Danny Ben-Moshe  

**Holocaust Denial in Australia**

The nature of Australian Holocaust denial organizations, their activities, and their place in broader far Right circles differs from similar groups in other countries. This is explained by the dominant role of the Australian League of Rights in far Right politics, the libertarian origins of the Australian Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), the lack of sizeable neo-Nazi groups in Australia, and the dominance of anti-Aboriginal and anti-Asian issues on the far Right agenda. Unlike many European countries where denial is explained as a response to their wartime collaboration with the Nazis, this motive does not exist in Australia, which fought against the Nazis and their allies.

Although Holocaust denial is a fringe activity in Australia, it has significantly increased over the last two decades with a concomitant growth in collaboration between Australian and overseas Holocaust deniers, led by the three main Holocaust denial organizations in Australia; the Australian League of Rights, the Australian Civil Liberties Union, and the Adelaide Institute. However, until the 1980s there was only one racist group for whom Holocaust denial was a central focus—the Australian League of Rights (hereafter the League). They challenged the “Holocaust hoax” long before it gained momentum in Europe and North America during the 1970s and, unlike the Australian Civil Liberties Union and Adelaide Institute, rather than copying the ideas and activities of overseas deniers, the League developed their own.

According to historian Hilary Rubenstein, “by the 1950s Holocaust denial was a frequent component of League of Rights propaganda” (a process overseen by Eric Dudley Butler who established the organization in 1946 and led it until his semi-retirement in 1991), a period in which he dominated Australian far Right politics.¹ The Holocaust was explained after 1945 by Eric Butler as “a propaganda offensive from start to finish.”²

The League’s general ideology was based on the social credit, anti-collectivist, and antisemitic notions developed in the 1930s by discredited British economist C. H. Douglas. He had explained the Depression, and his social credit alternative, in terms of real power being vested in the hands of the financiers—supposedly Jews bent on world domination.

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The League’s antisemitism in general, and Holocaust denial in particular, was a logical result of Butler’s theological world view. The “theological” framework which explains the League’s Holocaust denial is illustrated in Butler’s three-page article “The ‘Jewish Holocaust.’ Threat to Christianity” which shows that his denial was motivated by an attempt to exonerate Christian complicity in antisemitism and especially the Holocaust. He writes

If as Zionist propagandists are insisting, the alleged “Holocaust” during the Second World War was the culmination of two thousand years of Christian persecution of the Jewish people, and the roots of “anti-semitism” are to be found in “The New Testament,” particularly St. Mathew’s gospel and that Christians everywhere must accept collective guilt for the systematic gassing of millions of Jews in German concentration camps, it is the duty of Christians to face the far-reaching implications of the “The Holocaust” issue. The first thing that must be said is that the “holocaust” issue is not simply one of history but has become a religious question, one of a faith which ignores any evidence suggesting that the “holocaust” story may be false.³

With an estimated 2,000 activists in the League, Holocaust denial has been supported by the organization’s core supporters, although the less active would have been attracted to the League for its other political activities, for example lobbying on issues such as the debate about whether Australia should become a republic.

**Holocaust Denial and Civil Liberties**

The Australian Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) headed by John Bennett was the second organization established in Australia for which Holocaust denial became a primary objective. The ACLU’s main strategy is to campaign for Holocaust denial as a freedom of speech and civil liberties issue. Bennett, a retired lawyer in his late sixties, claims he used to believe in the Holocaust until he read Arthur Butz’s 1977 book *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century*, recalling “it was if the blinders had been lifted from my eyes.”⁴ He added: “I believe, as a lawyer, that allegations—especially those which cause offence to an ethnic group, in this case, Germans—should not be made without supporting evidence.”⁵

Bennett achieved national coverage for denial in 1979 when the *National Times* newspaper published a 13-point memorandum he was preparing to send

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⁵ *Your Rights*, March 1998.
to academics based on the thesis of American professor Arthur Butz and that of other deniers he had read, such as Robert Faurisson and Helmut Diwald.⁶ Later that year Bennett made his first trip outside of Australia to attend the first international “Revisionist Convention” in Los Angeles organized by the Californian-based Institute for Historical Review (IHR).⁷ Bennett said of his participation, “As a bored public servant I just find it intellectually stimulating.... I’m a detached cynic.... [W]e’re in very short supply in this conformist society.”⁸ His participation in the conference led to increased involvement with the IHR, and his becoming an Editorial Advisory Committee member of IHR’s Journal of Historical Review.

Bennett’s embrace of denial led to his 1980 suspension and eventual removal from the Victorian Council of Civil Liberties (VCCL). He had been Honorary Secretary of the VCCL since 1966, but its leadership was concerned that his personal views would be seen as those of the VCCL.⁹ By 1984 he established the ACLU, a name which has worked to Bennett’s advantage, for while the League is taboo, many unsuspecting media and politicians have assumed the ACLU is indeed a bona fide civil liberties organization for whom they have provided a platform.

The ACLU is a small organization run from Bennett’s home,¹⁰ and Holocaust denial appears to be part of his broader worldview. However, through his widely-available annual civil liberties guide, Your Rights, the media seek his commentary on freedom of speech issues, and other Holocaust deniers take his legal counsel when their freedom of speech is curtailed.

