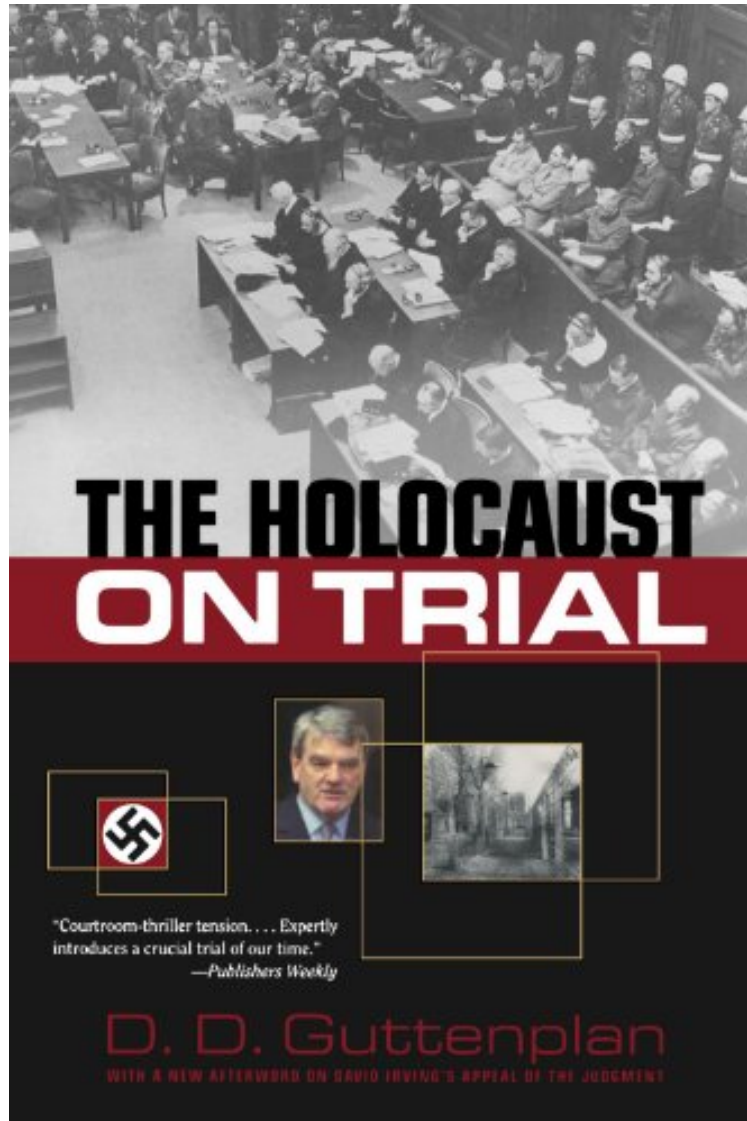


## The Holocaust on Trial

*D. D. Guttenplan*

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**D. D. Guttenplan : The Holocaust on Trial** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Holocaust on Trial:

1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. A fascinating, if mildly flawed, account of one of the most bizarre libel trials in historyBy KiwiwriterThis is an interesting book about a legendary libel case, and I've commented on this case in reviews of other books on the subject, most notably "Lying About Hitler" by Richard Evans and "History On Trial: My Day in Court with David Irving," so I don't want to rehearse the subject matter of the book in too much

