

## Irving-Lipstadt Trial

Legal proceeding held in London during the first few months of the year 2000. David Irving, a British writer who has published books about the Nazi period, sued Professor Deborah Lipstadt of Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia for writing in her book, *Holocaust Denial, The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory*, that he was a denier of the Holocaust.

The publisher of the book in the United Kingdom, Penguin, was named as a co-defendant. Irving claimed that being classified a Holocaust denier had damaged his reputation and had caused him monetary loss. He sued Lipstadt and the case was brought to trial before Judge Charles Gray of the London High Court. The defense sought to show that in his writings Irving had falsified and manipulated documents in order to diminish Hitler's role in the destruction of the Jews. Moreover, statements he had made, they argued, such as the Jews had not been murdered in Gas Chambers, or that more people had died in the back of US Senator Edward Kennedy's car than had been killed in Auschwitz, clearly showed that he denied the Holocaust. Lastly, they sought to prove that Irving was associated closely with those circles that advocate Holocaust Denial. Irving defended himself at the trial, claiming that he did not deny the Holocaust, but merely was engaging in legitimate historical debate.

The trial aroused a great deal of public interest, with some saying the case put the truth of the Holocaust on trial, whereas others believed it was more of a case about what is or is not considered reasonable historical debate. The judgement returned by Gray was in favor of Lipstadt, and in it he called Irving: "an active Holocaust denier antisemitic and racist." Judge Gray also said: "Irving has for his own ideological reasons persistently and deliberately misrepresented and manipulated history evidence."

The importance of the trial, beyond declaring Irving a Holocaust denier, was that it sent a clear message to the public that people like him who represent themselves as engaging in a reasonable and legitimate argument about the events of the Holocaust, are really engaged in the falsification of history. (see also Holocaust, Denial of the.)