Fredrick Toben and the Adelaide Institute

Although the Adelaide Institute is the most recently established of the three Holocaust-denying organizations, its founder and director, Fredrick Toben is Australia’s best-known Holocaust denier. The Adelaide Institute adds to the political work of the League and the legal work of the ACLU by offering a quasi-historical dimension to Holocaust denial, although none of its leaders are trained historians.

⁶ Rubenstein, “Early Manifestations,” 93.
⁷ ADL Facts, June 1980.
⁹ The Age, 2 Apr. 1980.
¹⁰ Bennett, letter to Without Prejudice, 10 Apr. 1991, claimed 400 members in 1991, although only about 50 attended the organization’s AGM during this period, The Age, 6 Oct. 1990.
Toben came to national attention in April 1999, when he was arrested after presenting Holocaust denial material to a state prosecutor in Germany, where denying the mass murder of European Jewry took place is considered a criminal offence. While his supporters presented him as a “martyr for truth,” it is far more plausible that he wanted to remake himself as Australia’s David Irving.¹¹ After a three-day trial in November 1999, Toben was convicted and sentenced to ten months in prison. Having already served seven months in a Mannheim prison while awaiting trial, he was freed after paying 6000 Deutschmarks (AUS $5000).¹² These events, and a finding against him by the Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission in 2001 that material on his Internet site breached the 1995 *Racial Hatred Act* by denigrating Jews, succeeded in placing Holocaust denial, in the Australian public arena in the same way actions against Ernst Zündel did in Canada in the 1980s. Toben documented his views and experiences in his book, *Fight or Flight: the Personal Face of Revisionism*.

Toben emerged as a player in the international “revisionist” movement with Willis Carto, describing him as “the pre-eminent Australian holocaust denier.”¹³ His activities were reported in varying degrees by Ernst Zündel and the IHR. The Adelaide Institute Internet site is one of six that Bradley Smith’s Committee for Open Debate on the Holocaust highlighted in their “revisionist archive.”¹⁴

Toben had arrived in Australia in 1945 with his family from Germany as a one-year-old. After gaining undergraduate degrees from Melbourne University in Australia and Wellington University in New Zealand, he undertook postgraduate studies in Germany, receiving a Ph.D. in philosophy from Stuttgart University. In advancing Holocaust denial he portrays himself, his ideas, and his organization in academic terms. “I wrote my thesis on Karl Popper” he claims, “and I therefore cannot accept closed thinking.”¹⁵

His denial extends beyond the Holocaust, with Toben arguing,

> The mind-set of those who believe in the existence of homicidal gas chambers is the same as that of scientists who believe in the HIV equals AIDS hypothesis. It is a deeply totalitarian mind-set which lacks the flexibility and honesty that is the hallmark of truly civilised people.”¹⁶

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Toben was an employee of the Victoria Department of Education and Training in Melbourne until his dismissal in 1985 on grounds of incompetence and disobedience, a move he challenged and claims to have won in the courts. After driving a school bus for four years, he gained relief work in Adelaide where he settled, with the Adelaide Institute being his full-time occupation for several years. Unemployed, Toben began to move in far Right circles, specifically that of the League, whose 1990 national seminar he addressed on the subject of Aboriginal land rights and multiculturalism. His involvement with the League would have undoubtedly exposed him to their views on Holocaust denial, and subsequently on February 9, 1994 he produced a one-page flyer called *Truth Missions* which was handed to members of Adelaide’s Jewish community attending a charity premier of *Schindler’s List*. By June 1994, *Truth Missions* was renamed the *Adelaide Institute*—a Holocaust-denying publication which evolved into an organization of the same name and objective, offering conferences, speakers, and the most comprehensive Australian denial Internet site.

To add credibility to his cause, Toben modeled the name of his publication and organization on the respected think-tank, the Sydney Institute. This strategy has been vindicated, with the Adelaide Institute referred to in the media as a think-tank, and with Toben described as a historian, despite having no formal history qualifications. Unlike the League or the ACLU, the estimated 250 members of the Adelaide Institute are dedicated Holocaust deniers. As with the ACLU, the Adelaide Institute is run inexpensively out of Toben’s suburban home, with income generated through membership fees, and some members being in a position to provide extra financial support.

**Antisemitism**

All three groups of deniers claim that they are engaged in historical enquiry and open debate. However, a broader analysis demonstrates clear hostility toward Jews. Indeed, the evidence suggests that their Holocaust denial is an extension of their antisemitism. This is particularly glaring in their reliance on and belief in the authenticity of the *Protocols*. This is indeed a logical part of Holocaust denial.

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19 Adelaide Institute associate Michael Mazur, for instance, pledged to financially assist their international conference described below (*Adelaide Institute*, no. 80 [Oct. 1998]).
philosophy, for if the Shoah did not happen there must have been a massive worldwide Jewish conspiracy to perpetuate the fraud.

