

Al Baron and Freedom of Speech: An Argument in Two Parts

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Part One: General Considerations

There are few conventional wisdoms that we do not despise. There are few that do not alarm us. None, however, do we find so alarming and despicable as the growing reluctance to attack or defend certain opinions with reasoned argument.

There are many who think that it enough to dismiss a false and pernicious opinion with the words "unacceptable", or "offensive", or "evil", or "mad". Failing this, they will call for it to be erased by Act of Parliament. Long part of its standard armoury, these shifts seem lately to have become the weapons of first and only resort of "progressive" belief in this country. Scientific racism, paranormal claims, new age religious cults, astrology, anti-Darwinism, anti-Einsteinism, and much else – these are set beyond the pale of reasoned reply, where not simply proscribed. To make reply is to risk accusations of frivolity, of giving such opinions an "undeserved credibility", or even of "objective complicity".

As libertarians, we believe in freedom of speech. Certainly, this follows from a general belief in the right to life, liberty and property that is not at the moment widely shared. Even so, there is a case for freedom of speech that stands alone; and this we will now put. We say that truth, progress, and even social harmony are best served by the equal toleration of all opinions. We say this on two grounds.

First, an opinion may, for all its appearance, be correct. There are few of us who have not believed with all surety in what we now dismiss as a falsehood. The most casual knowledge of history gives instances of truths laughed at and their discoverers persecuted. Galileo died under house arrest for having asserted that the Earth orbited the Sun. The German National Socialists drove physicists into exile or idleness for refusing to denounce the "Jewish" myth of the interchangeability of energy and matter. The Soviet Socialists even killed those biologists who denied, against Lysenko, that acquired characteristics in living things were transmissible to the next generation. So far as the truth is worth knowing, we lose by its suppression.

Second, even if an opinion is wrong beyond all reasonable doubt, to suppress it is to deprive us or what John Stuart Mill calls "Almost as great a benefit, the clearer perception and livelier impression of truth, produced by its collision with error."¹ Protect the most solidly based truth with penal laws, and faith in it will insensibly wither.

Take, for instance, a case given by J. A. Froude. Some time around 1860, a school inspector wrote to *The Times*, announcing that, contrary to what every astronomer believed, the Moon did not revolve on its axis. If it did, he explained, it could not always present the same face to us. School inspectors, it seems, were as ill-educated then as they are today. But a question had been raised. A few days later, a full answer was published from the Astronomer Royal. The Moon, he explained, did revolve on its axis – but at the same average speed as its orbit

about the Earth: only because of these synchronised movements could it always present the same face to us. [M]ost of us, Froude comments,

who had before received what the men of science told us with an unintelligent and languid assent, were set thinking for ourselves, and as a result of the discussion, exchanged a confused idea for a clear one.²

Yet, suppose the Moon's rotation had been an article of faith, and the Astronomer Royal had been able to answer the inspector with persecution instead of reason – that the inspector had been turned out of his job, or even imprisoned – what then? Why,

The world outside would have had an antecedent assumption that truth lay with the man who was making sacrifices for it, and that there was little to be said in the way of argument for what could not stand without the help of the law. Everybody could understand the difficulty; not everybody would have taken the trouble to attend to the answer.³

If, therefore, we desire the benefits of progress, we must leave opinions alone. We must leave people to seek out and announce anything that they believe to be true. If we want the occasional gleam of truth, we must put up with an endless torrent of nonsense. We must tolerate it all. We must hope for an answer not in censorship, nor in any other refusal to debate, but in the far greater power of unarmed truth.

Now, this deals with truth and progress, but what about the social harmony we mention above? The answer is simple, if unflattering to the present age. There are many people in this country and elsewhere who deny that the Holocaust really happened. Some of these people are self-evident cranks. Their research is a joke. Their very tone indicates that they desire to happen what they deny to have happened. Some, on the other hand, give every appearance of sound scholarship. They cite documents that cast doubt on the received account. They draw attention to alleged contradictions between what was said at the Nuremberg trials and what is now claimed. They deny that much of the Holocaust was technically possible.

Take, for example, the American writer L.A. Rollins:

Did you see *The Wall*, the TV movie about the Warsaw Ghetto? If so, then you may recall that after the deportation of Jews from Warsaw began, the character played by Tom Conti followed a train carrying Jews to Treblinka. There he saw a crematory building with huge chambers spewing black clouds of smoke into the sky. Thus he learned that Jews were being murdered at Treblinka.

But this is an example of what is known as 'dramatic license'. In reality, Zalman Friedrich, who supposedly followed a train carrying Jews out of

Warsaw, never claimed to have gone all the way to Treblinka, but only to a town near the camp. There he supposedly met an escapee from Treblinka, who supposedly told him that Jews were being murdered there.

