of "collective guilt" for the crimes of Hitler.

Three weeks after the fall of the Berlin Wall, when the hope for reunification was dawning at last, on Nov. 30, 1989, Bronfman WJC emissary Dr. Maram Stern met with East German Foreign Minister Oskar Fischer to assure him: "The WJC is and will remain a friend of the G.D.R."

Wolffsohn asks, "Why did the WJC proclaim its friendship with the G.D.R. in November 1989?" Stern himself provides the answer, which Wolffsohn quotes from the former's talks with Fischer: "The question of unification was not on the agenda. The WJC would do everything in its power to prevent it. The lessons of history still apply. Although it was difficult to take such a position in public, President Bronfman would exert his influence in this direction in the U.S. and elsewhere." Stern continued: "In any case, the WJC will do everything possible to strengthen the G.D.R. politically and economically."

(Indeed, U.S. President George Bush was lukewarm when the Wall fell; the British fumed about the threat of a "Fourth Reich" to their rust-bucket, Adam Smith economy.)

In an article in *Newsweek*, on Oct. 31, 1988, Bronfman said that "from a Jewish point of view," there is no problem with granting East Germany most favored nation status. To this, Wolffsohn responds, "Possibly he was confusing Jewish with private interests. During his visit to East Berlin, Bronfman had also discussed business relations between the G.D.R. and his own Seagram company with Minister for Foreign Trade Beil."

Wolffsohn continues: "East German leaders had succumbed to the widespread misconception that the World Jewish Congress represented the Jews of the world—a legend that representatives of the WJC energetically and enthusiastically promoted."

Bronfman and the WJC were also attacked in Israel. On Oct. 20, 1988, the daily *Yediot Aharonot* carried the following denunciation: "Bronfman represented neither the State of Israel nor the survivors of the Holocaust in the G.D.R."

In summarizing his critique of Bronfman's alliance with Honecker and his communist State, Wolffsohn writes, "A double moral standard remains a double standard, no matter who practices it, whether Jew or non-Jew, German or non-

German. Morality is not divisible by national heritage or history.”

Wolffsohn proceeds to discuss the implications of that statement for German-Jewish relations, pointing out that the attempt, by those such as Bronfman, to play the “Holocaust card,” has damaged Germany, Israel, and Judaism: “The younger generations of Germans were not born with eternal guilt. They bear none for the crimes of the National Socialists of the earlier generation, but, as Germans, they must assume a certain liability.”

On the use of the past against Germany: “Germany’s Nazi past has long ceased to be a matter of history. It now represents a political instrument wielded, whenever it is deemed necessary, by non-Germans, Jews as well as non-Jews. The nature of this instrument has, in the meantime, become entirely divorced from the real Germany and real Germans, but for this very reason it remains so effective. . . .

“Anti-Germanism draws upon, distorts, and exaggerates the Germany of today just as, in earlier times, the Jews were portrayed only as caricature.” Just as Jews were collectively labelled murderers of Jesus Christ, the Germans will be “unable to detach themselves from the stigma of the Holocaust.” While “following generations bore no guilt whatsoever, neither individual nor collective . . . the stigma was and is passed on as an instrument and argument against past, present and

future generations.”

Wolffsohn draws out the effect this has on Jews and Judaism: “Judaism as a religion no longer serves as a wellspring of identity for the majority of Jews. History, the story of the sufferings of the Jewish people, particularly the Holocaust, is now the chief determinant of Jewish identity. An identity de-Judaized from the religious point of view is re-Judaized by recourse to history, thus binding Jewish identity to the Holocaust.”

“This, in turn, requires a Germany stigmatized by the Holocaust.” Jews, therefore, “cannot allow the Germans to escape this historical bind without endangering their own Jewish identity.”

Wolffsohn calls this the “Holocaust fixation,” which creates a “filter” through which all Jewish history is viewed. From this vantage point, Israel becomes a “modern-day ghetto.” “Holocaust memorials are really highly un-Jewish,” they are “an indication of the de-Judaification of the Jewish people.” This has changed the Jewish people, he argues. “Suffering, which was perceived as divinely ordained in an era dominated by religion, has come to be viewed as the product of secular history, as the work of man rather than God.”

Wolffsohn presents the following conclusions:

- “Israeli and Diaspora Jews began to concern themselves more with the survival of the Jews than with the survival of Judaism.” (This is a critical point, as former Israeli deputy foreign minister, Yossi Beilin, and others are telling Diaspora Jews they are no longer needed by Israel, and must act instead to build healthy communities in the Diaspora based on the Jewish religion.)

- “The historization of Jewish suffering means that Jewish history and Israel, that is, the present-day Jewish situation rather than the Jewish religion, form the focus and definition of Jewish identity.”

- “Israel and Jews require the Holocaust as a general, and Germany as a special, symbol. They are bound to Germany for the purpose of preserving a Jewish identity that is no longer defined by positive self-determination but by a negative determination from outside, by anti-Semitism.”

Wolffsohn contrasts this with the view of David Ben Gurion, a close ally of Nahum Goldmann, who “envisioned a Jewish identity that would be self- rather than Holocaust-determined. This approach was clearly and positively manifested in his policy toward Germany.”

It is also an approach which contrasts sharply with that of Bronfman, who would prefer to keep Jews in a victimized state, with an identity defined negatively, by those who would persecute the Jews. As Wolffsohn has convincingly demonstrated, Bronfman’s approach binds Jews to the Holocaust, and both Israel and Germany to the Holocaust, confining both to a ghetto from which there is no escape, a ghetto which is run by Bronfman and his cronies.

It is for this reason that Bronfman is out to smear, and destroy, historian Wolffsohn.

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