The Protocols were published in Melbourne in 1945 by the social credit movement,²⁰ and a year later, Butler authored The International Jew—an Australian version of the false document. While conceding that the authenticity of the Protocols may be disputed, Butler clearly endorsed its portrayal of the Jewish plot for global control. The League became the main Australian distributor of the Protocols, viewing events through its prism of a global Jewish conspiracy. ACLU vice-president Jonathan Graham regularly refers readers to the Protocols in his column in the far Right publication, The Strategy, claiming it is “not a forgery but a blueprint which can be seen being put into action....”²¹

Toben’s deputy until November 2000 was the Berlin-born David Brockschmidt, who had an unusual background for a Holocaust denier. His parents were declared Righteous Among the Nations for helping supply trucks to Oscar Schindler during the war, and he spent eleven years working for the British army in the Rhine region as a civilian, and two years in Israel from 1977–1979 before settling in Australia.²² Brockschmidt describes “the schemes of the International Jews” engaged in a “world-wide conspiracy for the overthrow of civilisation and for the reconstruction of society on the basis of arrested development, of envious malevolence, and impossible equality.”²³ This is based on his belief in “the cunning and crafty behaviour of powerful Jewish groups in the financial world, in the world media, in global culture, in world politics and in practically all aspects of life,”²⁴ while simultaneously referring to the “anti-Gentile Babylonian Talmud” as “the root of evil.”²⁵

In Tasmania, the Adelaide Institute’s Olga Scully has made the distribution of the Protocols a regular part of the Adelaide Institute’s work, together with cartoons portraying ugly hooked-nose Jews sitting on piles of money and tricking the world into their conspiracy.²⁶ When distribution of the Protocols led to a hearing

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²² Intelligence Survey, July 1995.
²³ Adelaide Institute, Aug. 1995.
²⁵ Ibid.
before the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission, Scully claimed the “truth” of the Protocols as her defense.²⁷

Equally, the Australian far Right have long maintained opposition to Communism as a central focus of their ideology. As an anti-imperialist movement, Communism was opposed to the British Empire with which the far Right was closely identified. Moreover, Communism’s anti-racist agenda meant additional rights for Aborigines and Asians and a broad cosmopolitanism. Furthermore, until the collapse of the former Soviet Union, the Communist threat to Australia from Asia was regarded with genuine concern. For the extremist Right, Communism was seen as a Jewish movement, which deniers argued was advanced through the “Holocaust myth.”

As an organization dedicated to the British Empire and the Crown, the myths of antisemitic anti-Communism were a key ideological component of the League’s rationale. For example, in 1943 Father Patrick Gearson, a Melbourne-based professor of theology who became a prominent League supporter, authored Communism Unmasked under the pseudonym Jean Patrice. Describing Communism as being “a Jewish movement inspired by Satan and hence diabolically clever,” early editions of the book focused on Jewish communist “atrocities.” Since 1970, this work has been published and distributed by the League, and is unequivocal in its denial of the Holocaust. In The War Behind The War (1940), Butler argued that the avenue through which Jews achieved power since the French Revolution was through socialism. Antisemitism and anti-Communism thus became a complementary focus of League activity.

The Adelaide Institute and the ACLU also adhere to the belief in a direct link between Judaism and Communism. In the words of Brockschmidt, “there is a philosophical and religious link between Talmudic Judaism and Marxism-Leninism.”²⁸ Equally, for former ACLU secretary and Adelaide Institute Associate, Geoff Muriden, Bolshevism “was a Jewish creation maintained by Jews, which would make them liable for the murders, tortures and slavery committed in its name.”²⁹ Thus the deniers turn the Jews from victims into aggressors. For example, Brockschmidt and Muriden brazenly refer to the “Bolshevik-Jewish holocausts.”³⁰

Family experience explains why some individuals subscribe to denial. Explaining how her family fled to Germany from Russia where they were well looked after, Scully says

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²⁸ Adelaide Institute, Aug. 1995.
²⁹ Ibid.
If I can do a little bit to repay that, then I will because we would have all died if it had not been for them, yet whenever you read about them they are all Nazis who gas 6 million Jews and it’s a whole lot of lies.³¹

Little is known about Toben’s family background, although being of German origin he appears to reflect the motivations of deniers, minimizers, and relativists in Germany that want to dissociate the name of Germany from the events of the Second World War. Bennett is not known to be of German origin but he has a strong affiliation to the country, claiming in 1999 to have visited there for ten of the previous twelve years.³²

Operating Methods

The Holocaust deniers disseminate their views in a multitude of ways, but irrespective of the methods employed their arguments are repackaged versions of those devised by European and North American deniers. As such, Australian deniers add little to the ideas of their overseas peers and they are highly dependent on them. Their main claims are:

– The six million figure is a myth perpetuated to achieve Zionist goals in Palestine, with Bennett arguing that in 1938 “there were only 6.5 million Jews in Europe,” and the actual number of Jews to die in the War was about 500,000.³³

– There is no “proof,” according to Toben, that even those 500,000 were murdered, for there was no policy of extermination. Bennett explains that the 1942 Wannsee Conference, at which the Final Solution was agreed upon, “refers to the evacuation to the East not to extermination.”³⁴

– The victims, according to Bennett, actually died from disease, most notably typhus.³⁵ Toben asserts that this explains the presence of Zyklon B, for rather than kill Jews by gassing it was, as Bennett concurs, used to kill the disease that threatened them.³⁶ The League claims 100,000 died of disease.³⁷

³¹ Ibid.
³² Wimmera Mail Times, 7 June 1999.
³⁴ Your Rights (1993).
³⁶ Ibid.
The Adelaide Institute asserts that there were no gas chambers, and the ACLU states they were “reconstructed or fabricated” after the war.

The Holocaust was created, according to the League, to justify the formation of the State of Israel.

The Germans were victims, not persecutors, in what Toben describes as the “Dresden Holocaust.” In a July 1982 letter by Bennett to the University of Melbourne student newspaper *Farrago* stating that the only Holocaust was of a million Germans and Japanese who died as a result of Allied saturation bombings.