Furthermore, there was no crematory building at Treblinka, no chimneys spewing clouds of black smoke. At the time in question, the Jews allegedly murdered there were allegedly buried in mass graves, not cremated.

Finally, even if there had been a crematory building there, as at Auschwitz-Birkenau, the chimneys would not have been spewing clouds of black smoke into the air. The patent of Topf and Son, the builders of the Auschwitz-Birkenau crematories, indicate that it was impossible for them to emit smoke. And this seems to be confirmed by the aerial photographs of Auschwitz-Birkenau published in the CIA monograph *The Holocaust Revisited* (1979). According to the two CIA photo interpreters who analyzed the aerial photos taken of Auschwitz-Birkenau between April, 1944 and January, 1945, 'Although survivors recalled that smoke and flame emanated continually from the crematoria chimneys and was visible for miles, the photography we examined gave no positive proof of this.' In other words, *none* of the aerial photographs of Auschwitz-Birkenau show *any* smoke or flame coming from the crematoria chimneys.

Are you a believer in the infallibility of eyewitness testimony by Holocaust survivors? If so, then I suggest you look at the aerial photos of Auschwitz-Birkenau, and then ask yourself who you believe, Holocaust survivors or your own eyes.⁴

What are we to make of this? It is our belief that the Germans did rob, imprison and systematically murder perhaps ten million civilians during the War, and that a high proportion of these millions were Jewish. We have met too many survivors to doubt that the camps existed. We know too many undenied instances of German brutality to doubt the moral possibility of a Holocaust within them. Above all, we reject the conspiracy view of history on which Holocaust denial needs to rest. If the Holocaust never took place, at least the British and American Governments would need to have been actively involved in a gigantic conspiracy of fabrication since 1945 or before. These are governments that have been unable to cover up the most immediately damaging scandals. We think it incredible that institutions that failed to keep the burglary at the Watergate Building and arms sales to Iraq out of the newspapers have yet managed to keep up the myth of a Holocaust that never happened.

This being said, we have no specific reply to Mr Rollins. We have never made any study of the Holocaust. We do not know what was claimed about Treblinka or Auschwitz-Birkenau. We have never heard of the CIA monograph mentioned. We do not know if it exists, or if it really says what Mr Rollins quotes, or if it is based on a true study of the alleged photographs.

And the people who are most likely to know the truth of these matters seem to show the least interest in open debate. So far as the leaders of most Western Jewish communities have involved themselves in this debate, they have only called for its suppression. In this country, for example, the Board of Deputies has strongly supported every extension of our race relations laws, the ef-

fect of which has been to silence most rational debate on race. They are now strongly supporting still further extensions to these laws – in particular, a draft law in the European Parliament which would make it illegal throughout the Community to deny the factual truth of the Holocaust. Even where they cannot suppress their opponents by force of law, Jewish leaders on the whole refuse to debate with even the most apparently scholarly – and therefore dangerous – of the Holocaust deniers.

The result has been what anyone who has read Mill or Froude would expect. We quote from a recent article by Bernard Levin:

[A]n opinion poll, from a most reputable organisation, found that in the United States, 22 per cent of adults who were asked the question said it was possible that the Holocaust had never happened, and a further 12 per cent said that they did not know if the Holocaust had been possible. The admirable and most scholarly periodical called *Patterns of Prejudice* has recently carried a thorough examination of Holocaust-denial, by Deborah Lipstadt, a professor of religion at Emory University in Atlanta; she has written a book called *Denying the Holocaust*, and her article was drawn from her research for the book. I started the article, as I suppose most people would, in a sceptical mood; I knew, of course, about Holocaust-denial and those who propagate it, but I could not bring myself to believe that it could do serious damage, in the sense that a substantial number of people, neither anti-Semitic nor mad, might come to believe that history's greatest crime had never been committed.⁵

It has become a serious intellectual evil exactly because of what opposition has been offered. A general refusal to debate the matter, combined with occasional persecution, has made it possible for anyone with a light but enquiring mind to doubt that the Holocaust actually happened.

Part Two: The Case Of Al Baron

We turn now to the particular case of Al Baron, a journalist accused of running an anti-semitic campaign. In May this year, his flat in South London was raided by the Police, who removed his computer and a number of documents. Although charges have yet to be made, these could include incitement to racial hatred (Race Relations Act 1976; Public Order Act 1986), sending indecent material through the Post Office (Post Office Act 1953), and breaches of the Financial Services Act 1986.

Let us explain.

