

Anatomy of a Hoax: Holocaust Denial

The phenomenon of Holocaust denial, once considered a fringe manifestation with very little impact, has, more or less, entered the mainstream of historiographical and academic debate in recent years. The main danger associated with the deniers' discourse is that of forcing into the public conscience the awareness of the fact that there might be "more sides" to the Holocaust history than previously known based on written documents, testimonies of survivors and other types of proofs. The following paper is a review of the emergence, development and extent of Holocaust denial, especially in the United States, as well as an attempt to summarise the deniers' arguments, claims and motivations, following the line opened by Deborah Lipstadt and other historians.

"The alleged Hitlerian gas chambers and the alleged genocide of the Jews form one and the same historical lie, which permitted a gigantic financial swindle whose chief beneficiaries have been the State of Israel and international Zionism, and whose main victims have been the German people and the Palestinian people as a whole"¹.

One might think that this kind of statement is the work of a completely twisted mind and that any man with a shred of common sense would dismiss it from the very start. But, unfortunately and ironically enough, this is just one example among many such statements that form the bases of what is now commonly known as the phenomenon of Holocaust denial. The worst part of all is that this phenomenon, far from being just a fringe school of thought, has gained significant ground, especially in the last two decades, and has entered common conscience, finding for itself quite a number of followers.

Key words:

Holocaust denial, anti-Semitism, manipulation, mass murder, gas chambers, genocide

Holocaust denial has become an accepted, if not quite respected, historical assertion and it has generated realms of “well-founded historical literature”.

Holocaust denial emerged immediately after World War II, especially in the United States, as an isolated phenomenon with little or no credibility, but it has come a long way since then. Nowadays, traces of Holocaust denial and overt anti-Semitism can be found in the United States as well as throughout Europe and the Middle East and even as far away as Australia.

The explanations for the spreading and influence of this “*growing assault on truth and memory*”² are many and diverse. In the following paragraphs, I will try to outline the essence of this phenomenon, to present its perpetrators and to review some of the most important reactions against it.

The Holocaust is one of those historical facts with a very enduring life: nowadays, almost half a century later, it has lost little of its striking impact upon the memory of mankind. Newspapers, magazines, publishing houses, and research institutes regularly print articles, books, and studies centered upon different aspects directly referring to or merely related to the Holocaust. On the other hand, there are almost just as many newspapers, magazines, publishing houses and institutes that regularly publish materials on Holocaust denial, which points out that there certainly is an audience ready to read and to accept the claims made by the authors of these materials, the self-proclaimed “historical revisionists”. The ground on which the seeds of this denial are planted seems very fertile, and the more public the debate about it, the more people are likely to be caught up in the denial movement.

One of the most well-known and controversial public debates about Holocaust denial was generated by the recent suit brought by the freelance historian David Irving, probably the most prominent figure of Holocaust denial.

David Irving sued Professor Deborah Lipstadt for libel, claiming that the assertions she made in her book, *Denying the Holocaust*, were extremely offensive to him. The trial gripped the attention of both the British and the American media for many months, and the testimony given by David Irving horrified both the judges and the audience. The mere fact that such persons are taken seriously by so many people worldwide is extremely alarming, because it only shows us how vulnerable public opinion is when the instruments of manipulation are carefully orchestrated.³

Ignorance is the deniers’ first ally in their mission to distort history, and the higher the level of ignorance, the more dangerous the effects of the denials are. In this respect, one example is very relevant.⁴ In April 1993, in conjunction with the opening of the U.S. Holocaust Museum, the Roper Organization conducted a survey meant to determine the extent of Americans’ knowledge of the phenomenon. The results expected by the organization and the American Jewish Committee were not at all startling. However, the answer to one of the questions they initially wanted to eliminate from the questionnaire was more than shocking: when asked “do you think it possible or impossible that the Holocaust did not happen: 22% of American adults and 20% of American high school students replied that it was possible. This answer shows that Holocaust denial is not just an eerie phenomenon with no more credibility to it than the assertion that the Earth is flat.

Under such circumstances, one should not be amazed at the growing force of Holocaust denial and at the fact that its very existence is now being questioned in talk shows⁵ on national television.