The ways in which these arguments are advanced by the three denial groups reflects their differing operating methods. Thus the League’s Holocaust denial is advanced in their publications, the monthly *New Times Survey* and the weekly *On Target*; it features regular meetings of front organizations, such as the Conservative Speakers Club, which are often addressed by Holocaust deniers such Toben; by selling tapes of lectures given at their forums, in addition to sending these for free to public libraries; not to mention publishing Holocaust denial books through their publishing arm Veritas, whose authors include David Irving; by running Letters to the Editor campaigns; and organizing Australian speaking tours for overseas deniers.

### The ACLU

The ACLU’s main activity is the annual publication of *Your Rights* which is also available online, as well as from most local news agencies. The attraction of this booklet is the succinct summation of legal advice on a range of issues from tenancy laws to police questioning, but it also exposes purchasers to Holocaust denial, and to opposition to non-white immigration and Aboriginal reconciliation. In choosing the name for his organization and publication Bennett hoped its legitimate sounding title would give it access that would otherwise be denied. This deceptive suggestion of being a bona fide civil liberties publication, has secured for *Your Rights* the promotional quotes which appear on its back cover from popular magazines like *New Idea, Women’s Weekly, Vogue, Simply Living*,

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and Cosmopolitan. It was even positively reviewed in the journal of the Victorian Law Institute.⁴³

Despite *Your Rights* being the subject of Federal Court injunction hearings, an anti-Discrimination hearing in New South Wales, and having the national bookseller Angus and Robertson removing it from their shelves, it is likely to remain in circulation for the foreseeable future.⁴⁴ Thus, a segment of the community which would not otherwise come across denial material is thereby exposed to it. Purporting to be a civil liberties organization, the ACLU lobbies on legal issues with a racial dimension.

Like the League, the ACLU succeeds in getting Letters to the Editor published and its spokesmen appear as commentators on current affairs programs on related issues, such as the debate about regulation of the Internet, a subject of great importance to the far Right as a whole.

The main activity of the Adelaide Institute is the publication of their eponymously titled newsletter and its electronic version *Adelaide Institute Online*. The hard copy publication is a cheap stapled photocopy, usually consisting of articles that have appeared in the press in relation to the Holocaust—articles from Holocaust-denying websites; and pieces about the Adelaide Institute, especially from Jewish sources. By comparison, the Institute website, which has always been more comprehensive and impressive, offers an array of articles, many by Toben, and photos of him at Auschwitz standing in a gas chamber pointing to holes where he contends the gas would exit the chamber. After a 2003 legal finding forced Toben to remove denial material from his website, it has been has been replaced with general far Right material and anti-Zionist commentary.

Toben, like the IHR, digs into archives to find the “truth” about the Holocaust, and consistent with international denial efforts since the *Leuchter Report*, the Institute also undertakes “scientific” research to prove their case. For example, with funding from undisclosed sources, Richard Krege, an electronics engineer in his thirties, went to Treblinka in 1999 where he used ground penetrating radar to find that soil under which Jews had been buried was undisturbed. This led him to conclude there were no mass graves there and thus Treblinka was not a death camp. Indicative of how such “reports” generate media interest, the *Canberra Times* in Australia’s capital city and the *Examiner* in Tasmania reported his findings without challenge. Krege’s findings were disseminated on the Internet

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by the Holocaust Review Press, the Committee for Open Debate on the Holocaust, David Irving’s Focal Point, and the IHR.⁴⁵

Toben appears to regard himself as an ambassador-at-large for Holocaust denial, attending Jewish community meetings, often with other Adelaide Institute officials. Whenever an opportunity arises, he stands to ask questions and introduces himself in the process. In April 1998, for example, he joined a tour at Melbourne’s Holocaust Museum. According to witnesses, he repeatedly challenged the guide, disputing the assertion that smoke came from the crematoria. He also claimed that the railway lines into the Birkenau concentration camp were built after the war. An Auschwitz survivor interjected that he personally saw the smoke billowing from the crematoria, that he personally traveled on those trains, and that he had lost his entire family in the Holocaust. Toben remained calm throughout the exchange, left his Adelaide Institute business card and departed.⁴⁶

Toben is the main orator on Holocaust denial on the speaker circuit, and has played a key role in ensuring that denial has become a central belief of the far Right as whole. He has been very active in writing “Letters to the Editor” and calling talk-back radio, a very popular form of Australian media. As a result of his German trial, Toben acquired the highest profile of any Australian denier, and is often quoted in the media when denial news stories are generated by his legal cases. His prominence among the Holocaust deniers invited to Tehran by Iranian President Ahmadinejad in early December 2006 was therefore no surprise.

While the deniers clearly desire academic respectability, they are, in fact, hostile toward universities. Toben describes how “history departments at our universities resemble ideological faculties reminiscent of Marxist-Leninist state-run institutions,”⁴⁷ blasting as “cowards” the many academics who “will be shamed for having remained silent on the Jewish Holocaust issue” when they know the truth.⁴⁸ Although there have been no dedicated university campaigns such as those undertaken by denier Bradley Smith in America, there are four main aspects to the Australian deniers academic campaign.

First, university libraries are contacted to purchase denial books for their holdings. Second, historians are engaged in debate about denial. Accordingly,

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Bennett has written to academics asking for their views on the Holocaust, raising denial issues and suggesting the availability of Holocaust denial material.