In 1980, Mr Baron was briefly involved with the British Movement, an overtly national socialist organisation complete with Jewish conspiracy theories and a veneration for Adolf Hitler. This involvement ended with his realising that the British Movement was worthless and evil. He is quite open about this involvement, and says he was attracted only because the Movement was anti-Communist at the time of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. He denies that his motives were malevolent, and that he ever accepted any politics of hate.

In 1990, he interviewed Chris R. Tame for the *Investor's Chronicle*. This was a fine piece of work, as was another interview with Mr Tame as Director of FOREST.

Mr Baron approached the Libertarian Alliance again in 1991, for help in his campaign to end the imprisonment

here of Lorrain Osman, a Hong Kong businessman whose confused extradition had led to his becoming the longest person imprisoned in the United Kingdom without trial since the 17th century.⁶ He became an subscriber, and has attended a number of LA conferences.

This connection, we should say, does not mean that Mr Baron has become a libertarian of our kind. He still holds opinions most decidedly at variance with our own on such matters as gay rights and monetary economics. However, his belief in free speech, and his work on the exposure of various health and environmental scares, among much else, command our firm and public respect.

We also respect his work on the various national socialist movements. Indeed, we think that it is for this that he will one day be chiefly remembered. We think it no exaggeration to claim that he has become one of the most deadly opponents that national socialism has in this country – or perhaps the world.

His opposition has been so deadly because it is based on accurate knowledge – knowledge of what these people believe, and knowledge of the poisoned sources from which these beliefs are taken. In our last issue (*Free Life*, No. 18, May 1993), we carried a review by Howard Perkins of Mr Baron's *Shechita Barbaric?*. This begins and ends with the following paragraphs:

I would commend this pamphlet on two grounds. First, it is so hilariously funny that I almost had a seizure on reading it. Second, it is a devastating attack on British national socialism...

These issues – and others that I do not mention – are all discussed with a proper scholarly seriousness. Indeed, the author probably knows more about these aspects of anti-semitism than most anti-semites. There are 69 endnotes, and every work used is given its full citation. This makes the pamphlet a good starting point for anyone who wishes to study the history and doctrines of British national socialism. For anyone who wants a brief but authoritative overview of the subject, it is simply the best place to look.

This is a fair estimate of Mr Baron's work – formidable research married to a biting sense of humour, and a willingness to enter into controversies from which most others hold back.

We have before us a further sample of his work – *A Goy Pries into the Talmud: The Six Million Reconsidered by the Light of Four Small Candles*.⁷ This will be reviewed at length in our next issue. In the meantime, we will call it an astonishing piece of work. Its author deserves the highest praise from everyone who cares for the good name of the Jewish people. For he has made the sort of reply to anti-semitic claims that we regret above have not been made by the Jews themselves.

It deals with the claims that are often made about the contents of the *Talmud* – that, for example, it exhorts Jews to molest Gentile children, or to cheat Gentiles in any business deal, and so forth. We quote from the preface "To the Reader":

Talmudic fabrications and other anti-Semitic nonsense have rather more in common with flying saucers than with the geography of France. Primarily because the *Talmud* (which is written in Hebrew) is not a book which is stocked in most ordinary libraries, and there are few English translations available to the general public. However, English translations *do* exist, and it is

possible for a goy to pry into the *Talmud*. I am a regular researcher in the British Library (which stocks some eighteen million books), I am also a goy who has pried into the *Talmud*, and believe me, the obscenities are not there. For those who don't or won't believe me, there is one failsafe alternative: pry into the *Talmud* yourself!

What follows must be read in full to be appreciated. But we will say that whoever does read it need never again be thrown by the forged and twisted quotations with which most anti-semitic writers sprinkle their texts and their footnotes.

In another of his works, Mr Baron attacks the notion of a Jewish financial conspiracy:

Anti-Semites hold many erroneous views about Jews including that they control the financial system or even the whole economy. Bizarre as such beliefs may at first sight appear, a powerful case can be made out for them. The roster of Jewish names associated with banking, particularly "international banking", is so long that it is embarrassing: Goldman, Lehman, Loeb, Seligman, and of course Rothschild, to name but five. Jewish names are well-represented in commerce too: H. Samuel the jewellers, Amstrad (owned by Alan Sugar), and Marks & Spencer, Britain's largest (and most respected) retailer. Several hundred names could be added to this list, but impressive though it is, it is an illusion that Jews in any sense monopolise or even dominate the economy.

The anti-Semitic fantasy is that Jewish commercial hegemony is the result of a conspiracy; the reality is that the Jews are more successful in the free market largely because they are better at satisfying their customers' demands. After all, nobody *has* to buy from Jews.⁸

Yet, in spite of all this, Mr Baron is hated by the main bodies of our Jewish community. The Board of Deputies has reported him to the authorities, and *The Jewish Chronicle* has given him some rather unflattering coverage. Why should this be?

