

# Historians or hoaxers?

## The unprofessional disdain of academic historians for documenting the Holocaust

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Historians sometimes think of themselves as truth-tellers and iconoclasts. One Canadian historian, for example, places the following quotation from Khrushchev as an epigraph at the head of her website:

'Historians are dangerous people. They are capable of upsetting everything.'<sup>[1]</sup>

Yet this is only true of *real* historians, those who are prepared to tell the truth about the past without fear or favour. It is doubtful that more than a handful of such historians have appeared in any given century.

Certainly, there is little reason to attribute to academic historians today either truth-telling or iconoclastic potential. Indeed, it is hard to think of a single academic historian who has ruffled a politician's feathers in a very long time, let alone one who has rocked a political establishment.<sup>[2]</sup> The risks of genuine scholarly independence, such as loss of tenure, the loss of prestige, professional and social ostracism, and the loss of a means of livelihood are so great that they ensure that most academics conform to the expectations of their peers and the heads of their institutions.

One only has to be aware of the trials and tribulations of New Zealand historian Joel Hayward, whose 1991 M.A. thesis gave a fair, and in certain respects sympathetic assessment of Holocaust revisionism, to appreciate the fact that an historian who upsets things has no future in academia.<sup>[3]</sup> In 2002, Hayward was forced by the pressure of the controversy over his M.A. to resign his tenured position as a Senior Lecturer in Defence and Strategic Studies at Massey University, Canterbury, N.Z. Although Hayward is now employed again (apparently by a British military college), his website trumpets the fact that he is a 'NON-REVISIONIST scholar.' In short, if Hayward is working as an historian again today, it is only because these days he flaunts his non-revisionism and his philo-Zionism. (He maintains, for example, that 'Israel clearly has a right to exist within its current borders.')

Given that his latest book is about Lord Nelson, it also looks like a condition of his current employment is that he stays well away from WWII-related subjects.

The result for Hayward is probably the BEST that could be expected for any academic who shows even the slightest objectivity in relation to the Holocaust. Today, academic historians are the zealous watchdogs of orthodoxy, the political religion of post-WWII liberal democracy. Subscribing to this religion is now mandatory - we are talking about an orthodoxy that is as rigidly enforced as any in any historical period, not excluding under dictatorships such as those of Hitler and Stalin.

Although this political religion lacks a name, its dogmas - which comprise the core of what most ordinary people think they know about modern history - include the following:

1. The Nazi regime was the most evil which has ever existed.
2. Hitler was the most evil man who has ever lived.
3. Hitler and the Nazis cannot be viewed negatively enough because they perpetrated the most evil crime ever perpetrated, the Holocaust. This was an evil plan, the most evil ever devised, to exterminate the Jews. The plan was the fruit of Hitler's radical anti-semitism.

4. WWII was a good war because it led to the overthrow of Hitler and the Nazis. It doesn't matter an iota how many people were killed in the war, because the removal of the Nazi regime was a good at any price.

5. Winston Churchill is one of the greatest men in history because only he realized how truly evil the Nazis were. If it wasn't for him, England may never gone to war with Germany and the Nazi regime might not have been overthrown, with consequences too terrible to even think about.

6. Stalin was nearly as bad as Hitler, but at least he didn't try to exterminate the Jews and at least he helped overthrow the Nazis. However, he did confine many of his political enemies to gulags, which were pretty much the same things as concentration camps, so he was still very, very bad.

7. Hitler and Stalin headed totalitarian regimes of right and left respectively.

8. Because both leftwing and rightwing totalitarianism are so bad, the only viable political alternative to either is liberal democracy.

9. Because liberal democracy overthrew Hitler and the Nazis, it proves just how virtuous and benevolent it is.

10. You cannot say anything good about Hitler. If you do, it means you are a crypto-Nazi and therefore as bad as Hitler yourself.

