

Some Random thoughts on David Irving

by Dr. Karl Kolcheck

An aging David Irving, who has begun to look more and more like a demented Rudolf Hess with lantern jaw and sunken eyes, was once considered the *enfant terrible* of the world of historical writers.

Now, he is merely the *enfant*, having slipped into almost total obscurity. This diminution of public attention is highly distressing to Irving, the victim of a deprived, fatherless childhood, who lusts after public attention like a hart panteth after water but in his case, the well has run dry.

His early books such as the "Destruction of Dresden," first published in 1963, were well-researched and crafted but the decline set in early and progressed to the terminal state, an awful biography of Hitler's propaganda minister, Josef Goebbels, published in 1996. Based to a very large degree on completely fictitious documentation prepared by the former Soviet KGB as political disinformation, this book is full of pointless anecdotes, sniggering sexual innuendo and leaves an objective reader with the distinct feeling that the book should have been written in the sort of soft crayon supplied to therapy patients in locked wards.

Irving ascended, or descended (depending entirely upon the view of the reader), from a pro-German writer to a fierce and highly partisan supporter of Adolf Hitler, his acquired and well-worshipped father figure, and an intemperate and completely inaccurate denigrator of his legion of critics.

He had access to the personal diaries of a number of luminaries of the Third Reich and was able to publish a great deal of interesting information that proved to be of limited use to legitimate historians. Unfortunately for students of history, most historical diaries are, more often than not, completely self-serving and Irving's interpretations of them have proved to be equally so.

His major fault as a historical writer, aside from a serious lack of literary style, has been that he wrote to an idea and instead of making a study of authentic documentary, as opposed to anecdotal, sources, he selected material that supported his various ideological thesis and deliberately ignored anything else that might refute the ideas he tried to nourish in the minds of his readers.

Also, Irving has no problem whatsoever in inventing conversations or archival records and putting these spurious evidences into his political screeds with perfect aplomb.

The respected historian John Lukacs has devoted what amounts to more space than he deserves to Irving in his 1997 book, "The Hitler of History." In this work, which is a scholarly and reasonably balanced work on Hitler's place in historical reporting, Lukacs, on pages 229 through 232 points out a small sampling of Irving's deliberate distortions of records and his habit of not identifying any references for important assertions.

In a number of specific cases, it is obvious that Irving has simply invented sources, quotes and other supportive data.

British author and historian Martin Middlebrook has dealt with Irving's failings very clearly in his 1973 book, "The Nuremberg Raid." On pages 293 through 296,

Middlebrook dissects a story that Irving reported in his work "And the German Cities Did Not Die-A Documentary Account" published by a small, right-wing Swiss house in 1963.

In this book, Irving stated categorically that the Germans had learned in advance about the disastrous 1944 British air raid on Nuremberg in which a very large percentage of the raiding aircraft were lost to German action.

Irving quotes three British airmen, who were prisoners of war in Germany, to the effect that the Germans had prior knowledge of this raid.

Very extensive research on the part of Middlebrook proved that two of the named airmen had no knowledge whatsoever of the statements attributed to them by Irving, in fact flatly denying them, and the third alleged witness simply never existed anywhere except in Irving's imagination.

Another exposition of Irving's literary mendacity can be found in a chapter of a 1994 book entitled "The Churchill Papers" by Alexander Baron, pages 13 through 17.

This study lists a large and significant number of serious errors of fact appearing in Irving's book, "Churchill's War."

In all of his books, Irving consistently misstates or invents facts, invents important dates and proper titles and generally acts as if has never read any of the works in the lengthy bibliographies he always provides as proof of his research.

Probably the worst example of this can be found in "Hitler's War", published in 1977, in which Irving discusses the German Freikorps leader, Albert Leo Schlageter. This man was involved in the Ruhrkampf in the 1920's and was caught and executed by the French in Dusseldorf in 1923.

This part of Irving's reportage is correct.

What is not correct, however, and is an error exposing such a gross unfamiliarity with the subject of German history as to stagger the imagination, is the connected statement that at Schlageter's side on that date was also shot one Andreas Hofer.

As any legitimate scholar of German history will instantly recognize, Hofer was the man who raised the Austrian Tyrol against Napoleon I and was indeed captured and shot by the French but in Mantua, Italy in 1810!