Deborah Lipstadt’s book, *Denying the Holocaust – the Growing Assault on Truth and Memory*, is the best to-date account of Holocaust denial. It presents chronologically and clearly the roots of the phenomenon, the insti-

tutions and people involved in the practice of denial, and their main works and arguments.⁶ The author tries to summarize the deniers' most frequent claims (she identifies five major themes for research in the field of denial: the absence of a single master plan for the annihilation of the Jewish people; the absence of gas chambers used for mass murder at Auschwitz and other camps; the fact that the testimonies of the survivors are given so much credibility because there is no objective documentation to prove the Nazi genocide; the absence of a total loss of Jewish lives between 1941 and 1945; the "mock trial" character of the Nuremberg trials, staged for the benefit of the Jews). She also tries to find explanations for the proliferation of denial literature, especially in the last two decades. The main argument that she brings is that the denial stirrings are closely connected with the neo-Nazi ideology and the rise of the radical right in politics. The evolution of West European politics, especially in the last ten years, has pointed out elements that show a return to the anti-Semitic language and attitudes common more than half a century ago. However, the anti-Semitism of the 1990s encompasses new elements and new ideas that feed the anti-Jewish feeling that has always existed in Europe. Neo-Nazism and the new radical right rely on Holocaust denial in order to obtain legitimacy and recognition in the political arena. Jean Marie le Pen⁷, Jorg Haider, and Pim Fortuyn, are some of the western politicians who have played the card of anti-Semitism and have enjoyed considerable success. The fact that these people come from countries other than Germany (where the appearance of such ideas could seem more natural) shows that European anti-Semitism is far from extinct. Actually, the issue of an anti-Semitic Europe has received extensive coverage from prestigious magazines such as *Time*⁸: "*a Boston newspaper blared Kristallnacht Returns and declared, 'not since the Third Reich has there been anything like it.'*" In

response to anxious enquiries, the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles issued an advisory warning Jews "*to exercise extreme caution while traveling to France and Belgium.*"⁹ However, this does not mean that there is no anti-Semitism in Germany or in other parts of Europe. Actually, the region that has shown itself most prone to fall prey to deniers' ideas in the past ten years is post-Communist East Central Europe, where the political and social atmosphere have been favorable to the development of such ideas that I will present later on.¹⁰

The most prominent European "canaries in the coal mine"¹¹ are David Irving, who achieved international fame during and after the aforementioned trial, Ingrid Rimland, Ernst Zündel, Fred Leuchter, Willis Carto, David Duke, Masami Uno, Richard Harwood, and Robert Faurisson, whom I have already quoted and whose arguments and statements would be extremely funny if there weren't so many people who take them seriously. His area of study is rather unique: "*criticism of texts and documents, investigation of meaning and counter-meaning, of the true and the false*"¹². The irony here is that Faurisson regularly creates facts where there are none and dismisses and falsifies pieces of factual information that disprove his scenarios. One of his assertions refers to the "Draconian orders" given to the German army "*not to participate in excesses against civilians, including the Jews; consequently, the massive killings of the Jews could not have happened*"¹³. Faurisson also asserts that the wearing of the yellow star was imposed on the Jews in order to ensure the safety of the German soldiers. Following the same logic, one can easily reach the conclusion that six-year old children, who were also forced to wear the yellow star, constituted fierce threats to the well being of the German soldiers¹⁴. One of his best-founded arguments, however, remains the one regarding the gas chambers. According to him, the reason why one should not believe in the existence of gas cham-

bers is that “*no death camp victim has given eye witness testimony of actual gassings*”¹⁵. Faced with such irrefutable arguments, any historian who tries to disprove his findings has no other option but to rest his case.