The most obvious answer is that Mr Baron does sometimes give the wrong impression. Look again at the title of the pamphlet from which we quote above – *A Goy Pries into the Talmud: The Six Million Reconsidered by the Light of Four Small Candles*. To anyone disinclined to read it, this work looks like yet another anti-semitic screed. Some others of his publications quote anti-semitic cartoons on their covers. It is no answer that the factual accuracy of what these cartoons claim is often scathingly attacked within: first impressions mean a lot. His publishing house, Anglo-Hebrew Publishing, was set up to oppose anti-semitism and popular misconceptions about the Jews. But his means of advertising this venture do seem to have frightened several elderly Jewish people to whom he sent publications and requests for donations – and we repeat, not surprisingly

Again, Mr Baron seems to believe that the best form of defence is attack. We will not comment on legal proceedings which are pending or actual, but his current strategy is not the one that we might adopt in the same circumstances.

Then there is Mr Baron's campaign against the "anti-fascist" magazine *Searchlight*. This is a contemptible publication that mingles disinformation with distortion and plain lies to destroy the reputations of anyone whom it is

Editor or his masters currently dislike. Of course, it does sometimes publish true information about national socialists – but far more often false information about anarchists, conservatives, libertarians and other anti-socialists. We do not approve of every argument that Mr Baron has used against *Searchlight*, but we fully share his distaste for its editorial policy. And we have no doubt that it is behind many of his present troubles.

Finally, there is the strong possibility of discreditable motives on the part of some Jews. Mr Baron is most obviously not an anti-semitic. He is, however, a committed anti-zionist. We know that these two doctrines are easily conflated. Even so, they are logically distinct, and in this case are actually so. Moreover, while we regard anti-semitism as a degrading superstition, we regard anti-zionism as an entirely legitimate opinion. It is not one that we are inclined to share: Mr Tame is even an ardent *pro-zionist*. But we see no difference between opposing the policies of the Israeli Government and opposing those of the British Government: both are matters of fair comment. By no means every Jew is a committed zionist, and so far as many Jews are committed on the subject, it is against the state of Israel.

We suspect that in Mr Baron's case, some Jews are cynically conflating these two distinct doctrines, for the purpose of smearing an enemy of Israel as an enemy of the Jewish people. If so, this is a disgrace. We can think of little that is more liable to add weight to the claims of real anti-semites than the Jews are conspiring to pervert the course of justice.

In conclusion, we will express our strongest disquiet at the campaign against Mr Baron. We encourage our readers, both Jewish and Gentile, to read his pamphlets. We are quite convinced that they will then fully share our disquiet.

Notes

1. John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (1859), published with other essays in the "Everyman" edition, J. M. Dent and Sons, London, 1972, p. 79 (Chapter II, "Of the Liberty of Thought and Discussion"). But I could just as easily quote Thomas Babbington Macaulay:

"Men are never so likely to settle a question as when they discuss it freely. A government can interfere in discussion only by making it less free than it would otherwise be. Men are most likely to form just opinions when they have no other wish than to know the truth, and are exempt from all influence, either of hope or fear. Government, as a government, can bring nothing but the influence of hope and fears to support its doctrines. It carries on controversy, not with reasons, but with threats and bribes. If it employs reasons, it does so, not by virtue of any powers which belong to it as a government. Thus, instead of a contest between argument and argument, we have a contest between argument and force. Instead of an argument in which truth, from the natural constitution of the human mind, has a decided advantage over falsehood, we have a contest in which truth can be victorious only by accident." (Review of Southey's *Colloquies* (1829), in *Critical and Historical Essays*, "Everyman" edition, J. M. Dent and Sons, London, 1931, Vol. 2, p. 209).

2. From "A Plea for the Free Discussion of Theological Differences" (1863), in *Essays in Literature and History* by J.A. Froude, "Everyman" edition, J. M. Dent and Co., London, 1906, p. 197.
3. *Ibid.*
4. L. A. Rollins, *Lucifer's Lexicon*, Loompanics Unlimited, Washington, 1987, pp. 54-55.
5. Bernard Levin, "Compounding the Evil", *The Times*, 25th June 1993.
6. See Al Baron, *Imprisonment without Trial: The Lorrain Osman Case*, Introduction by Chris R. Tame, Legal Notes No. 15, The Libertarian Alliance, London, 1991.
7. The ISBN for this work is 1 871473 26 8. Copies are available from the following address: InfoTech Manuscripts, c/o 93c Venner Road, London SE26 5HU. Tel: 081 659 7713
8. From *Charity Begins at Home*, ISBN 0 99211 06 7 available from: Anglo-Hebrew Publishing, at the above address.✻