In September 1996, Toben and Brockschmidt repeatedly disrupted an Adelaide University continuing education class called *Hitler’s Germany: Will History Repeat?*⁴⁹ Third, they expose students to denial literature. Bennett personally distributed literature in the University of Melbourne Student Union building during the Jewish student’s Holocaust Awareness Week in April 1998, and he has written letters to student union papers.⁵⁰ Fourth, they organize Holocaust denial speakers on campus, for example Bennett accompanied David Irving on a talk at Melbourne.⁵¹

Most academics do not engage with deniers, on the basis that debating the issue with them confers legitimacy on their ideas. Only one academic has openly identified with them—Dr. William DeMaria, a lecturer at the School of Social Work and Social Policy at the University of Queensland. However, still hoping to influence students who have no personal memory of the Second World War but who will one day become influential members of the Australian community, deniers have continued their efforts in the universities.

The League, the Adelaide Institute, and the ACLU maintain a close and complementary relationship. The League has portrayed Bennett as “Australia’s leading and most influential libertarian,”⁵² while Bennett has praised the League “for its fight against media censorship on issues such as immigration, multiculturalism and finance.”⁵³ Bennett personally attended the testimonial dinner to mark Butler’s semi-retirement, where he praised his “courage and tenacity.”⁵⁴ Toben, while denying being a League activist, said he held those who were “in the highest regard” for having “shown a deep concern for the well being of Australia.”⁵⁵

The three groups rely on each other for audiences. For example, Bennett has addressed several League meetings and written for League publications,⁵⁶ while Toben conducted a national speaking tour for the League on his return

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from Germany in 2000.⁵⁷ The three organizations similarly rely on each other for mutual promotion. Tapes of Adelaide Institute and ACLU talks to League meetings are distributed by the League, who also promote Your Rights.⁵⁸ The Adelaide Institute publishes material by Butler, and ACLU vice president Graham Pember refers readers of his Strategy column to the League’s On Target⁵⁹ The three organizations provide other assistance to each other. For example, when the League arranged screenings of a David Irving video after he was denied entry into Australia in 1993, it was Bennett who organized the Melbourne showing,⁶⁰ and when the League arranged for Canadian lawyer Doug Collins to visit Adelaide as part of a national speaking tour, the Adelaide Institute was the local contact address.

The three organizations also turn to each other when legal and political difficulties arise. When Toben was incarcerated in Germany, his deputy David Brockschmidt addressed the League’s Adelaide Conservative Speakers Club on the events surrounding Toben’s trial.⁶¹ The ACLU set up a defence fund for Toben’s German trial which raised $6,000,⁶² and Bennett planned to travel to Germany to advise Toben during his incarceration.⁶³ The three organizations provide each other with practical and moral support, a core constituency, and a rationale that they would otherwise be denied.

International links

The importation into the country of overseas denial and deniers has been fundamental to the development of Holocaust “revisionism” in Australia. Given the limited resources in Australia, deniers from abroad add a dimension that makes the work of the Australian Holocaust negators more viable as they regularly publish and refer to the work of their overseas peers. The League has gotten mainstream media coverage by inviting speakers who attract media attention to Australia. This included the 1988 speaking tour of Dr. Robert Countess of Alabama, an editorial advisory board member of the IHR⁶⁴; and the 1991 visit of the Cana-
dian lawyer Douglas Christie who had represented Holocaust deniers such as Ernst Zündel.

The clearest illustration of the local use of overseas deniers was during the first Australian Revisionists Conference that took place in August 1998 in Adelaide. There were four speakers from overseas, including Butz from America and Jürgen Graf from Switzerland who delivered the keynote address. Sixteen deniers participated by video or phone, including Robert Faurisson, Mark Weber, Ahmed Rami, Ernst Zündel, and Charles Weber.⁶⁵

The relationship between Australian and overseas deniers is mutually beneficial. The overseas negationists increase their sense of relevance, purpose, and effect. Organizations such as the IHR based in California cite their participation in Australian activities in order to present themselves as an international organization. Similarly, the relationship Australian deniers have with their overseas peers makes them feel that however marginal they are locally, they are relevant internationally. As an IHR report about the 1998 Adelaide conference stated, “For some time now, Australia has been one of the most dynamic battlefields in the worldwide struggle against the historical blackout. And at the forefront of the battle there is the Adelaide Institute.”⁶⁶

Both Toben and Bennett regularly attend IHR conferences, but the more active of the two is Toben, who has extensive contacts with deniers across the globe. His European contacts are well documented in his travel diary of a 1998 trip to Europe which was devoted to meeting deniers, visiting concentration camps, including Auschwitz, and delving into archives where his findings merely reaffirmed his beliefs. In London he met Germar Rudolf to discuss the involvement of *Adelaide Institute Online* in an English language publication Rudolf had been planning, and he stayed with Rudolf on the farm of British National Party leader Nick Griffin. In Poland he met with Tomasz Gabis, editor of the magazine *Stancyk* which features denial; in Vienna he spent time with Emil Lachout, an engineer who supposedly “proved” there were no gas chambers; and in France he visited Robert Faurisson at his home.⁶⁷

In addition to reinforcing Toben’s worldview and providing him with information to disseminate in Australia there was a practical dimension to these contacts. Ludwig Bock, who had personally been convicted for Holocaust denial,⁶⁸

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represented Toben during his German trial, and German supporter Eric Rossler paid the fine imposed on Toben by the German court. 