Nevertheless, leaving all irony aside, Holocaust denial is not a threat just to Jewish history, but a threat to all who believe in the ultimate power of reason. The clever disguises used by these people in order to get their message across could easily misguide one’s power of reason. For instance, the first and foremost circle of deniers has been established around the Californian-based and respectably named *Institute for Historical Review*, which has already gained important status especially in the United States, and which has already organized several so-called “revisionist conferences” beginning in 1974. The deniers have twisted the term “revisionism”¹⁶ so as to suit their purposes, claiming the right to free speech under the protection of the First Amendment. Their main arguments – “the Ten Commandments of Holocaust denial” – include the pronouncement saying that the Holocaust, the organized plan to annihilate the Jewish people during the Second World War, simply did not happen. There never was a master plan whose result would be the annihilation of European Jewry. On saying that, the deniers deliberately ignore historical facts such as Hitler’s own declarations published in official documents of the time, such as the two statements I would like to quote and that show the extent to which the Third Reich was infused with anti-Semitism and hatred of the Jews, so much so that the organized massacre of all these people was the next logical step. In a speech delivered before the Reichstag in January 1939, Hitler said: “*Today I want to be a prophet once more: if international finance Jewry inside and outside of Europe should succeed once more in plunging nations into another world war, the consequence will not be the bolshevisation of the earth and thereby the victory of the*

Jewry, but the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe”¹⁷. Another statement, made in September 1942 (eight months after the Wannsee Conference in January 1942, which marked the start of the implementation of the Final Solution) reinforces his ideas: “*in my Reichstag speech, I have spoken of two things: first, that now that the war has been forced upon us, no array of weapons and no passage of time will bring us to defeat, and second, that if Jewry should plot another world war to exterminate the Aryan peoples in Europe, it would not be the Aryan peoples which will be exterminated, but the Jewry...At one time, the Jews in Germany laughed about my prophecies. I do not know whether they are still laughing or whether they have already lost all desire to laugh. But right now I can only repeat: they will stop laughing everywhere and I shall be right also in that prophecy*”¹⁸.

By their claims, the deniers try to absolve the Nazis of all guilt and put the victors and the vanquished of the war on par. Moreover, that the the Nazis were not the perpetrators of murder and destruction, but rather the Allies were, who should also be held responsible, not only for countless civilian casualties subsequent to their bombing of German cities, but also for the death of Jewish prisoners who had been gathered in labour camps “for their own protection”¹⁹. Deniers acknowledge that some Jews were incarcerated in such places as Auschwitz, but this camp was equipped with “*all the luxuries of a country club, including a swimming pool, dance hall, and recreational facilities*”²⁰. (These arguments were presented at the trial of the Canadian denier Ernst Zündel by the “expert engineer” Fred Leuchter, whose case I shall discuss in the further on.)

The birthplace of Holocaust denial was not Germany, as many might think, but the United States, where one can find many sources of inspiration for this phenomenon as early as the 1920s and 1930s. As Deborah

Lipstadt has observed, “*modern Holocaust denial draws inspiration from a variety of sources. Among them are a legitimate historical tradition that was highly critical of government policies and believed that history was being used to justify those policies; an age-old nexus of conspiratorial scenarios that place a neat coherence on widely diverse developments; and hyperbolic critiques of government policies, which, despite an initial connection to reality, became so extreme as to assume a quality of fantasy. The aforementioned historical tradition was taken over and co-opted by Holocaust deniers. In the other two cases, denial was their logical successors*”²¹. American revisionism was born in 1920, after the First World War, when Sidney B. Fay and Harry Elmer Barnes started publishing articles and studies criticizing American involvement in the war, which, according to them, had been triggered by Jewish influences. Barnes can be rightfully regarded as the “father of American Holocaust denial”, because he started writing articles attacking the facts referring to the destruction of European Jewry even before World War II had finished. Another famous and influential American anti-Semite in the inter-war period was none other than Henry Ford, who not only wrote but also sponsored the publication of such overtly anti-Semitic pamphlets as the one entitled *The International Jew: the World's Foremost Problem*²². Some other historians, such as Charles Bread and Freda Utey, claimed, in the immediate aftermath of World War II, that “*Hitler did not want to go to war with Poland, but planned for Germany and Poland to dominate Europe together*”.²³ Another favorite theme of argument for these early revisionists (I am reluctant to use the term “deniers” at this stage, because their activity does not fall into the category of those proliferated by David Irving and his supporters) was that of comparison between the Nazi atrocities and the casualties and destruction brought about by the Allies or in some other historical atrocities,

