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HOLOCAUST, THE, NBC television film *The Holocaust*, by Gerald Green, first shown in United States in April 1978. It became a focal point for discussion and aroused considerable controversy. Appearing just one year after the mini-series *Roots*, it marked the expansion of Holocaust consciousness into diverse segments of the population. Unexpectedly, the viewing audience was vast. So enrapt was the audience in New York City that when commercials came on the water pressure in the city dropped. Among those critical of the film was Elie Wiesel, who referred to it, inter alia, as “untrue, cheap, offensive, soap opera and trivializing.” On the other hand, Rabbi Irving Greenberg, one of the most distinguished scholars of the Holocaust in America, called it “a breakthrough.” He wrote:

Ten of millions will see with their own eyes and experience in their own homes a shadow of the incredible and unprecedented total assault on Jews and humanity. It is a challenge to our consciences and to our teaching and learning ability that we study along with it, in order to deepen our understanding of the incomprehensible.

In retrospect, both Wiesel and Greenberg were correct. The mini-series, which has not stood the test of time as a work of art, did have major impact, expanding interest in the Holocaust, moving it beyond the boundaries of an area of concern to Jews alone, triggering interest in Holocaust survivors and in the telling of their stories, sparking the creation of Holocaust memorials and museums and making the Holocaust a focal point of discussion. It also increased interest in the Holocaust on college campuses and in the teaching of and research on the Holocaust.

The decision to show the film in Germany (January 1979) met with violent opposition, and extreme neo-Nazi groups threatened to attack the television stations from which it was telecast, and there were bomb blasts at two regional transmitters during its showing. It nevertheless had a profound effect. It was estimated that no less than 60% of the population viewed it and that it had an effect on the vote in the Bundestag regarding the cancellation of the statute of limitations for those charged with Nazi atrocities. A cruel joke told in Germany at the time is indicative of its effect: “It had more impact than the original.” In 1981 the Germans decided to rescreen *The Holocaust* the following year.

The film has been shown in numerous countries throughout the world, including Israel, England, France, Belgium, Denmark, Brazil, Austria, Australia, and Japan.

Most importantly, it demonstrated that there was a vast, international audience for portrayals of the Holocaust in the popular media. This enabled other television shows and movie broadcasts to be shown. It is no exaggeration to say that the mini-series of the Holocaust, problematic as it may have been,

was a turning point in Holocaust consciousness in the last quarter of the 20th century. Much of what has been achieved can be attributed directly or indirectly to the doors opened by this successful television series.

[Michael Berenbaum (2nd ed.)

HOLOCAUST DENIAL. In one sense, Holocaust denial began during World War II, as the Nazis tried to carry out their mass murder of Jews in secret and in many cases returned to the sites of destruction to destroy the evidence, plow the camps under or dig up and burn the bodies of those shot by *Einsatzgruppen*. But active denial of the Nazi genocide began shortly after the war, promoted by some former Nazis in South America and elsewhere.

In most societies Holocaust denial is a fringe phenomenon, and is less about historical events and more about classical antisemitic conspiracy theories. If the Holocaust did not occur, but people all over the world believe it did, how could this be? Most deniers allege that Jews made up this story to exact reparations or to justify the creation of Israel, and have fooled the world through alleged control of governments and the media.

While distinguished professors of history worldwide have disagreements about aspects of the Holocaust (exactly when was the “final solution” decided upon, for example), they all agree that the evidence for the genocide of approximately six million Jews, many in purpose-built gas chambers and carried out by the Nazis and their collaborators, is not only incontrovertible, but overwhelming. To believe in denial, one must posit that all these historians are either incompetent, part of a vast conspiracy, or both.

Yet denial persists not because it has a historical purpose, but because it has a political one.

Some of the earlier deniers included a French concentration camp survivor named Paul Rassinier and American isolationist Harry Elmer Barnes. It was not until the 1970s that denial was noticed beyond the world of white supremacy. Arthur Butz, a professor of electrical engineering at Northwestern University, wrote a 1976 book called *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century*. And in 1979 Willis Carto, a long-time active antisemite, created the Institute for Historical Review, designed to give the impression that denial of the Holocaust was simply another credible historical theory. The IHR held its first conference in 1979, which was attended by white supremacists from around the world. Usurping the historical term “revisionism,” they claimed they were Holocaust “revisionists,” not deniers. While revisionism is an accepted historical approach which seeks new ways to understand historical events, Holocaust deniers, on the other hand, ignore or twist evidence in order to pervert history.

Key deniers over the last decades of the 20th century included the Frenchman Robert Faurisson and a German national then living in Canada named Ernst Zuendel, co-author of *The Hitler We Loved and Why*. And while white supremacists, hoping to rehabilitate Nazism and fascism by removing

the moral albatross of the Holocaust, were the driving force of Holocaust denial, others were involved as well. Left-wing MIT professor Noam Chomsky wrote in defense of Faurisson. And Holocaust denial could be found in the black separatist community too, including in the Nation of Islam's paper *The Final Call*. Frequently a white supremacist and a black supremacist website are only two mouse clicks away from each other, the connective tissue being links to web-based antisemitica in general and Holocaust denial in particular.

