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A Public Letter on Edwin Black's *IBM and the Holocaust*

Analysphere.com is an Australian-based website specializing in information technology issues. We are especially careful about following up on issues as they wend their way through the media.

Beginning in February 2001 and for about a year thereafter, the Analysphere.com site featured statements regarding Edwin Black's *IBM and the Holocaust* that regrettably were false and without foundation. Moreover, we quoted from negative reviews that have either been publicly retracted, corrected or from which leading historians have disassociated themselves. Once the errors were called to our attention, we immediately removed all offending web pages. We wish to correct the record and apologize with this open letter.

1. For example, we wrote, "The authenticity of his photographs for example is being vigorously questioned by specialists." In fact, we know of no specialists who have ever questioned the photographs in Mr. Black's book. Ironically, the English-language edition we reviewed only had one photograph, the well-known United States Holocaust Memorial Museum picture of IBM Hollerith punch card machine. Our assertion is withdrawn.
2. We also wrote, "Black's most substantial failure, apart from the tendency to stretch his evidence, is lack of insight into the vulnerability of individuals and corporations dealing with a totalitarian government." In fact, we know of no instances in which Black "tended to stretch his evidence" and take we note that numerous historians and other experts have carefully examined both his text and his documentation for more than a year and have lauded Black for precision both in his compilation of fact and factual context. Our assertion is withdrawn.
3. We also wrote, "Black acknowledges he hasn't found documents directly linking IBM to participating in the Holocaust, alleging instead that Watson and associates would have known how IBM's machines were being used." In fact, Black has discovered thousands of documents linking IBM to the Holocaust, many of which have been published by leading newspapers, shown on television, displayed on large posters at leading academic institutions and otherwise publicised. Black has never acknowledged that he "hasn't found documents directly linking IBM to participating in the Holocaust." Our assertion is withdrawn.
4. Elsewhere we asserted, "there's reason for wariness about both facts and interpretation in Black's study." In fact, we know of no documentation or facts to support this statement. On the contrary, voluminous public examinations by experts have assured the reliability of his facts and interpretation.
5. We also quoted several negative reviews. For example, we quoted historian Peter Hayes' comment that *IBM and the Holocaust* was "Illogical, overstated, padded, and sloppy." We did not later add that the Anti-Defamation League immediately condemned the Hayes review as "morally bankrupt," and the same news organization shortly thereafter published a subsequent review concluding

With exhaustive research, Black makes the case that IBM and Watson conspired with Nazi Germany to help automate the genocide of Europe's Jews. ... Black's book is so enlightening [because] it paints a richly textured picture of how a man [Watson], and an entire company, can ignore all sense of morality.

6. We quoted historian Omer Bartov lamenting in a newspaper that “the lesson from Black's book ... is that shoddy scholarship and sensational assertions seem to do very well in the current marketplace.” But we did not note that the same newspaper later ran a letter asserting, “We have been unable to locate a single historian, survivor, archivist, or editor anywhere who can produce even one Nazi-era document, oral testimony, or memoir to support many of Bartov’s assertions.” The term “editor” included the newspaper editors themselves.

7. Nor did we quote or note the public retraction by historian Judith Baumel who, in a magazine article, quoted the Bartov and Hayes reviews. Later, Baumel’s article was withdrawn by the magazine, and Baumel publicly apologized and stated

I have never found any evidence or documentation that *IBM and the Holocaust* contains any “padded or sloppy” content, “undocumented conjecture,” “factual inaccuracies” or “imprecise accounts” regarding Hollerith machines. While my article only quoted negative reviews, the majority of historian comments have indeed been laudatory.

8. In addition we quoted the comment by historian Howard Segal in a review that

The book's greatest weakness, however, is its exaggeration of the importance of punch-card machines and, in turn, of the degree of ‘automation’ of the Nazis' murderous operations.

We did not mention that Segal later retracted and apologized for his review, and the magazine pulled it from its website.

After a year of rigorous worldwide examination, which Black publicly invited, no errors of fact have been found, many public retractions and corrections have been published, and a flurry of new revelations have only deepened the documentation first revealed in *IBM and the Holocaust*.

On May 2, 2003 the American Society of Journalists and Authors awarded Black its two highest honors: best non-fiction book of the year for the paperback edition of *IBM and the Holocaust* and best investigative newspaper article of the year for his *Village Voice* article on ‘IBM at Auschwitz’.

Analysphere.com regrets the errors and statements on the website. That regret is demonstrated through a donation by *Analysphere.com* of \$18 to Yad Vashem.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be a cursive representation of the word 'Analysphere'. The signature is written over the text 'Analysphere.com'.

2 May 2003