Also in "Hitler's War", on page 260, Irving speaks of a "secret meeting" held at the Kremlin by Josef Stalin on May 5, 1941. Present at this alleged meeting were top members of his government. In this "secret meeting", Irving claims that Stalin outlined his plans to attack Hitler.

This episode was tailor-made by Irving to support his thesis that Hitler did not have any reason to attack Stalin in 1941. Unfortunately, this "secret" speech (and another one on the following evening) was not secret and copies of it survive in the Russian archives.

In them, Stalin speaks of the need for not upsetting Hitler and provoking a military attack. There is no mention whatsoever of any Soviet attacks on Germany in these speeches but of course at this is at odds with Irving's ideas, he manages to create a scenario more to his liking.

Irving, who once had access to Russian archives, must doubtlessly have seen these files which are certainly not secret nor permitted to be viewed by only a select few, among whom Irving, by inference, includes himself.

If he ever had such a positive relationship with the Russian archives, it was quickly terminated when the Soviet archive authorities discovered that Irving had been systematically pilfering their papers and selling them to document collectors. The brilliant historian was promptly jailed and, looking like an unshaven and sockless refugee from Bosnia, was physically expelled from the country accompanied, once he had cleared the border, by his loud cries of Jewish persecution for his heroic activities in search of the Real Truth as he likes to term his flights of fancy.

This light-fingered, and very profitable, (an original Hitler signature is worth over a thousand dollars on the autograph market) lifting has not been limited to the contents of the Moscow archives but extends to the German Bundesarchiv, the American National Archives and several other prominent repositories of Third Reich documents.

Also in his "Hitler's War", Irving states on page xxiii that postwar faked Mussolini diaries were "perpetuated by two Italian nuns." If Irving had taken the trouble to research the subject, he would have found that the forgeries, which fooled all of the recognized experts, had been prepared by an Italian woman named Amalia Panvini and her eighty-four-year old mother.

At the time Irving made this statement, the actual and accurate information on these faked diaries was certainly well-known, especially in England and reference to it can be found in the highly entertaining book by Robert Harris entitled "Selling Hitler" which appeared in 1986. The section on the Panvini fraud can be found on pages 289-290.

This work also contains a number of uncomplimentary commentaries on Irving's behavior in the Hitler diary scandal including references to a £26,000 overdraft on Irving's bank account.

It is an enormous series of errors of omission and commission that render Irving's literary excursions into historical fiction as little more than propaganda pamphlets for the promulgation of the godhead of Adolf Hitler and which have no place in the history section of any library.

A compilation of these errata would fill, at the very least, a small book and are viewed as absolutely appalling by any serious historical researcher, regardless of whatever point of view they espouse.

Most of this exposed errata is of such a nature as to very clearly establish that David Irving is either an ideological fabricator of the worst kind or a grossly incompetent and throughly careless researcher.

His desperate craving to be noticed, to be the cynosure of all eyes, once led him to initially attack the authenticity of the Stasi-created "Hitler Diaries" that caused so much amusing havoc in the publishing world in 1983, and then, seeing that the tide appeared to be running in the favor of their authenticity, Irving at once publicly reversed himself and claimed that the terrible fakes were indeed authentic.

According to a British writer, Irving was the first to call the documents fake and the last to authenticate them.

By doing this, Irving certainly obtained the print media attention that he so frantically craves, but in the long view, he forever destroyed the tattered remnants of his professional reputation.

Irving, who once enjoyed considerable fame and recognition in ideological circles, has certainly given validity to the statement by Charles DeGaulle that old age is shipwreck. His extramarital adventures cost him his wife and daughters and his increasingly polarized and erratic political views resulted in his being banned from Germany, Canada, Australia, Italy, Russia and New Zealand.

There is a strong movement in train to have him permanently banned from entry into the long-suffering United States. This would leave only France and England for Irving to sport in.

The French, it should be noted, revere the actor Jerry Lewis as a brilliant performer and the British are simply stuck with him.

Being banned from a county in no way discourages Irving. In August of 1998, Irving ostensibly came to America to address what he claimed was a "crowd" of thousands at a meeting in Buffalo, New York. He did indeed travel to Buffalo but instead of addressing the multitude from the balcony of the city hall in emulation of the Führer, he was quietly driven into Canada via Windsor, and did address a meeting of his Canadian minions in Montreal where he regaled the house with his daring exploits in swimming across a river in the dead of night and escaping Canadian border guards and their snarling dogs.