Most deniers know they are not going to persuade people right away that the Holocaust did not happen. They seek to couch their agenda in the language of free speech and open inquiry, and ask why their claims should be rejected out of hand, rather than debated.

Their claims, of course, can be easily exposed. For example, they assert that the seminal piece of Holocaust literature – the Anne Frank diary – is a fraud. They allege that part of the manuscript is written in ballpoint pen and that the ballpoint pen is a postwar invention, appearing in 1951. But they fail to note that this writing represented emendations made by Anne's father, Otto, and that the diaries were first published in 1947. Or they claim that modern crematoria take hours to consume a body, so how could it be that 1940s-vintage crematoria could have accommodated the massive numbers of Jews allegedly killed in Auschwitz? But they fail to note that modern crematoria have to be started up for each corpse and the ashes have to be kept segregated, whereas the regular supply of bodies kept the Nazi ovens fueled, and there was no desire to keep each person's ashes distinct.

Experts on Holocaust denial agree that while the deniers' claims must be exposed, deniers should not be debated. Deniers want people to believe that there is a mere difference of opinion between equally credible scholars, those whom they call "revisionists" and those whom they call "exterminationists." Deniers would be able to create that impression if historians and other scholars appeared on the same platform with them, regardless of what then transpired. No NASA scientist would have a friendly television debate with someone who claimed the earth was flat. The reasons not to appear in debate with deniers are even more compelling: whereas flat earth theorists are quirky and peddling the bizarre, Holocaust deniers are ideologues who twist history and science in order to promote hatred.

Precisely because denial is antisemitism promoted through distortions of history, it must be combated vigorously. Perhaps the biggest blow against the deniers occurred in 2000, in the London trial of David Irving versus Penguin Books Limited and Deborah Lipstadt.

David Irving was a prolific writer of books about World War II who had close relationships with many white supremacists and former Nazis. He routinely presented Nazis in general and Adolf Hitler in particular in a better light than most historians believed was warranted. But he did not become a full-blown Holocaust denier until the late 1980s. Irving attended the Canadian trial of Ernst Zuendel, who was brought

up on charges related to his Holocaust denial activities, and met Fred Leuchter there. Leuchter would later be convicted of practicing engineering without a license, but was then known as a person who worked with various United States prisons on their methods of execution. Leuchter had been commissioned by Zuendel's defense to go to Auschwitz II (Birkenau), scrape the walls of the remnant of a gas chamber, and conclude whether it had sufficient residue of Zyklon B gas to justify the conclusion that people had been killed there. Leuchter issued a report claiming that the killings had not taken place. The report was fatally flawed. To pick one mistake of many, Zyklon B residue, if present after so many years, would only adhere to the surface of walls, but Leuchter took chunks (illegally), and sent them to a lab, which then ground up the entire samples (thereby diluting the residue) before testing. Nonetheless, residue was found which was fully consistent with how we know the chambers were used to kill people, but Leuchter reached the opposite conclusion. Despite the fact that the judge in the case ruled that Leuchter had neither the credentials nor the training to make conclusions about the Auschwitz gas chambers, his report converted Irving, who then published a version under his own imprint.

Irving began editing out any reference to the Holocaust from his writings, stating that "if something didn't happen then you don't even dignify it with a footnote." In addition, he began to work more closely with white supremacist groups, and to say things such as "[m]ore women died on the back seat of Edward Kennedy's car at Chappaquiddick than ever died in a gas chamber in Auschwitz."

When books about Holocaust denial began appearing in the early 1990s, they mentioned Irving. One of those books, Emory University professor Deborah Lipstadt's *Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory*, was published in the United Kingdom, Irving's home. He sued Lipstadt for defamation, as British libel laws put the onus on the defendant to prove the truth of her assertion, and she had claimed he was a dangerous spokesman for Holocaust denial.

Irving lost his libel suit. The record of the case (found at Holocaustdenialontrial.org (or hdot.org)) demonstrated how deniers such as Irving mistranslate, fabricate, use double standards, and otherwise lie in order to promote an antisemitic and pro-Nazi agenda.

While this trial vindicated Lipstadt, discredited Irving, and weakened denial, it did not end denial, which has an increasing market in the Arab and Muslim world. The PLO and other Arab groups had promoted Holocaust denial materials for many decades, but there was a marked increase after the beginning of the second Intifada in 2000. Denial not only paints the Jews as nefarious, but also seeks to deny any legitimacy to the State of Israel, since its modern creation in 1948 is linked to the events of World War II.