11. It is not permissible to say anything that would suggest that Nazi crimes were not as bad as historians maintain. If you do, it means you are seeking to 'minimise' Nazi crimes. Anyone who seeks to 'minimise' Nazi crimes has to be a crypto-Nazi. On the other hand, you are allowed to say that Nazi crimes were even worse than historians previously maintained. While it is not permissible to 'minimize' Nazi crimes, it is permissible, indeed actually encouraged, to maximise them, even if you're lying.

12. It is not permissible to say anything bad about Jews, who have always and everywhere been totally innocent and unfairly persecuted. To criticise Jews is to engage in anti-semitism, and no matter how different the circumstances may be anti-semitism always has the potential to trigger another Holocaust.

13. Under no circumstances can you say that WW II was fought for the benefit of the Jews. You have to say that it was fought for 'democracy.'

14. Since the Allies' aim was to overthrow the Nazi dictatorship, nothing the Allies did during the war, no matter how heinous, and whether it was done to the Germans or to someone else, can legitimately be construed as a 'war crime.' To describe an act of the Allies as a war crime is to suggest that there is no inherent moral difference between Allied acts and Nazi acts. To even suggest that the Allies could have committed war crimes is a sign of crypto-Nazism.

15. The Nuremberg trials were a massive leap forward for human moral development, as war criminals were prosecuted as such for the first time.

Of course, academic historians do not teach these dogmas in the same open and honest way that, say, a Catholic priest teaches the dogmas of the Catholic church. Rather, because students come to University already steeped in the modern political religion academic historians are free to *assume* them and their writings constitute large-scale elaborations of them. The dogmas are perpetuated not by being taught explicitly, but by ensuring that they are the only conclusions that can legitimately be drawn from history.

Of all the dogmas I have just described, the only one which might be regarded as open to debate is whether Hitler was worse than Stalin. Some people would insist that Stalin was

worse, since his regime killed many more people. However, the idea that the Holocaust is the most evil crime ever perpetrated tends to reinforce the conclusion that Hitler was worse, although the obvious implication - that Jewish lives are worth more than Russian lives - is left unuttered (because drawing attention to the fact that Jewish lives are to be regarded as more important than other people's lives is something that you would only do if you were motivated by anti-semitism).

Of all the dogmas of the political religion whose caretakers academic historians have become, by far the most important - perhaps because it's also the least defensible - is dogma #3: that Hitler and the Nazis implemented a programme for the extermination of the Jews.

Academic historians are complicit in the perpetuation of this political dogma mainly by omission - that is to say, by neglecting to do their jobs properly. They 1) overlook the fact that there is no material evidence to support the Holocaust hypothesis and 2) take for granted the authenticity of the documents which they cite, in lieu of material evidence, as proof that the Nazis tried to exterminate the Jews.

Let me expand on these two points:

### 1. *The utter disregard of material evidence*

Academic historians normally treat material (i.e., physical) evidence as conclusive (unless, of course, it is subsequently proven to be inauthentic). For example, if a Roman map did not show a city in a certain location, but archaeologists discovered Roman-era ruins at this location, historians would conclude that there had been a city there in Roman times, not that the city could not possibly have been there because it wasn't mentioned in Roman documents. Conversely, if a town was drawn at an identifiable location on a Roman map and archaeologists had failed to turn up so much as a potsherd at that place, most historians would conclude that the mapmaker had made a mistake, not that the mapmaker was right and that all traces of the settlement had been obliterated by the ravages of time.

Yet in the case of the Holocaust, the dearth of material evidence for the existence of large-scale extermination programme is not perceived as significant. It is assumed that the Nazis destroyed their vast death machinery so thoroughly as to preclude all possibility of postwar detection. It is not permissible to express doubts as to whether the Nazis could really have eliminated all material evidence so completely, including making the ashes of six million people vanish from the locations at which they must have been interred. To think such doubts is to engage in thought crime; and to verbalize the doubts, hate crime.

It is therefore more acceptable for academic historians today to assume that the Nazis had magical powers - that is, the ability to make material evidence disappear beyond hope of recovery, even by means of the most sophisticated modern technology - than it is to conclude that the lack of material evidence supports the allegations of Holocaust revisionists.