Israel, the Middle East, and the Left

A central thesis of the deniers is that the Holocaust “hoax” was created to justify ongoing support for the State of Israel. This rationale has led the denial movement to win many adherents in the Middle East. Indeed, there are increasing links between Australian deniers and Middle Eastern regimes and groups which support denial. For example, the Libyan regime of Colonel Gaddafi was active in Australia, particularly during the 1970s and 1980s. Bennett wrote an article for the first edition of the pro-Libyan magazine *The Green March* in 1986, and in 1988 he reportedly traveled to Libya as part of a delegation to sit on a “tribunal” to “judge” the U.S. bombing of Libya. The ACLU’s Graham Pember liked to refer readers of his *Strategy* column to Radio Islam, providing an extremist Islamic source of denial for Australians to access.

When Toben held his 1998 international denial conference in Adelaide, the United Arab Emirates Ambassador to Australia attended. In December 1999, Toben spent three weeks in Iran where he lectured on denial to university students and was interviewed by the *Tehran Times*, which described him as a “German researcher residing in Australia.” Since then he was interviewed from Australia by Iranian television about the Pope’s 2000 visit to Jerusalem, claiming that “the Jewish politicians are using the Holocaust and the six million dead figure as a justification for suppressing the Palestinians and for claiming that Jerusalem is their undivided capital.” During his attendance at the 2006 Holocaust denial festival in Iran, Toben was again, a prominent figure. Toben clearly enjoys the sense of importance this provides, and the Iranians benefited from using a Western figure to reinforce their views. Middle Eastern issues, more specifically anti-Zionism, have indeed taken an increasingly prominent place in

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69 *Adelaide Advertiser*, 16 Nov. 1999.
Toben’s activities. After the Australian High Court ordered him to remove denial material from his Internet site, it has been largely dedicated to the Palestinian cause, which provides a basis for indirect denial.

In August 2003 Toben and his Adelaide Institute colleague Mohammed Hegazi attended a conference in Iran on the Palestinian Intifada at which Toben was one of the speakers. The Adelaide Institute website included photos of Toben wearing a black and white keffiyah, next to women in traditional Islamic dress as he described how they questioned the Holocaust. In other photos Toben and Hegazi appeared next to two Palestinians who had witnessed the “Zionist ‘Holocaust’” of the people of Palestine. At Tehran University they stood in front of a recreated Palestinian home demolished by the Israeli army. The caption read: “A demolished home symbolizes the actual ethnic cleansing of Palestinians from their own homes: millions of Germans suffered this fate at the end of World War Two, carried out by the same Axis of Evil that supports aggression against and oppresses the Palestinians.”

Australian collaboration with Middle Eastern regimes and organizations over Holocaust denial is consistent with trends internationally. Ties to those involved in Middle Eastern denial have the potential to introduce more extreme forms of antisemitism into Australia. It is no accident that several deniers, such as Jürgen Graf, have made Iran their home and Toben has suggested that he may follow their lead.⁷⁷ He said in relation to Federal Court action arising from the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission finding against him, that he “would apply for political refugee status in Iran if and when his condition of stay in Australia becomes insecure.”⁷⁸ In the interim, Toben remains active in the broad Middle Eastern anti-Zionist crusade, boasting that he traveled to Jordan during the 2003 war in Iraq in an attempt to offer himself as a human shield. In August 2003, he declared: “The tragedy in Iraq deflects from the Palestinian tragedy, and peace will only come to the Middle East with the dismantling of the Zionist, apartheid, racist state of Israel.”⁷⁹

The increasing prevalence of Holocaust denial in the Muslim world has the potential to increase support for Holocaust denial in Australia from within the Islamic and Arabic communities, as has already occurred in Europe and North

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⁷⁹ *ADC Online* 5, no. 2 (Aug. 2003).
America. Incidents of this nature have happened in Australia in the past. This could lead to alliances between Islamic extremists and the traditional far Right, a practice which is evident in Europe and North America. In addition, with denial often related to extreme forms of antisemitism in the Middle East, these ties may increase the radical character of denial amongst groups such as the League, ACLU, and the Adelaide Institute in Australia. Moreover, as Islam in South East Asia is influenced by the extremist Islamic groups from the Middle East there may be a growth of denial in Asia in which Australian deniers could play a role. Indeed on his way to Iran for the conference on the Intifada in August 2003, Toben stopped in Malaysia where he gave a lecture to the history class of Professor A. B. Kopanski at the International Islamic University in Malaysia.

Holocaust denial is also likely to appear in the Australian Islamic/Arabic community in relation to attacks against Israel. For example, in October 2000 as the Al-Aqsa “Intifada” erupted, the Australian Muslim News published on its front page a statement from the president of the Supreme Islamic Council of New South Wales, Gabr Elgafi, which stated that the Council deplores the Israeli Government and its army for the atrocity and the barbaric behaviour in the State of Palestine. We the Muslims of New South Wales urge the Australian Government and the Prime Minister to demonstrate their disgust and disapproval of the events in Palestine and the Israeli territories. We find ironical that the victims of the so called holocaust have had a lapse of memory.

