

OPINION OF A COMMITTEE MEMBER

Isaak Lapides

At present, I cannot sign the final protocol of the Committee, and let me explain the reasons.

Background. After several years of tense discussions, the Committee consisting of 5 scientists, mostly mathematicians, worked out instructions for two lists of data for two experiments. One of them is designated R and the other is designated F. Both experiments are aimed at performing another test in the spirit of the Gans experiment, where R more closely follows the principles used in Gans' investigation, while F is more "loose" in its design.

Each of the sets of data was prepared by an expert/experts appointed by the representatives of the Committee. The computations on the basis of the data provided by the experts show lack of significance.

At the last meeting of the Committee (reduced to 3 members after Professor Bar-Natan and Professor Rips resigned from the Committee), Professor Aumann and Professor Furstenberg inserted the results of the computations into the final protocol of the Committee, prepared in advance, and signed it. I, being the third member of the Committee, refused to sign it. In the sequel, I specify the reasons for my refusal to sign the protocol of the Committee.

Technical reasons. A thorough check has shown that the work of the experts and of the representatives of the Committee was plagued with extreme carelessness, resulting in dozens of errors and in many essential violations of the instructions of the Committee. The experiments based on those data therefore lacked any scientific meaning (see [1] and [2]).

List R.

(1) Expert (I) of list R was requested to identify the places of birth and death of the 66 personalities of the sample. The instructions in writing stated:

"We are asking you to write only the places that, according to your opinion, are known in a reliable way; you have to indicate the sources of the information and to specify the rules according to which you have acted and how you have applied these rules in every particular instance."

The aim of these requests is to secure the transparency of the work of the experts and its quality.

Let us check whether expert (I) had fulfilled these requests. Now, expert (I) has provided a list of criteria for his work. Do these criteria satisfy the above requests? Carefully looking at the criteria provided by expert (I) definitely leads to a negative answer.

in the two lists do not fit one to another (see [1], pp.19-20).

(4) Faults in the process of the spelling of the names. The Committee adopted a procedure of how to get the spelling (in Hebrew) of each name. This procedure requires the knowledge of the correct pronunciation of each name. This information was to be supplied by the last expert by punctuation of the name ("nikud" in Hebrew). Instead, the representatives of the Committee decided the pronunciation themselves. As a result, in 18 cases this decision seems to be mistaken or lacking ([1], p.22). In addition, in 12 cases there were mistakes in applying the procedure. In addition, one of the personalities was by mistake omitted from the list. In addition, in 3 cases by mistake the place of the burial and not the place of the death was indicated. In addition, there were 3 typos ([1], p.22).

Conclusion: The accumulation of all the mistakes and faults described above makes the experiment R performed with this data devoid of any scientific meaning whatsoever.

List F.

(1) The expert for F was asked to prepare two lists, one of "localities" and the other of "Jewish communities." In fact, he only prepared the list of localities.

(2) The expert was asked to prepare "a short list of reference forms" (prefixes) for each of the two lists. He did not do this.

(3) The expert did not provide any references for his information. He did not supply "a short explanation (in one or two lines) to each locality" as he was explicitly requested in writing.

It turns out [2] that there was a lacuna (oversight) in the protocol of the Committee. Namely, it does not specify what to do with the data supplied by the expert.

I stated the basic reasons why I do not agree with the results of the experiments performed by the Committee. I concluded that the starting data cannot lead to a well-founded conclusion regarding the Gans paper.

In conclusion, I believe that the Committee must start afresh or complete its work without any resolution.

References

[1] D.Witztum, Comments on List R (in Hebrew), submitted to the Committee.

[2] D.Witztum, Comments on List F (in Hebrew), submitted to the Committee.

[3] D.Witztum, Comments to the reply of the expert (I) (in Hebrew), submitted to the Committee.

Professor Isaak Lapides
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Jerusalem