### 2. *A cavalier attitude towards documentary evidence*

Given the non-existence of material evidence, documentary evidence is obviously critical to reasoned belief in the Holocaust. While the majority of the public seems happy to accept eyewitness testimonies as a sufficient basis for their exterminationist beliefs, for scholars 'the faintest ink is usually a more reliable foundation for historical analysis than the strongest memory.'<sup>[4]</sup>

Holocaust scholars seem to be divided on the question of whether documents exist that refer to the alleged Nazi programme for the extermination of the Jews. In *Harvest of Hate* (1979), Léon Poliakov specifically avers that with respect to this programme 'no documents have survived, perhaps none ever existed.'<sup>[5]</sup> Yet on the back cover of Steve Hochstadt's *Sources of the Holocaust* (2004), the author Judith Magyar Isaacson is quoted as saying

that that Hochstadt's collection 'documents [the Holocaust's] perpetration with painstaking accuracy.'

Although Isaacson is clearly exaggerating here - if there were such documents it is hard to see how Poliakov could not have been aware of them - there does seem to be a growing tendency to assert that a corpus of Holocaust documents exists which, while far less complete than we would like, is nonetheless adequate for the purpose of affirming the existence of a Nazi extermination programme.

Unfortunately, academic historians have failed to concern themselves with the question of the authenticity of the documents they cite as evidence for the Holocaust. They neglect such crucial matters as the provenance of the documents, the accuracy with which they have been translated, and whether their meanings are being construed fairly.

A striking but never discussed fact about Holocaust historiography is that its key documents are all of unproven authenticity. Most of the documents academic Holocaust historians have taken to citing are, in fact, no more than mere transcriptions. By far the majority appeared for the first time during the Nuremberg trials, and were prepared for the court by the Documentation Division of the Office of the U.S. Chief of Counsel (OCC) in Paris, an organization that subsumed the OSS's Evidence Collection and Analysis Section in London. In other words, many if not most of the documents used in the Nuremberg trials originated with the OSS, the wartime precursor of the CIA.

Very little is known about either the OSS's Evidence Collection and Analysis Section or the OCC's Documentation Division. Matters such as the provenance of the documents cited at Nuremberg are apparently of little interest to historians generally. To my knowledge, no historians go beyond the transcriptions which were used during the postwar war crimes trials to seek out original documents - something which would be inexcusable in almost any other avenue of historical enquiry.

To be sure, one reason for this is that in most cases it is impossible to say where the originals are held today, if indeed they exist at all. Carlos Whitlock Porter, an American-born professional translator who apparently today lives in Germany, is the only person I know of who has looked into this matter, and he has established that no institution acknowledges possessing any original documents:

'The standard version of events is that the Allies examined 100,000 documents and chose 1,000 which were introduced into evidence, and that the original documents were then deposited in the Peace Palace at The Hague. This is rather inexact. ... The Hague has few, if any, original documents. The Hague has many original postwar "affidavits," or sworn statements, the Tribunal Commission transcripts, and much valuable defense material. They have the "human soap," which has never been tested, and the "original human soap recipe" (Document USSR-196), which is a forgery; but apparently no original wartime German documents. ... The National Archives in Washington ... claim that the original documents are in The Hague. The Hague claims the original documents are in the National Archives. The Staatsarchiv Nurnberg and the Bundesarchiv Koblenz also have no original documents, and both say the original documents are in Washington. Since the originals are, in most cases, "copies," there is often no proof that the documents in question ever existed.'<sup>[6]</sup>

The reality, therefore, is that the bulk of the 'evidence' for the Holocaust derives from a corpus of documents that was expressly manufactured by the OSS and OCC in 1945-46 for the purpose of incriminating the leaders of the former German government at Nuremberg. The procedure went roughly along these lines: the Documentation Division in Paris created 'copies' (in English only), certified them as true, and sent them to the prosecution in Nuremberg, while the original documents (if they ever existed) were never seen or heard of again. German translations of the original English texts were then prepared and sent to the defense in Nuremberg, where they arrived as late as possible so that the defense had insufficient time to worry about such matters as their authenticity.