even the American Civil War. One particular statement, made by the English professor Austin J. App, whom I shall refer to later on as well, is relevant in this context: “*the top U.S. media, possibly because they are dominated by Jews, have no tradition of fairness to anyone they hate. They have also in wartime subverted much of the public to a frenzy of prejudice. Even in our civil war, where Americans fought against Americans, Americans of the North were told and came to believe that Choctaw County stunk with dead bodies of murdered slaves and that the Southern belles had worn necklaces strung out of Yankee eyeballs!... If Yankees could believe that Southern girls wore necklaces of Yankee eyeballs, would they not even more readily believe that Germans made lampshades out of the skins of prisoners, or that they boiled Jews into soap?*”²⁴. However preposterous these claims might be, all the revisionists of this period differ from the Holocaust deniers in the sense that they stopped short of claiming that the atrocities never happened. They indeed tried to minimize the number of dead, to downplay the cruelties inflicted upon the Jews in the death camps, but they never actually said that they did not happen.

However, one cannot say the same about what transpired in the early 1950s, when revisionist historians began transforming into outright deniers, mostly influenced by the radical right ideology that had survived the fascist period and was trying to gain new legitimacy. The activity of the early proper deniers was also prompted by the publication of the first accounts of the Holocaust. One of the first defenders of the Nazis in the post-war era was the French fascist Maurice Bardèche. In his works (*Letter to François Mauriac, Nuremberg or the Promised Land*), he contended that the evidence about the concentration camps had been seriously falsified and that the real culprits for the atrocities were not the Nazis, but the Jews themselves, because they had helped insti-

gate the war²⁵. Another Frenchman, Paul Rassiner, former prisoner in the Büchenwald camp, published in 1948 a work called *Le passage de la ligne*, in which he claims that the survivors' testimonies could not be given much credibility because they were thoroughly biased. However, his own words were given a lot of credibility, since in 1977 the American publishing house Noontide Press published all his major books concerning the Holocaust in one issue entitled *Debunking the Genocide Myth*²⁶. Rassiner also published a book in response to the classic text *Destruction of European Jewry* by Raul Hilberg, published in 1961, in which Rassiner claims that the figures presented by Hilberg in the book, all very well documented and concordant with the facts, were much inflated. Rassiner's ultimate argument is that "*some people may have been killed, but those who conducted such exterminations were acting on their own and not in the name of a state order or a political doctrine*"²⁷.

The 1970s marked a change in the denier's methods: they started coming up with new arguments alongside old ones, the most important being the money element – the Jews pretended to have been Holocaust victims so as to inflict a deep sense of guilt upon the German people and thus to be able to blackmail them for hard cash poured into the Israeli state bank. Consequently, all talk and evidence about the six million dead, the gas chambers, and the crematoria was an invention of the Zionist establishment. The deniers' attacks focused on such prominent historians as Raul Hilberg and Hannah Arendt, whom they dismissed as "frauds". Moreover, when confronted with such overt statements as the ones made by Hitler himself, which I have already quoted, the deniers dismiss them as well as "*irrelevant hyperboles, typical of the kind of defiance that was hurled by the ancient heroes*"²⁸.

The late 1970s and the early 1980s saw the establishment of a well-organized school of Holocaust denial, es-