The Middle Eastern dimension adds another potential source of support for deniers from the hard Left where anti-Zionism plays a central role. Anti-Zionism, particularly amongst elites, has been identified as a new form of antisemitism with implications for Holocaust denial. Evidence of the Israeli-Nazi equivalence in left-wing circles has been widely seen since the outbreak of Israel-Palestinian fighting in September 2000. In 2003, as controversy raged about Israel’s security fence, the Sydney Morning Herald broadsheet published a cartoon which equated the West Bank with the Warsaw Ghetto, through two walls. Hatred for Israel on

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the Left, which involves breaking down the taboo of the Holocaust, could thus fuel Holocaust relativism and lead to direct collaboration between anti-Zionists and Holocaust deniers as has occurred in Europe. Indeed, in 2003 the left-wing Melbourne Underground Film Festival in Australia offered screenings on the Israeli occupation from “a Palestinian perspective” together with the screening of films by Irving and Faurisson. This was a clear sign of the developing relationship between Holocaust relativism, denial, and left-wing anti-Zionism.

David Irving

Any discussion about Holocaust denial in Australia would be incomplete without considering the British historian David Irving. While obviously not an Australian denier, he has done more than anyone else to make Holocaust denial an issue of public debate in Australia. Australian denial organizations were centrally involved in this process, with Irving acting as a vehicle to promote their agenda. Irving first visited Australia in March 1986 on a national tour organized by the League publishing arm, Veritas, to promote his book *Uprising*. League leader Butler and Irving appeared to have a close relationship, with Butler hosting him in his home during this visit.⁸⁵ Overseas, Butler also chaired meetings for Irving, such as that held in Winnipeg in 1987.⁸⁶ Because of his relatively high profile, Irving attracted extensive and mostly uncritical media interest during his visit, far more than the local deniers could generate for themselves.

After Irving failed to find a British publisher for *Churchill’s War*, Veritas published the book and organized a 1987 tour of Australia for Irving to promote it. The Australian Jewish community became increasingly concerned at the higher profile Irving was giving to Holocaust denial and as reports emerged in 1992 that he would be visiting again, the Jewish community began to lobby for him to be denied an entry visa.⁸⁷ In 1993 Irving received a letter from the Government informing him that he was being denied a visa based on concern that “the effect your presence in Australia will have within the community” and “that your proposed visit...would have been disruptive to the Australian community.”⁸⁸ Thus

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⁸⁵ *The Bulletin*, 13 May 86.
began a cycle of repeated visa applications which enveloped the sick cause of Holocaust denial in the false halo of free speech.

While denied personal entry, in 1993 Irving produced a video especially designed for an Australian audience, “The Search for Truth in History,” with the local deniers responsible for its promotion. Newspaper advertisements promoting the video listed Muriden and the ACLU’s contact details, and in a program organized by Veritas and Bennett, the video was scheduled to be shown nationally but most talks were cancelled because of protests. However, this whole process made denial an almost daily news item, fed by interviews with Irving from the UK and America.

Irving received some practical benefit from this Australian support during his 2001 libel trial in London. 288 donations were received from Australia alone, ranging from $10–$2000, in the period leading up to his trial. Irving was assisted in preparing information for his cross-examination by Australian public servant Michael Mills. This demonstrates that an Australian such as Mills who has no impact on the debate about the Holocaust in Australia, can play a more significant role when connected to prominent overseas deniers. Following the court’s decision against Irving, the ACLU sought to provide financial assistance for his appeal.

The Internet has undoubtedly broadened the reach of all deniers and is the primary means through which non-Australian deniers can reach an Australian audience. Irving’s Internet site, for example, provides a section for purchases with Australian credit cards. While the Internet does not offer the range of coverage of mainstream media, it has been the means by which Irving interacts with Australians in a mutually beneficial and close relationship. The ACLU and League promote his books, which are available at their meetings, while Toben lauds Irving as “one of the few historians to have their moral and intellectual integrity intact.” Irving returned the favor by issuing a statement in support of Toben during his own legal difficulties in Australia.

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89 The Age, 19 June 1993.
90 The Age, 20 May 1993.
95 See, for example http://www.fpp.co.uk/Letters/Rightwing/Knight241101.html accessed 3 July 2002.
96 ACLU newsletter, no. 110 (April 1996).
97 Sydney Morning Herald, 10 Apr. 1999.
By lending his name to the Australian deniers, Irving has been able to assist their campaign and they have remained committed to him despite the London court’s decision unequivocally branding him as a racist, antisemite, and Holocaust denier.

The Far Right

Holocaust deniers are sufficiently connected to the broader far Right that they can use these links effectively to advance their cause. It is far Right tolerance of Holocaust denial that provides the deniers with a base to increase their support. For example, the militia magazine *Lock Stock and Barrel* does not directly espouse negationist theses, but it does carry advertisements from Olga Scully. More- over, Holocaust denial is a crucial part of the white supremacist agenda, openly espoused by Australian neo-Nazi skinheads and New Age racists obsessed with UFOs, lost civilizations, and alternative health. It has long been embraced by militant Christian Identity ministries who have distributed the *Leuchter Report* and Ernst Zündel’s tapes. It also creeps into the agitation of the racist Right opposed to Asian immigration and multiculturalism.

Denial clearly generates antisemitism, so protecting freedom of speech must be balanced with protecting the Holocaust denier’s Jewish targets. Despite the centrality of freedom of speech, there are legal limitations on hate speech to which the Jewish community has recourse, primarily the 1995 Racial Hatred Act. This prohibits racially offensive or abusive behavior, covering public acts “reasonably likely in all the circumstances to offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate that person or group.” The Executive Council of Australian Jewry (ECAJ) took action against both Toben and Scully under the act with the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC). In 2001, HREOC ordered Toben to remove material from his Internet site which breached the act by denigrating Jews, and to apologize to ECAJ, while Scully was similarly ordered to apologize for her literature.