Few professional historians can be unaware that original documents and *only* original documents qualify as evidence. Without access to the original of the document it professes to transcribe, there is no way for an historian to tell whether a given transcription is accurate. Transcriptions may conceal interpolations and excisions, while translations can involve interpolations, excisions, misleading translations and even the fabrication of entire passages. Many Holocaust documents can legitimately be suspected of being wholesale fabrications.

Although many documents were certainly fabricated, the Documentation Division in Paris seems rarely to have been required to forge documents. The procedure followed at Nuremberg, which assigned evidentiary value to mere 'copies,' avoided the need for original documents. The defence, on the other hand, had no power to insist that original documents be used.

The real problem was the risk of authentic documents coming to light which would contradict the fabricated documents. We can assume that as the Nuremberg trials proceeded authentic documents that had the potential to create conflicts with forged documents were secreted away in inaccessible locations. Given the fact that an extremely large proportion of the total corpus of Nazi documents remains inaccessible to historians even today - historians have probably never had access to more than a small sample of the documents captured by the Allies in the closing stages of the war - we can safely assume that most original documents that would resolve questions concerning the Holocaust are destined never to be made public. Many may even have been destroyed in order to ensure the enduring success of the hoax. (If it was a hoax, of course. A theoretical possibility is that genuine documents had to be suppressed for another reason, perhaps because they point to the complicity of the U.S. corporations that worked hand in glove with the Nazis during the war.)

Another potential problem was the appearance of individuals associated with the Nazi regime who would have had the ability to expose the OSS/OCC documents as fabrications. The need to prevent this from ever happening would explain why, starting in May 1945 with the alleged suicides of SS-General Hans-Adolf Prützmann, SS head Heinrich Himmler and SS-General Odilo Globocnik while in British captivity, there followed a bizarre string of murders of individuals associated with the Auschwitz concentration camp. (These were perpetrated by a Jewish hit squad known as the DIN.) As Joseph Bellinger, author of a new book on Himmler's murder, points out, within six months or so of the war's end practically any one who could have shed light on the Jewish policy of the Third Reich was murdered! [7] This, it must be said, was extremely convenient for the prosecution at Nuremberg.

So we therefore encounter a striking paradox. Although the Holocaust is considered by many historians to be the central event of the 20th century and also one of the most important events in history, the standards which are applied to the study of the Holocaust are lower than those which would apply in, for example, a minor property dispute in a local court. Yet if the Holocaust is to be elevated to its present status as central event of the 20th century, it is obvious that it must meet a higher standard of proof, not a lower one.

To be blunt: if historians are going to tell people that the Holocaust is one of the most important events in history, they better have overwhelming evidence to back up their extraordinary claims. So far, though, they have not lived up to their responsibility. Despite the gravity of the subject, which demands the greatest scrupulousness, they remain suspiciously cavalier about documenting the Holocaust, as though it were the one historical event that transcends the historian's craft.

In the case of the rush to impute to the Nazis a programme for the extermination of millions of people which has implausibly left no material traces, all the normal rules of historiography seem not only to have been suspended, but to have been violated over and over again. Historians routinely cite documents from secondary works like Raul Hilberg's *The Destruction of the European Jews* (1961) or from printed collections of documents, such

as Robert Wolfe's *Holocaust: The Documentary Evidence* - but they never cite original documents.



Dirk Moses of the University of Sydney's History Department: an example of the kind of academic hack under discussion. (For an excellent critique of Moses's disingenuous treatment of Holocaust revisionism, see [here](#).) Moses reportedly refers to people who think there ought to be evidence for the Holocaust as 'crazed positivists.' Who would want to study history with this guy?

In short, whether or not the Holocaust took place, the historiography of the Holocaust is a house of cards: it is a vast edifice constructed on the precarious foundation of mere transcriptions of documents which have never been examined by those who cite them and whose authenticity has never been and probably never can be established. One wonders how many academics have been honest enough to share this information with their students.