pecially in the United States, which had become the place with the most flourishing denial literature and where many European deniers came to publish their works. Until that period, Holocaust denial in the U.S. had been primarily the province of fringe, racist and extremist groups who had found some support in a number of seemingly respectable circles. The inventiveness of the deniers found new arguments, the most quoted of them being the one according to which out of the 5 million Jews living in the United States, about 90% of them were European Jews who had allegedly died in the Holocaust, but who were safe and sound and living on money paid by the German and American taxpayers²⁹. Harry Elmer Barnes, whom I have already mentioned, contributed significantly to the shaping of the new denial ideology, publishing some rather influential works such as *The Struggle Against the Historical Blackout*, in which he expresses his strong belief that Germany was in no way responsible either for the outbreak of World War II or for the atrocities it had been accused of. Barnes also praised Paul Rassiner for his great contribution to the emergence of the truth concealed by the Jewish politicians: "*this courageous author lays the chief blame for misrepresentation on those whom we must call the swindlers of the crematoria, the Israeli politicians who derive billions of marks from nonexistent, mythical and imaginary cadavers, whose numbers have been reckoned in an unusually distorted and dishonest manner*"³⁰. Thus, Barnes paved the way for the claims of the American "guru of Holocaust denial", Austin J. App. A professor of English at the University of Scranton and LaSalle College, App, just like Barnes, was mainly concerned to lift the moral burden of the atrocities charge from the shoulders of a defeated and divided Germany. App was known for being an ardent defender of Nazi Germany. App's major contribution was the formulation of eight undeniable axioms that have become the fundamentals of the denial

theory, included in his suggestively entitled book, *The Six Million Swindle: Blackmailing the German People for Hard Marks with Fabricated Corpses*. (1973) App's main preoccupation was that of dismissing the figure of six million as a "smear terrorizing myth", claiming that there was not a single "order, document or blueprint that proved that the Nazis intended to annihilate the Jews"³¹. He offered a strange argument to prove his point: the fact the some Jews had survived constituted proof that none were killed³². He also argued that Nazi Germany was so efficient that no Jew could have escaped if the Nazis had indeed intended to destroy all Jews. Consequently, the Holocaust was a hoax perpetrated by the Jews and communists alike.

His famous eight axioms are worth quoting, because they prove just how far the deniers are willing to go just to prove their twisted arguments:

"1. Emigration, never annihilation, was the Reich's plan for solving Germany's Jewish problem. Had Germany intended to annihilate all the Jews, a half million concentration camp inmates would not have survived and managed to come to Israel where they collect "fancy indemnities" from West Germany.

2. Absolutely no Jews were gassed in any concentration camps in Germany and evidence is piling up that none were gassed in Auschwitz. The Hitler gas chambers never existed. The gas installations found in Auschwitz were really crematoria for cremating corpses of those who had died from a variety of causes, including the genocidal Anglo-American bombing raids"

3. The majority of Jews who disappeared and remained unaccounted for did so in territories under Soviet, not German control.

4. The majority of Jews who supposedly died while in German camps were in fact subversive partisans, spies, saboteurs and criminals or victims of unfortunate but internationally legal reprisals.

5. If there existed the slightest likelihood that the Nazis had really murdered six million Jews, "world Jewry" would demand subsidies to conduct research on the topic and Israel would open its archives to historians. They had not done so. Instead, they have persecuted and branded as an anti-Semite anyone who wished to publicize the hoax. This persecution constitutes the most conclusive evidence that this figure is a swindle.

6. The Jews and the media who exploit this figure have failed to offer even a shred of evidence to prove it. The Jews misquote Eichmann and other Nazis in order to try and substantiate their claims.

7. It is the accusers, not the accused, who must provide the burden of proof to substantiate the six million figure, the Talmudists and Bolsheviks have so brow-beaten the Germans that they pay billions and do not dare to demand proof.

8. *The fact that Jewish scholars themselves have "ridiculous" discrepancies in their calculations of the number of victims constitutes firm evidence that there is no scientific proof to this accusation"*³³.

App's arguments were further explored by Richard Harwood in a booklet published in 1974, entitled *Did Six Million Really Die? The Truth at Last*, which was sent to major newspapers and to the leaders of the British Jewish communities, being the preeminent British work on Holocaust denial for almost ten years after its publication. Harwood argues that "*Hitler had no reason to murder the Jews when he needed them for forced labour.*" He goes on to point that the total number of Jews in Europe before the war was six and a half million and that one and a half million emigrated abroad. Harwood cites figures from international organizations - all quoted - to demonstrate that there were not more than three million Jews in Nazi Germany³⁴.