A head count of the Montreal meeting disclosed that the total number of attendees was one hundred and five, three less than his biggest house in Los Angeles, earlier in the year. At the Los Angeles meeting, held in a motel meeting hall by the Institute for Historical Review, Irving sold fifteen copies of his book on Goebbels.

On this particular trip, as on many others, he was accompanied by a very young woman who was passed off as a "research assistant." His antics with her were such that his California host had to remove them from his home and put them up at a local hotel where the bill for three days of frolic amounted to over three thousand dollars.

But still Irving made his presence known to the masses, diminished though their numbers might be.

Where once he addressed large crowds of screaming young former East Germans, his later meetings with his admirers are confined to small rooms with ten or fifteen strange, pale people of the sort who believe in flying saucers and Martin Bormann's survival as a fruit stand operator in Brazil.

When Irving's book on Goebbels was finally rejected by the mainline American publishing company of St. Martin's Press as being absolutely impossible, Irving lost his last pretense to being a legitimate historical writer and has been reduced to publishing his own books.

However, as long as vanity presses exist, Irving will always be able to pay someone to print his increasingly disoriented books.

These he has dragged around the United States in a rented car, offering them like so many wilted cabbages to the attendees of Nazi relic shows. Even this avenue has finally been closed to Irving who was unceremoniously forbidden entrance to the prestigious American Military Extravaganza show held on a yearly basis in Pennsylvania and he is now totally dependent on occasional sales to those of his devoted followers who are still at liberty or above room temperature.

In England, a photograph was published in a British newspaper in 1984 that showed Irving, in shabby clothes, selling his book, "The Destruction of Dresden" on the sidewalk in front of his apartment house on Duke Street, a practice that eventually resulted in his being ordered by the police to cease and desist because of a flood of complaints by his neighbors.

At the same time he was selling his books like clip-on ties to passersby, Irving was also accused by the same police report of making "loud and incoherent" speeches about his persecutions by "powerful Jewish groups."

Stories of persecutions including mythic break-ins at his flat and public assaults are part and parcel of Irving's standard speech to his loyalists.

His small band of fanatical followers continue to fan the dead ashes of his career with worshipful, if badly scrawled, letters, homemade fruitcakes and small checks.

If it were not for this support, Irving and Benté, his very young German paramour, would have to go onto public assistance. Once Irving drove a Rolls Royce but now rides a bicycle or takes public transportation. He lives in an old apartment that has one small room set aside as "David Irving's War Room" and the walls of the entire establishment are covered with hundreds of pictures of David Irving in various mock-heroic poses as well as a number of sketches by the late, former Nazi Minister of Armaments, Albert Speer. This interesting individual spent his own declining years making small ink sketches and passing them off, for considerable sums of money, to true believers and the gullible as "original Hitler artworks."

It seems ironic that Irving, whose career has been based on self-delusion, prevarication and a frenzied campaign of Hitler-worship, would, in the end, have his apartment walls covered in sacred Hitlerian relics that are as fake as his own documentary references.

As Irving's star sinks quickly, and mercifully, from the sight of mortal men, the failed writer had loudly blamed a great catalog of mythic enemies for his eclipse and obliteration.

He sets these earth-shattering truths forth in a newsletter for his true believers called "David Irving's Action Report" which reads like the product of a remedial middle-school class in beginning journalism and contains such weighty statements as ..."Today a man gave me a ride in a big car"...and shows a picture of a small child looking at plant life over the caption..."Jessica sees the big leaf."

In the years following his decline and fall, Irving has increasingly sought more publicity by filing legal actions against as many people as he can identify as having criticized his inaccuracy, ideological nonsense and general literary buffoonery.

His lawsuits, which he files in his own name, being unable to afford an attorney, are universally thrown out by the courts but only after he has put his victims through great expense and travail.

On July 22, 1994, the "Guardian" published a story about Irving receiving public aid to permit him to file suit against "The Sunday Times." Public aid, in this case, was granted because Irving proved to be significantly below the poverty level.

Libel laws in England are very severe and Irving has delusional hopes that his victims will pay him off and avoid the expenses of lawsuits. To date, no one has

accommodated him and he has seen case after case thrown out of court by indignant judges as having no merit whatsoever.

There is a provision in British law called barratry which prohibits the continuous filing of frivolous lawsuits and the courts in England have repeatedly threatened Irving with this but to no avail.