detail. As is probably well-known by now, Prof. Lipstadt wrote a book on Holocaust deniers, and among those she denounced was David Irving. He sued her in London, claiming she was the point end of a Jewish conspiracy to demolish her reputation, relying on Britain's tough libel laws to put the burden of proof on her. Irving failed utterly in his task (partially because his case was so idiotic, and partially because he acted as his own barrister), and ruined what little reputation he had left as a serious historian. Mr. Guttenplan's book is interesting, in that he's sympathetic to Prof. Lipstadt's cause, less so to her person, while regarding Irving as a bit of an underdog, while utterly disliking his position. The writing is done in a present active tense, which conveys a good deal of immediacy, and he did a lot of research and work. I can't give this book five stars because I felt that his dislike of Prof. Lipstadt was neither justified nor called for -- she was being sued, and to make the ordeal worse, she had the double burden of having to prove she was right. She was dealing with the typical tactic of the internet bully, often seen in political and historical forums, where the troll makes a provocative statement and demands that others "prove him wrong." That is now how cases are proved in academia and most courtrooms, where the burden of proof is on the person making the statement, provocative or otherwise. As I have said in the past to other people stating internet idiocies: "I already have my Master's Degree. I don't have to do your thesis. You prove your argument." I also can understand Prof. Lipstadt's anger at being labeled as the spear-point of a non-existent conspiracy to "get" Irving, when his only real enemy is himself. The closest Irving came to "proving" his case at trial was to bring in an anti-Semitic college professor from America, whose evidence-in-chief was that "Jews stick together." The defense barrister, Richard Rampton, didn't even rise from his chair or look up when he said, "I have no cross-examination for this witness." The judge didn't bother to mention the professor's testimony in his judgment. Given the power of Irving's threats and paucity of the actual attack, I can understand Prof. Lipstadt's irritation when she finally had to deal with this nonsense. Because of that weakness, I cannot give this otherwise riveting account five stars. But I highly recommend it nonetheless.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Gripping Courtroom Drama! By Reviewer X...BR  
Mr. Guttenplan is a very good writer and he manages to actually bring the reader into the trial, and compels you to keep reading, almost by a sheer force of will. His writing style is very dramatic and extremely vivid. Most importantly since this book is about a REAL trial, he is about as fair and detached as one could be considering the subject and the despicable nature of David Irving. Mr. Guttenplan goes out of his way, almost as if he doesn't want to be the next person hauled into court, to be very fair and give the pseudo-historian David Irving the benefit of the doubt. Make no mistake, he finds Irving repellant and his position on the holocaust abhorrent and unconvincing. Despite this he tries to be fair, and he does a good job. If people like history mixed with some flair, some drama, and some excellently written plot devices, you will love this book and actually LEARN something!! I read it in 4 days, and I was thinking about it when I wasn't reading the book. It will stay with you. Despite his misguided introduction on the nature of history and his questionable conclusion on the same subject, the trial part (over 90% of the book) is fabulous.

6 of 8 people found the following review helpful. One Part Eichmann; One Part Scopes! By Kevin Currie-Knight  
For those who like gripping court dramas that touch on historiography, epistemology, WWII history, and politics, D.D. Guttenplan has written your kind of book. "Holocaust on Trial," is a 'gavel to gavel' account of the David Irving v. Deborah Lipstadt and Penguin Book Co. trial. Irving, a non-PhD'd historian, writes books purporting to show that there were no gas chambers at Auschwitz, that far fewer Jews died there than is thought, and that Hitler had no knowledge of the 'final solution to the Jewish question.' Lipstadt is an Emory University professor of Jewish Studies who wrote a book, called "Denying the Holocaust," in which she brands Irving as a 'dangerous' holocaust denier. Upon the release of Lipstadt's book Irving sued Lipstadt for libel in his home country of England where the libel laws are such that (contra US law) it is the defendant that must prove that libel did NOT occur and that everything she said was accurate. Thus, to show that she didn't libel Irving, Lipstadt must show that everything she writes about him is accurate. In order to do that, she has to, in a court of law, prove that the holocaust happened the way most historians believe - gas chambers and all. And, she must prove that Irving knowingly distorted evidence to arrive at a contrary conclusion. Guttenplan's book does a good job recounting the trial with journalistic detail. We get a good feel for who David Irving (who argued his case himself) and who the defendants are (though as Lipstadt doesn't speak at all in the trial, she is certainly the most absent of the characters). We get a good feel for the grave stakes each side is playing for. Should the defense lose, shock waves will flow through the entire historical community, who are watching with baited breath. Should the prosecution lose, Irving will prove himself to be a historical quack. This book does well at painting the picture of a tense, yet spectacular, trial. While Guttenplan tries to be journalistically objective, never dismissing Irving as may be tempting, he certainly doesn't get a good impression of Irving. (Of course, Guttenplan is also quick to point out that just as Irving is not a PhD'd historian, neither is Lipstadt, who's PhD is in Jewish Studies.) Even readers who don't know how the real trial ended are likely to get the continual feeling that Irving is to be outmatched. In this sense, the book is anti-climactic; but just like watching "Titanic," the fun is not in finding out how it ends, but in finding out how it gets there. Basically, Lipstadt wins and exposes Irving as a fraudulent historian with questionable motives and you, the reader, get to see how she pulled it off! Other readers have noted that this book is long on journalism, and short on philosophical rumination. What is proper historiography? How much of history is evidence and how much is inference? How do we know what 'historical truth' is anyhow? None of these questions are discussed at any length. If that is what you want,

Deborah Lipstadt and Richard Evans (a historian the defense used to debunk Irving's historical claims) both have books out that touch on these questions. This book is the journalism; not the philosophy. Anyhow, this is a very solid book about a trial all of Britain was watching (oddly, it got little publicity in the states). For those concerned with history and the mechanisms by which historians tell the good from the bogus, this is a book worth reading and thinking about.

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.

.com 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 bw 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. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc.  
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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