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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