He has been sued for copyright violations and converting monies given to him by foolish, small publishing houses for books that he has not and never will, or can, write for them.

An article in the "Independent" of February 22, 1994 discussed Irving's being thrown in jail in England because of a lawsuit against him for his refusal to return a £50,000 advance from a gullible German publisher.

As Irving has no money, these lawsuits only serve to goad him into greater frenzies of manic activity

No one seems to be successful in halting his increasingly disordered behavior and the catalog of his baseless charges, complaints, lawsuits and slanders continues unabated.

One of his most insistent, and meglomaniacal, charges is that criticism of him and his scribblings has made him fearful of assassination!

Famous, public figures like presidents and popes are assassinated but the killing of David Irving would be far more in the way of euthanasia than assassination.

Instead of being ashamed of his lunatic antics, Irving boasts of them on what he calls his "Inner Circle" website. This site, which he calls "a confidential location which I have created for the inner circle of my supporters at [http://www.fpp.co.uk/ Inner/ Circle.html](http://www.fpp.co.uk/InnerCircle.html)" is a bizarre arena that is a compendium of whining pleas for money, psychotic and badly written attacks on everyone whom Irving sees as his enemies and delusional pages about his importance in the world order.

In addition to his Internet nuisances, Irving produced a pamphlet that was a color copy of a cover from the German "Stern" magazine, an institution that loathes him. This counterfeit printing, which Irving takes very seriously, is filled with pompous pictures of himself and is accompanied by a thoroughly faked cover story about his greatness, coupled with a fictitious abject apology from the editorial staff of the German magazine for having defamed him.

Anyone who doubts that David Irving is a sane man need only visit his "confidential location" to realize that Irving entertains a strong possibility of eventually ending up in a padded room, hopefully sooner rather than later, eating cold beans from a tin tray while someone with a monocle watches him through a peephole in the door.

Instead of a diet of bubble-and-squeak, an appalling cockney dish of fried cabbage and potatoes that Irving regularly indulges in, he will end up gobbling fistfuls of Thorazine and spending his golden years, tightly wrapped in a sheet and immersed in a tub of cold water.

Here he will be able to endlessly chant paragraphs from "Mein Kampf" for the edification of his West Indian ward attendants and throughly soil the tub water.

Irving, in his "David Irving Fighting Fund" newsletter, written and mailed from a cut-rate motel in Key West, Florida, his "American Battle Headquarters", produces an endless series of whining requests for funds from the true believers, the "Inner Circle."

Accompanying these tearful entreaties is a colored picture of a aging Irving clutching a very small child. This is presumably his out-of-wedlock daughter but if not, it makes him appear as an aged poster boy for pedophiles.

Irving moans that if he does not pay his rising legal bills, bills incurred solely because of the dismissals by various British courts of his endless and meritless lawsuits, he will be "driven from the battlefield of Real History forever."

This is a consummation devoutly to be wished by anyone with a respect for written history and these feelings include historians of all beliefs and persuasions.

Even those who espouse a right-of-center philosophy find him to be an acute embarrassment and spend a good deal of their time in distancing themselves from his shrill, hysteric mouthings.

In point of fact, if Irving wishes to view the enemy who has destroyed him he need only look in the bathroom mirror while shaving.

The British have a long record of cherishing eccentrics and Irving is precisely the kind that ends up giving wild and emotional public speeches about his persecution by mysterious Jewish groups, speeches that would be filled with dramatic, Hitlerian gestures and what he considers biting sarcasm and wit.

These speeches are not to crowds of cheering, teen-aged neo-Nazis but to an audience composed of one small child engaged in picking his nose and a pensioner asleep on the same bench at London's famed Hyde Park corner. Here he can join legions of other eccentrics who daily fulminate on Global Warming, Scientology and Martians who send radio messages to the select via their dental fillings.

Instead of the cheers of hundreds, the only noises that now greet Irving's rants are the hootings of passing police vehicles and the rude, but not entirely unfitting, sounds emitted by a flatulent dog off to one side and hopefully, downwind.

Should Irving, by some chance, escape permanent confinement in an asylum, and as his Inner Circle of admirers diminishes due to death or confinement, Irving will quite predictably end his career talking to himself in public transportation and writing long, rambling screeds that the local newspapers will soon cease to publish.

Finally, he will burst a blood vessel when he tries to find a rare, unautographed copy of one of his earlier books in a second hand book stall and hears a clerk say, "David Who?"