Deniers' efforts have long been centered upon gaining scholarly and historical legitimacy, and one step to-

wards this goal was made in 1976 with the publication of *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century* by Arthur Butz, professor of electrical engineering at Northwestern University, who significantly changed the nature of Holocaust denial. The American press extensively reported about the stirrings caused by the publication of this book, whose denial arguments are very cleverly disguised, since at first sight Butz appears to be a serious scholar who is very critical of Nazi Germany. Butz also tried to explain away all the Nazi references to the destruction of the Jews by misquoting statements made by Hitler and Himmler, and attempts to expose the Holocaust hoax as a product of a Jewish-dominated press. Butz was strongly supported by the leader of the Institute of Historical Review, Willis Carto, who declared at the first revisionist convention in 1974 that “*if Satan himself had tried to create a force for the destruction of the nations, he could have done no better than to invent the Jews*”³⁵. The Californian Institute also provided support and “expertise” in 1986, at the trial initiated by the Canadian government against Ernst Zündel, charged with stimulating anti-Semitism through the publication and distribution of material he knew was false. (One such booklet was entitled *The Hitler We Loved and Why*). Among the deniers present at the trial were David Irving and Robert Faurisson, who provided “specialized consulting”. However, the climax of the trial was reached with the testimony of the “expert engineer” Fred Leuchter, who was in fact just a history graduate from an obscure American university, but who claimed to have the necessary competencies to conduct specialized tests at Auschwitz in order to discover whether the facilities there could have been used to conduct mass gassings. Unsurprisingly enough, the firm conclusion that Leuchter presented before the jury was that those facilities could have under no circumstances been used to kill people – they were just innocent shower rooms; moreover, he also arrived at the

conclusion that Zyklon B was a pesticide whose main purpose was that of killing lice, not people. The deniers present in Canada considered Leuchter’s testimony as a historic event, marking the end of the “gas chambers myth”.

However, the Court was not eager to accept Leuchter’s arguments and the judge dismissed both the “scientific proofs” he produced and his qualifications as an engineer. However, *The Leuchter Report* is still regarded a sort of Holy Grail by the perpetrators of Holocaust denial.

Following the popularity gained by Holocaust deniers after the Zündel trial, they considered that it was time to make another move towards acquiring legitimacy in one of the most sensitive environments: the campuses of the American universities, where the early 1990s saw the emergence of several posters and announcements calling for “open debate” about the existence of the Holocaust. The person behind this carefully orchestrated assault was Bradley Smith, director of the self-styled *Committee for Open Debate on the Holocaust*. He launched a propaganda campaign by placing ads in the campuses of the most important American universities, ads entitled “*The Holocaust Story: How Much is False? The Case for Open Debate*”. These ads provoked a fierce debate in the campuses, between those who supported the idea of publishing the ads in the campus newspapers in the name of free speech and those who considered that such ads were a danger not only for the academic environment but also for the historical memory in general. Smith bet on the concept of political correctness to support his claim for open debate, and indeed some universities did publish his ad either as an article or an op-ed piece in the campus newspaper. However, the issue here was not political correctness or free speech – it was distortion of facts and fabrication of evidence, and if some universities indeed decided to publish such an ad, then the deniers

could consider that they obtained a major victory towards penetrating segments of public opinion that might be fertile ground for the spreading of their ideas³⁶. The great danger about publishing such ads in university newspapers is that, as Deborah Lipstadt put it, *“many students read both the ad and the editorials condemning it. Some, including those who read neither but knew of the issue, may have walked away from the controversy convinced that there are two sides to this debate: the “revisionists” and “the established historians”. They may not know that there is tremendous controversy about the former. They may not be convinced that the two sides are of equal validity. They may even know that the deniers keep questionable company. But nonetheless they assume that there is an “other side”. That is the most frightening aspect of this entire matter”*³⁷.

As I have already pointed out, Deborah Lipstadt mainly refers to the phenomenon of Holocaust denial in the United States, where it has been cultivated for decades, but that does not mean that Europe has been spared this phenomenon. I have mentioned at the beginning of this paper that Europe is going through a new phase of anti-Semitism during which it is not unusual to see in the newspapers declarations such as the one printed by the Italian daily *La Repubblica* on March 24, 2000: *“Six Million Jews dead? No way, they were much fewer. Let’s stop with this fairytale exploited by Israel to capture international solidarity”*³⁸. There are hardly any fairies in this story, I may add – and this statement is not an isolated one. All over Europe and the Middle East, articles and studies have been published in order to substantiate the claim that the Holocaust is nothing more than a very convenient way for Israel to get money and international sympathy.