Given the powerful challenge mounted to Holocaust orthodoxy by revisionism, the documentary status quo seems remarkable. You would think that by now academic historians would be demanding free and unfettered access to original documents for the purpose of using them to refute revisionist opponents. You would think that the numerous websites that have proliferated in recent years aimed at refuting revisionism would be bristling with scanned images of original documents, which would make mincemeat of the doubting Thomases.<sup>[8]</sup> Yet every such website of which I am aware - and every book which follows the same agenda - aims to persuade by means of mere transcriptions.<sup>[9]</sup>

Clearly, academic historians are only interested in historical truth so long as it does not upset any of the central dogmas of the modern political religion. To affirm that religion, they enthusiastically write the history of WWII using documents of doubtful authenticity and entirely disregard revisionist writings, even though the latter constitute the only form of independent quality control in the field of Holocaust studies. (You don't think peer review exists in any meaningful sense in Holocaust studies, do you? How could it, in such an atmosphere of intimidation and persecution?)

As both a credentialed historian and a member of the interested public I must say that I find myself heartily sick of the appalling state of academic historiography today. Because they show a disgraceful disregard of issues such as the provenance of Holocaust documents, academic historians deserve to be dismissed as handmaidens of a monumental hoax rather than devotees of the truth.

The current generation of academic historians seems to me to consist of crooks, liars and gullible fools - and I would not hesitate to apply the latter accusation to several prominent academic historians I know personally who have published on the subject of the Holocaust (including one who maintains, quite seriously, that Elie Wiesel's farcical *Night* is by the far the best book on Auschwitz).

But what else can we expect, when professional history is in the service of a dogmatic religion rather than historical truth?

## Notes

[1] <http://www.nipissingu.ca/faculty/annec/HIST3926W/Outline.htm>

[2] The biggest academic controversy in recent years took place in 2001-2 and concerned a book, *Arming America: The Origins of a National Gun Culture*, by Michael Bellesiles, who was at the time Professor of History at Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia, U.S. However, this controversy concerned trivial offences against historiographical conventions which are committed routinely by all historians writing large books, especially ones on subjects which have not been extensively researched before; the controversy was really nothing more than a rightwing beat-up. In most such cases, even when the work is considerably sloppier, views are challenged and modified over the years as the historiography of the subject grows and becomes more sophisticated. As for iconoclasm, the closest to an iconoclastic academic historian I can think of is Professor Justin McCarthy professor of history at the University of Louisville in Louisville, Kentucky, who argues convincingly that the alleged Armenian holocaust is a fabrication.

[3] For Hayward's overview of the affair, see <http://www.joelhayward.com/myoverviewoftheaffair.htm>

[4] John Costello, *Mask of Treachery*, Pan Books, 1989, p. xvii.

[5] Léon Poliakov, *Harvest of Hate*, New York, Holocaust Library, 1979, p. 108, cited in Jürgen Graf, *The Giant With Feet of Clay: Raul Hilberg and his Standard Work on the "Holocaust"*, Capshaw, Alabama [U.S.], Theses & Dissertations Press, 2001, p. 19.

[6] <http://www.cwporter.com/g3803ps.htm>

[7] <http://www.cwporter.com/d2.htm>

[8] From this point of view, the best exterminationist website is [Mazal.org](http://Mazal.org), which currently offers photographic reproductions of 25 original documents, including 23 from the Auschwitz State Museum concerning the construction of the crematories. (Although this is only 23 pages out of at least 88,000 pages of Auschwitz Central Construction Office documents that were captured by the Red Army in 1945, it is better than nothing.) Although a number of additional documents on Mazal.org are represented as 'German Original' documents, this is a deception. The documents so identified are all inscribed in English as 'certified true copies,' meaning that they are postwar creations. They are **not** authentic Nazi-era documents but belong to the class of documents that were prepared for the Nazi war crimes trials by the Documentation Division of the OCC in Paris.

[9] Here are a few examples of the websites to which I refer:

[The Nizkor Project](#)

[A Teacher's Guide to the Holocaust](#)

[Documentary Resources on the Nazi Genocide and its Denial](#)

[The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum](#)

[The Jewish Holocaust 1933-1945](#)