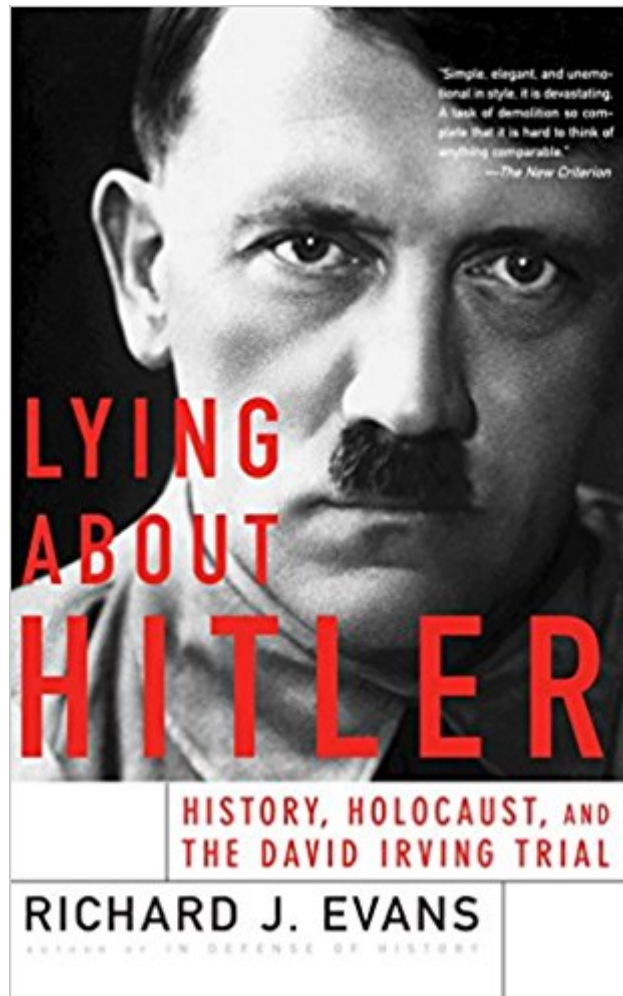




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Lying About Hitler



Synopsis

In ruling against the controversial historian David Irving, whose libel suit against the American historian Deborah Lipstadt was tried in April 2000, the High Court in London labeled Irving a falsifier of history. No objective historian, declared the judge, would manipulate the documentary record in the way that Irving did. Richard J. Evans, a Cambridge historian and the chief adviser for the defense, uses this famous trial as a lens for exploring a range of difficult questions about the nature of the historian's enterprise.

Book Information

Paperback: 336 pages

Publisher: Basic Books; Reprint edition (April 18, 2002)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0465021530

ISBN-13: 978-0465021536

Product Dimensions: 5 x 0.8 x 8.1 inches

Shipping Weight: 12.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.5 out of 5 stars 75 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #416,983 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #49 in Books > History > Europe > Great Britain > Wales #757 in Books > History > Europe > Great Britain > England #824 in Books > History > World > Jewish > Holocaust

Customer Reviews

As an expert witness for the defense in last year's Irving-Lipstadt trial, Evans (history, Cambridge Univ.) was charged with determining whether David Irving was, as Deborah Lipstadt asserted, a Holocaust denier. Evans spent two years researching Irving's work, tracing his sources, and then evaluating his publications and public speeches. Moving easily from analysis of Irving's abuse of primary documents to a discussion of what constitutes legitimate historical methodology, Evans presents compelling proof that Irving is a Holocaust denier and why he should not be considered a legitimate member of the historical profession. Evans's depiction of the trial and of Irving's behavior in court is followed by an assessment of the implications of the judgment in Lipstadt's favor. Evans's point that some commentators seemed to forget that it was Irving who was attempting to silence Lipstadt, rather than academic historians and "Jewish interest groups" attempting to stifle free speech, is well worth remembering. Evans eloquently argues that what was really on trial was history itself. Fortunately, history won. Ironically, Evans's carefully documented book has not yet

been published in the U.K., as Irving's threats to bring a libel suit have already caused one company to drop publication. Highly recommended. Frederic Krome, Jacob Rader Marcus Ctr. of the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

When Deborah Lipstadt's *Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory* (1993), a groundbreaking book about the disturbing movement to refute the reality of the Holocaust, was published, one of the writers identified as a Holocaust denier, the Englishman David Irving, sued Lipstadt and her publisher, Penguin, for libel. Although Irving never earned a degree, he has written nearly 30 books about Hitler and other related subjects. His contention, therefore, was that Lipstadt had denigrated his work as a historian by accusing him of distorting the historical record to support his extreme anti-Semitic politics. The defense had to prove that Irving, in fact, had deliberately misrepresented the contents of relevant documents to conform to his sympathetic view of Hitler and his belief that nothing on the order of genocide occurred under Nazi rule. Evans, a Cambridge-based historian who specializes in modern German history, was retained by the defense as an expert witness, and he chronicles his arduous research effort with impressive lucidity. At question was the very bedrock of history: Is there such a thing as historical objectivity? Or, as Evans writes, "How do we know when a historian is telling the truth? . . . Wasn't it all a matter of interpretation?" Sensitive to these conundrums and the high emotional valence attached to the Holocaust, Evans was scrupulous in his examination of thousands of pages of documents, assiduously evaluating Irving's interpretation of such primary sources as Goebbels' diaries, always on the lookout for evidence of inaccuracies and bias. He found plenty, and he describes his discoveries with quiet and contagious excitement. By sharing his vast insider's knowledge and recounting his surreal experiences on the stand as Irving, who represented himself, conducted his chaotic cross-examinations, Evans enables readers to fully appreciate the significance of both Lipstadt's victory and Irving's exposure as exactly what he claimed not to be. There is such a thing as truth, and history, responsibly practiced, will reveal it. Donna Seaman Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Great summary of the main evidence against David Irving in the libel trial against Deborah Lipstadt.