Post-communist Eastern Europe has also witnessed both a rise in anti-Semitism and the emergence of a new

concept connected to the Holocaust period, that of “organized forgetting”³⁹. The attitudes towards Holocaust in this region range from outright Holocaust negationism (for many years openly professed in Romania until recently, until the appearance of harsher libel laws, by such politicians as Corneliu Vadim Tudor and Stanislav Panis, and writers such as Radu Theodorescu, who claims that *“no document on the Holocaust can be found. No order signed by Hitler, Himmler or other German leaders. The much-heralded Final Solution had two versions: that preceding the war against the USSR and consisting of the deportation of Jews to Madagascar; and that following the war outbreak, consisting in their deportation to the Far East. The gas chambers were delousing and disinfecting chambers, and the much heralded Zyklon B was a pesticide, as demonstrated by American engineer Leuchter in the two analytical reports he produced after visiting all camps in Germany, Austria and Poland. The crematoria burned the corpses of those who died of typhus.”*⁴⁰) to deflective negationism and selective negationism. Also, Holocaust is now associated with “comparative trivialization”, namely the banalization of the phenomenon and of its consequences. Shafir points out the meaning of “comparative trivialization” as being *“the willful distortion of the record and of the significance of the Holocaust, either to the humanization of its local record in comparison with atrocities committed by the Nazis, or through comparing the record of the Holocaust itself with experiences of massive suffering endured by local populations or by mankind at large at one point or another in records of history”*⁴¹.

The debate about the Holocaust is still in full swing, and there is no telling what might follow. The arguments that will be brought into the spotlight by the deniers cannot be predicted. All that we, the ordinary common sense

people, can do is be on guard for these distortions and be prepared to disprove them with facts. The belief that Holocaust survivors will one day be able to walk down the street without being pointed at and sneered at and the Holocaust in itself will not be contested should be kept alive, just like Anne Frank (one of the deniers' preferred targets) maintained her belief in escape until the very end: *"I simply cannot build my hopes on a foundation consisting of despair, misery and death. I feel the suffering of millions, I can bear the overapproaching thunder that will destroy us too – and yet, if I look up into the heavens I know that this cruelty too shall end and that peace and tranquility will return again"*⁴².

Notes:

¹ Robert Faurisson quoted by The Guardian Weekly (April 7 1991)

² See Deborah Lipstadt, *Denying the Holocaust*, New York, 1993, Penguin Books

³ So as to exemplify the kind of statements typical for Irving, I would like to quote a fragment from a speech he delivered in 1996 in Portland and posted on the Internet: "when I get to Australia in January I know what is going to happen. They are going to wheel out all the so-called eyewitnesses. One in particular, Mrs. Altman, I've clashed with her once or twice. She is very convincing. They can be very convincing. Because they have to do it so often over the years. They've had a free run. We're going to meet because she has that tattoo. I am going to say, 'you have that tattoo, we all have the utmost sympathy for you. But how much money have you made on it! In the last 45 years! Can I estimate! Quarter of a million! Half million! Certainly not less. That's how much you've made from the German taxpayers and the American taxpayers.'

Ladies and gentlemen, you're paying \$3 billion a year to the state of Israel. Compensation to people like Mrs. Altman. She'll say, 'why not, I suffered' I'll say you didn't. You survived. By definition you didn't suffer. Not half as much as those who died. They suffered. You didn't. You're the one making the money. Explain to me this. Why have you people made all the money, but Australian soldiers who suffered for five years in Japanese prison camps haven't got a bent nickel out of it!"

⁴ Cf. Lipstadt, op. cit., p. xi.

⁵ The host of one such talk show in which Holocaust survivors and deniers were brought face to face, Montel Williams, urged viewers to stay tuned after the commercial break in order to find out whether the Holocaust was "a myth or a truth" (Lipstadt, op. cit., p. 2).

