



The Holocaust on Trial

By D. D. Guttenplan

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The account of a trial in which the very meaning of the Holocaust was put on the stand.

D. D. Guttenplan's *The Holocaust on Trial* is a bristling courtroom drama where the meaning of history is questioned. The plaintiff is British author David Irving, one of the world's preeminent military historians whose works are considered essential World War II scholarship and whose biographies of leading Nazi figures have been bestsellers. Irving refuses to admit to Hitler's responsibility in the extermination of European Jewry, replying that the Holocaust as we know it never happened. The defendant is Deborah Lipstadt, who blew the whistle on Irving, calling him "one of the most dangerous spokespersons for Holocaust denial." Irving sued for libel, and under English law, it was up to Lipstadt to prove the truth of her writings, and the falseness of Irving's views. 4 pages of b/w photographs.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

D.D. Guttenplan's *The Holocaust on Trial* is a thorough account of a landmark trial in the ongoing controversy over Holocaust denial. In 1977, the publication of *Hitler's War* by the British historian David Irving caused a stir with its sweeping revisionist claims about the Holocaust. According to Irving, Hitler did not command the murder of millions of European Jews; in fact, he was barely aware that the Holocaust had happened. In 1994, American historian Deborah Lipstadt refuted Irving's findings in *Denying the Holocaust*. In 2000, Irving sued Lipstadt for libel--in England, where there is no analog to the First Amendment, and libel laws strongly favor plaintiffs. The ensuing trial raised questions about how "history is judged, as well as made." As a journalist, Guttenplan is particularly skilled at drawing sharp character sketches. (For instance, Irving's swaggering success as a wunderkind historian is epitomized by his fancy Mayfair flat and his Rolls Royce.) The author's talent for character sketches shapes his larger perspective on the trial as well. In this book's conclusion, Guttenplan notes the massive number of empirical facts cited as evidence on both sides of the argument, and rues the lack of "witnesses, memories, *testimony*," which, he argues, is another central and necessary aspect of historical truth. --Michael Joseph Gross

From Publishers Weekly

Like Hannah Arendt's Eichmann in Jerusalem, born of her New Yorker essays, Guttenplan's book springs from his Atlantic Monthly articles. In 1996, British military historian David Irving author of WWII studies, biographer of Hitler, Himmler and Goebbels sued American scholar Deborah Lipstadt for her book *Denying the Holocaust*, which labeled Irving an extremist liar and "one of the most dangerous spokespersons for Holocaust denial." Guttenplan, contributing editor at the Nation, makes the complex case navigable, from issues of the historian's craft to British libel law (which, unlike American libel law, favors plaintiffs). Although Irving, Lipstadt and Judge Charles Gray unambiguously stated that history was not on trial, everyone else saw otherwise. Lipstadt's British publisher Penguin incurred considerable expense for the legal defense for its author, who also had problematic Anti-Defamation League supporters; Irving received assistance from neo-Nazi acquaintances and from reputable historians (John Keegan) and iconoclastic journalists (Christopher Hitchens). Guttenplan's fine journalistic style proves equal to the subject's gravity. Readers not familiar with the intricacies of Holocaust historiography or British libel laws may flounder at times, but Guttenplan fluidly guides readers through most of the rough spots. In his hands, Irving is infinitely more interesting than the sympathetic Lipstadt, perhaps for the same reason that Dante's Inferno engrosses more than his Paradise. Guttenplan only touches on deeper epistemological, historiographical and philosophical issues, but maybe these are for historians and philosophers. Although we know the trial's outcome, the book creates delicious courtroom-thriller tension. Most important, it expertly introduces a crucial trial of our time. Four b&w photos. Agent, Andrew Wylie. (May 21) Forecast: Norton has planned an author tour to New York and Washington, D.C., where the combination of Irving's notoriety and Guttenplan's readable treatment will stir up a great deal of interest and debate.

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From Booklist

Like Richard Evans in *Lying about Hitler* [BKL Mr 15 01], Guttenplan, a contributing editor of the *Nation*, chronicles the recent libel trial in Britain brought by historian David Irving. Irving, widely viewed as an apologist for Hitler, sued American scholar Deborah Lipstadt, whose *Denying the Holocaust* (1993) had labeled Irving as a right-wing extremist. The case was significant because, as a result of Britain's skewed

libel laws, the onus was on Lipstadt to practically prove that the Holocaust had indeed happened. Guttenplan's work manages to satisfy considerably more so than Evans' frantic, hour-by-hour approach, in major part because he is, simply, a better writer. Interspersing essayistic diversions, the author presents a thoughtful work as well as a courtroom thriller. In the end, Guttenplan demonstrates that, in one witness's words, "The assumption that the discovery of one little crack will bring the whole building down is the fundamental fallacy of Holocaust Denial." That appears to be Irving's position, one that the trial judge did not buy. *Allen Weakland*

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Bruce Zimmerman:

This The Holocaust on Trial book is absolutely not ordinary book, you have it then the world is in your hands. The benefit you receive by reading this book is usually information inside this publication incredible fresh, you will get details which is getting deeper you read a lot of information you will get. This The Holocaust on Trial without we understand teach the one who looking at it become critical in thinking and analyzing. Don't be worry The Holocaust on Trial can bring once you are and not make your carrier space or bookshelves' become full because you can have it in the lovely laptop even phone. This The Holocaust on Trial having excellent arrangement in word in addition to layout, so you will not experience uninterested in reading.

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