However, for Toben and Scully the process reinforced their world view, with both stating they would ignore the findings. Toben responded to the pending case by switching to an overseas Internet Service Provider, but in a 2002 landmark ruling, the Federal Court found the 1995 Racial Hatred Act applied to the Internet

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and ordered Toben to remove material from his Internet site. The Federal Court ruled that he would be in contempt of court if he refused to do so, making him accountable under Australian law even if the material is hosted in another jurisdiction. This was an important precedent in relation to online racism in Australia and may also influence similar deliberations by courts overseas. The Federal Court decision against Toben, which was upheld following an appeal, was also of particular importance because it found that Holocaust denial breached the Racial Hatred Act objectively, rather than being subjective to the feelings of the complainant. Scully was also found to breach the act with the risk that if she continued to distribute her material she would be in contempt of court. Toben removed offending material and the threat remains of being held in contempt of court should he add denial material to his Internet site. Ultimately, if Toben moved overseas it would be hard to enforce any decision handed down by an Australian court but his legal liability would probably prevent his return to Australia.

Despite the important precedent of the High Court decision against Toben, the ability of the judiciary to identify the antisemitic nature of denial remains a moot point. When, for example, the Jewish Community Council of Victoria sought an interim injunction to prevent the screening of Irving’s film at the Melbourne Underground Film Festival, the judge said it may be offensive to some members of the Jewish community but it did not constitute racial vilification under the Victorian Racial and Religious Tolerance Act. He found the film to be “quite bland” despite references such “traditional enemies” and “dining out on the Holocaust.” Reflecting the importance of freedom of speech in Australia, the judge said he made the ruling to uphold the right of the Victorian population to engage in robust discussion. Legal responses to Internet regulation may well prove pivotal in the future of Holocaust denial in Australia and indeed internationally.

In terms of Holocaust denial on the Internet, the work of Australian deniers will also be affected by the situation overseas. In his German trial, for instance, Toben was acquitted of charges of defaming the memory of the dead on the Internet because the offending information was installed outside the German jurisdiction. However, an appeal to the German Supreme Court found he might be tried as the material could be downloaded in Germany. This has global implications for Internet regulation, but its practical effect means that Toben is unlikely to return to Germany. This indicates that the future prospects of Holocaust denial in Australia will be directly affected by global responses to it.

Denial in Australia will also be affected by developments in the negationist movement overseas. For example, the reduced funding that the California-based IHR enjoys, as compared to the past will affect its activities in Australia and the support it can offer figures such as Toben. In terms of responding to Holocaust denial, the Jewish community runs extensive Holocaust educational programs
while in both government and private high schools, Holocaust literature such as the *Diary of Anne Frank* is widely read. However, educational authorities, both Jewish and general, will need to consider as part of these efforts the development of specific educational programs aimed at addressing the issue of Holocaust denial. This will be increasingly important as survivors of the Holocaust, who speak to thousands of schoolchildren each year, pass away.

An indication of the potential for Holocaust denial was provided well over a decade ago by the best-selling and award-winning 1994 book by Helen Demidenko, *The Hand That Signed the Paper*. This case demonstrated that some of Australia’s leading literary figures and intellectuals were willing to embrace a book whose central thesis, while not denying the Holocaust, found a defence for it. The book presented “Jewish-Bolshevik” persecution of Ukrainians in the 1930s as a parallel to the Holocaust and a kind of “justification” for it. All three Holocaust denying organizations enthusiastically embraced the novel. Although *The Hand That Signed the Paper* is a work of fiction and as such is distinct from overt denial, this experience suggests that a time may arise when literary figures will similarly defend a work of Holocaust denial. Indeed, in February 2000, the Victorian Minister for the Arts, Mary Delahunty, in a hypothetical discussion said she would hope to “have the courage” to put public money into a play based on the work of David Irving.¹⁰⁰

It is easy to dismiss Holocaust deniers as extremists. But with the passage of time, the advantages of the Internet and international support, the potential exists for them to establish an “alternative history.” Acceptance of denial’s core thesis is by no means limited to the racist fringe. The Chief Historical Examiners for the High School certificate in one state and a school history teacher in another have reportedly said, when referring to revisionism, that there is an alternative point of view. A danger lies in the appeal of relativism to some Western liberals as was seen in responses to Norman Finkelstein’s book, *The Holocaust Industry*. While hard core deniers remain small in number, scores are known to attend their meetings, hundreds are sympathizers, and they reach thousands through their mailing lists.

Denial of the Shoah can and does lead to overt antisemitism. It can also put Holocaust survivors, of which Australia has the highest per capita number anywhere outside of Israel, on the defensive. This is what Nadine Fresco, a French

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¹⁰⁰ **Arts Today**, ABC Radio National, 16 Feb. 2000. When criticized for this, she said Holocaust revisionism was outside the boundaries of what is acceptable and therefore would not be publicly supported. Mary Delahunty to B’nai B’rith Anti-Defamation Commission, Inc., 21 Feb. 2000.
authority on Holocaust denial, describes as the “double liquidation,” denying not only the dead but also the living.¹⁰¹