Evans rocks!

Interesting lessons for historians or anyone interested in learning how propaganda is created. Find out how easily history can be twisted and rewritten.

Interesting point of view considering the it is Hitler!

Professor Evans was one of the expert witnesses in one of the most important trials in history--the libel case brought by David Irving against Penguin Books. Irving claimed that Penguin, by publishing a book critical of Irving's methods and motives in books about WWII and Nazi Germany, had damaged his reputation. This book is a compelling account of Evans' role in showing that so-called "historian" David Irving had been manipulating, mischaracterizing, and misusing historical evidence for virtually his entire career of writing about the Second World War and Nazi Germany. And Evans is devastatingly convincing in showing just what really went on in the trial, as well as how widely the trial itself and Irving's work were misunderstood by even intelligent and sophisticated commentators in the world press (some of whom thought that Irving was being somehow prosecuted for his creativity or unpopular views). Evans' book is eminently readable, well organized, and powerful without being polemical. At the very beginning, he warns the reader that the Irving case was about more than Irving's contention that he had been libeled by being labeled a "Holocaust denier" among other things by Penguin's author Deborah Lipstadt. That is really important and seems to be Evans' larger purpose: to show that there really are some historical "truths" and that the tendency in social sciences to dismiss objective truth and to excuse wild theories by citing the preconceptions or political beliefs of the historian in question is dangerous. Among the book's strengths are the evident sincerity of the author and his ability to describe how Irving's deception worked and fooled so many people, from professionals to laymen. Evans is excellent in portraying how historical research is done, what standards are expected of serious historians, and how Irving's work did not meet those standards. He is also convincing in demonstrating Irving's apparent racism and anti-semitism, and he is also subtle in explaining partly the motivations of "Holocaust deniers", though doing so fully would be outside the scope of this book. I found few weaknesses, one being the inconsistency sometimes in explanations of detail. (For example, a brief explanation in Chapter 2 of what the Nazi party tribunals that reviewed events of November 1938, so-called "Kristallnacht", were doing would be more important than identifying the proper pronunciation of one proper name in a later chapter). Another weakness is the all-too-common failure to include illustrations. It is frustrating to read descriptions of documents, or in the case of Irving, physical appearance, and not be able to see a

few photographs that are surely readily available from press accounts. But those are minor complaints (and the book publishers are apparently cutting costs like everyone else). The most important theme of the book is how this case shows that there really are truths in historical analysis, and that historians should not shrink from taking on those who would question such truths as the overwhelming evidence of the mass and systematic destruction of Jews and other minorities in Nazi Germany. Historians themselves can be dangerous actors in human history if people like Evans and Penguin do not take courageous stands as they did here. All in all, wonderfully concise and a great read.

great story

Professor Evans's account of his part in the trial in which David Irving sought to have Deborah Lipstadt's book "Denying the Holocaust" suppressed. The trial took place in the High Court in London, and Professor Evans, of Cambridge University, was asked to research three of Irving's books back to their sources to establish whether his view of history was influenced by his ideology to such an extent that he would lie about the record. Evans, while initially sceptical about Irving, was quite appalled by what he uncovered. The work took two years, and this story is about it and the trial. Evans is a details man, and as such he writes a riveting tale, although it's hard work as this is a book dense with detail. Particularly interesting to ponder is Evans's summary of what makes an historian, and why Irving cannot be considered to be one. Evans describes Irving's demeanour and behaviour in court while acting as his own defence counsel. The final chapters deal with the judgement against Irving, and with the behaviour of the television and print media. Their obsession with Irving and their singular lack of preparedness led to shallow and ill-informed debate. Like some reviewers on this site, interviewers and writers had apparently neither seen nor read anything about the trial before rushing into speech or prose about it. In the case of John Keegan, some other agenda prompted his summary of the trial. Evans certainly made this amateur reviewer sit up and think about media sources, and indeed historians or those who pretend to be them, more than ever, for which I am grateful to him.

This is an excellent book. I am only giving it 4 stars because Evans writing style can be slow at times. However, the information contained within the pages of this account is worth the reading for anyone interested in history, Hitler and the holocaust. Evans does an excellent job of showing that history is an active mental evaluation of what took place, why it took place and how the

historian's interpretation of the evidence demonstrates the mindset of the historian. Evans unabashedly shows that David Irvin is not a historian but rather a holocaust denier and liar. Mr. Irving loses all credibility of a historian by falsely attributing conclusions to reliable sources by bending them to fit his arguments. Evans shows that David Irving willfully distorts original (source material) authors meanings and purposes for his own purposes that directly contradicts the originals documents or that Irvin will pick up on insignificant and implausible pieces of evidence while dismissing more substantive evidence that does not fit his thesis. According to Evans, "if we mean by historian someone who is concerned to discover the truth about the past, and to give as accurate a representation of it as possible, then Irving is not a historian".

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