⁶ However, it is not the only book dealing with the subject. Michael Shermer and Alex Grobman are the authors of another book focused on Holocaust denial, but their work is largely based on what Lipstadt says. (Michael Shermer, Alex Grobman, *Denying History – Who Says the Holocaust Never Happened and Why They Say It*, New York, 1995 Doubleday Books).

⁷ Le Pen even went so far as to declare that "the gas chambers were a mere detail of history" – D. Lipstadt, op. cit., p. 10.

⁸ Time Europe, June 17 2002, vol. 159/ no. 24.

⁹ How bad is it?, in Time Europe, June 17 2002, vol. 159/ no. 24.

¹⁰ See also Michael Shafir, *Between Denial and "Comparative Trivialisation" – Holocaust Negationism in Post-Communist East Central Europe*, Jerusalem 2002, The Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Anti-Semitism.

¹¹ Lipstadt, op. cit., p. 2.

¹² Ibidem, p. 9.

¹³ Ibidem.

¹⁴ Ibidem.

¹⁵ Ibidem, p. 16.

¹⁶ This concept was launched by the renowned American historian William Appleman Williams in connection with the American foreign policy in the early period of the Cold War.

¹⁷ Lipstadt, op. cit., p. 61.

¹⁸ Lipstadt, op. cit., p. 61-62.

¹⁹ Cf. Lipstadt, p. 21.

²⁰ Ibidem, p. 23.

²¹ Ibidem, p. 31.

²² The title of this pamphlet indicates the fact that Ford strongly believed in the “world Jewish conspiracy” promoted by the Protocols of the Elders of Zion; he actually financed the publication of 6000 copies of this infamous work.

²³ Lipstadt, op. cit., p. 40.

²⁴ Quoted in Lipstadt, op. cit., p. 46.

²⁵ Cf. Lipstadt, p. 50.

²⁶ Noontide Press is closely connected with the Californian headquarters of the Institute for Historical Review.

²⁷ Lipstadt, p. 52.

²⁸ Paul Rassinier, quoted in D. Lipstadt, op. cit., p. 62.

²⁹ Cf. George Lincoln Rockwell, *In the Valley of Death Rode the Six Million. Or Did They?*, Los Angeles 1979, Noontide Press.

³⁰ Quoted in Lipstadt, op. cit., p. 74.

³¹ Cf. Lipstadt, p. 93.

³² “Every Jew who survived the German occupation is proof of this” – see D. Lipstadt, p. 93.

³³ Quoted in Lipstadt, pp. 99-100.

³⁴ Lipstadt, op. cit., p. 119.

³⁵ Ibidem, p. 154.

³⁶ Among the universities that accepted this ad for publication were University of Arizona, Cornell Univer-

sity, Duke University, University of Georgia, Howard University, University of Illinois at Urbana-Campaign, Louisiana State University, University of Michigan, University of Montana, Northwestern University, Ohio State University, Rutgers University, Vanderbilt University, and Washington University. The list of those that refused to have anything to do with the ad includes U. C. - Berkeley, Chicago State University, Brown University, U. C. - Santa Barbara, Dartmouth University, Emory University, Georgetown University, Harvard University, University of Minnesota, University of North Carolina, University of Pennsylvania, Purdue University, Rice University, University of South Carolina, University of Tennessee, University of Texas, UCLA, University of Virginia, Yale University, and University of Wisconsin.

³⁷ Lipstadt, p. 208.

³⁸ The declaration belongs to Ikrima Said Sabri, the Palestinian-Authority appointed imam of the Al-Aqsa mosque and mufti of Jerusalem, and is quoted in Goetz Nordbruch, *The Socio-Historical Background of Holocaust Denial in Arab Countries – Reactions to Roger Garaudy’s The Founding Myths of Israeli Politics*, Jerusalem 2001, The Vidal Sassoon International Centre for the Study of Antisemitism.

³⁹ Shafir, op. cit., p. 4.

⁴⁰ Ibidem, p. 22.

⁴¹ Ibidem, p. 60.

⁴² Quoted in Lipstadt, op. cit., p. 230.