Most forms of antisemitism come in a hard-core and soft-core variety. Holocaust denial has a variety of soft-core versions too. One "soft-core" version is the frequent abuse of

Holocaust history to create equivalencies, and to diminish the seriousness and the singularity of Nazi crimes. For example, some claim that while the Nazis had concentration camps, the United States also imprisoned Japanese-Americans during World War II; or that while the Nazis killed innocent Jews, the Allies killed innocent Germans by bombing Dresden. But as with hard-core denial, the softer version also intentionally omits important facts: For example, while the imprisonment of Japanese-Americans was certainly racist, they were not then shot, gassed, or burned. And while reasonable people may have different views on the bombing of Dresden, civilian populations had everything to gain when the Allies took over, and everything to lose when the Nazis did.

An increasingly widespread and related phenomenon is the false equation of Israeli and Nazi leaders, and of Israeli treatment of Palestinians with Nazi treatment of Jews. Such accusations not only reflect immoral equivalences, but also by necessity diminish the horrors of the Holocaust. Regardless of anyone's views on the Middle East conflict, it is historical distortion and the promotion of bigotry to make an equation between alleged instances of discrimination carried out by Israeli authorities and the machinery designed and implemented for the attempted mass murder of an entire people by the Nazis.

Another related phenomenon is that found in the writings of Norman Finkelstein, an assistant professor in political science at DePaul University. Whereas hard-core deniers posit that the Holocaust is fiction, and that Jews are exploiting this nonevent through conspiratorial means to harm non-Jews, Finkelstein accepts that the mass murders did occur, but then joins the deniers in claims that Jews are collectively abusing this history for evil purposes. Not surprisingly, deniers cite Finkelstein enthusiastically.

Holocaust denial is combated today in a variety of ways. In some democracies (with the noticeable exception of the United States because of the First Amendment), denial is recognized as illegal hate speech, and prohibited. Jewish defense agencies, such as the American Jewish Committee, the Anti-Defamation League, the UK's Community Security Trust, the Canadian Jewish Congress, and the Australia/Israel Jewish Affairs Council, have been particularly active in combating denial, with a combination of diplomatic, programmatic, legal, and educational endeavors. They, as well as individuals such as Emory professor Deborah Lipstadt, have been actively engaged in educating the public about the meaning and implications of denial, stressing that denial of the Holocaust is not really about the facts of the Holocaust, and is not benign nuttiness, but rather a new antisemitic canard which abuses history in order to demonize Jews.

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[Kenneth Stern (2nd ed.)]

HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY (Heb. יום השואה; Yom ha-Sho'ah). In a resolution passed by the Knesset (April 12, 1951) the 27th day of Nisan was proclaimed as "Holocaust and Ghetto Uprising Remembrance Day – a day of perpetual remembrance for the House of Israel." This date was chosen because it falls between that of the *Warsaw Ghetto uprising (which began on the first day of Passover) and the Israel War of Independence Remembrance Day (on Iyyar 4), and also because it occurs during the traditional mourning of the Counting of the Omer. The Holocaust and Heroism Remembrance Law of *Yad Vashem (1953) determined that one of the tasks of the Yad Vashem Authority is to inculcate in Israel and its people awareness of the day set aside by the Knesset as Holocaust and Heroism Remembrance Day. On March 4, 1959, the Knesset passed the Holocaust and Heroism Remembrance Day Law, which determined that tribute to victims of the Holocaust and ghetto uprising be paid in public observances. An amendment to the law (1961) required that places of entertainment be closed on the eve of Holocaust Remembrance Day. Outside Israel, however, Holocaust Remembrance Day is usually celebrated on April 19, the day on which the Warsaw Ghetto uprising broke out according to the civil calendar. The rabbinate in Israel has ruled Tvet 10 as the Day of *Kaddish* on which persons commemorate the *Yahrzeit* ("memorial anniversary") of relatives, victims of the Holocaust, whose date of death is unknown, with prayer and study.

In 1979, the President's Commission on the Holocaust, established by President Carter, commemorated Holocaust Remembrance Day in the Capitol Rotunda with an unprecedented ceremony attended by the American National leadership including the president, the vice president, and many members of Congress. Since 1979 civic ceremonies have been held in Washington and in individual states and cities, and observances are held in churches. The Jewish community observes Yom ha-Sho'ah as a community in communal commemorations rather than individual synagogue observances. As consciousness of the Holocaust grew in Europe in the 1990s, several European countries adopted an annual Day of Remembrance for the Holocaust. They observed the memorial on the secular calendar, choosing January 27, the date of the Soviet entry into Auschwitz. Aside from Israel, no other country gives significant prominence to Jewish resistance alongside the Holocaust and even within Israel such a dual emphasis has significantly diminished. In 2005 the United Nations, which has not been known for its pro-Israel stance, held its first commemoration of the Holocaust and in November voted for an annual commemoration.

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[Nathan Eck / Michael Berenbaum (2nd ed.)]

HOLOCAUST RESCUERS, JEWISH. Much attention has been paid to the non-Jews, around 20,000, recognized by *Yad Vashem as *Righteous Among the Nations, who risked their