

## News

# Europe Seen Cracking Down on Holocaust Revisionists

By MARC PERELMAN

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In a flurry of activity on both sides of the Atlantic, several so-called revisionists have been arrested on Holocaust denial charges in recent weeks.

Three revisionists — Germar Rudolph, Ernst Zundel and Siegfried Verbeke — have been extradited to Germany. But the most visible case involves far-right British historian David Irving, who was arrested November 11 in Vienna, Austria, on 16-year-old charges that he publicly denied aspects of the Holocaust — a crime in Austria.

Jewish communal leaders, including Shimon Samuels, international relations director of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, praised the moves. Samuels said that they were part of an overall trend in Europe toward greater attempts to atone for the Holocaust.

"There is a drive toward transparency that is very healthy in Europe," he said. "Unlike in America, there is not much difference in Europe between hate speech and hate crime. And there seems to be a new willingness to use those laws when it comes to Holocaust denial."

Holocaust revisionists, meanwhile, were slamming the crackdown efforts, saying they were part of a Jewish conspiracy to prevent open debate.

"As the new owner of Germar Rudolf's publishing company, I wish to express my outrage that the Holocaust, unlike any other historical event, is not subject to critical revisionist investigation," said Michael Santomauro, who runs a Web site dedicated to Holocaust denial and to attacks against Jewish communal leaders and organizations. "Furthermore I deplore the fact that many so-called democratic states have laws that criminalize public doubting of the Holocaust. It is my position that the veracity of Holocaust assertions should be determined in the marketplace of scholarly discourse and not in our legislature's bodies and courthouses."

The charges against Irving, filed by Austrian prosecutors, were based on two 1989 speeches in which he denied the existence of the gas chambers. If convicted, Irving could face up to 20 years in prison.

Irving is the author of nearly 30 books. One of them, "Hitler's War," challenges the fact that 6 million Jews were murdered in the Holocaust. He once famously insisted that Adolf Hitler knew nothing about the systematic slaughter of the Jews, and he has been quoted as saying there is "not one shred of evidence" that the Nazis carried out their "final solution" on such a scale.

In 2000, Irving lost a libel case he brought against historian Deborah E. Lipstadt for calling him a Holocaust denier. The British court ruled that Irving was antisemitic and racist and that he misrepresented historical information.

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In addition to Irving's arrest, Rudolph, 41, was sent from Chicago this month to his native Germany, where he was wanted on a 1995 conviction of inciting racial hatred for disputing the deaths of thousands of Jews held captive at a concentration camp. Rudolph was sentenced to 14 months in prison for publishing a report disputing the deaths of thousands of Jews in the gas chambers at Auschwitz, according to a statement by the Department of Homeland Security. Rudolph, a former chemist, claimed in his report that since he had failed to find traces of Zyklon B on the bricks of gas chambers, mass gassings of Jews could not have occurred at Auschwitz.

After his conviction, he fled Germany and lived in Spain, Great Britain, Mexico and the United States, according to the DHS press release. He was arrested in Chicago October 19 after a background check by immigration officials, and deported November 14 to Germany.

Earlier this year, Canada deported Ernst Zundel, 66, to Germany, where a state court is hearing charges of incitement, libel and disparaging the dead. He faces a maximum sentence of five years in jail if convicted. Also, in October a Dutch court agreed to extradite Siegfried Verbeke — a co-founder of the Belgian extreme-right Vlaams Blok party, now called Vlaams Belang — to Germany, where he faces charges of racism and xenophobia and publicly doubting the Holocaust. He is looking at 14 months in prison.

Verbeke was convicted on charges of Holocaust denial and racism in Belgium in 2003 and sentenced to a one-year jail term. However, Belgian authorities refused to extradite him to Germany. After his arrest in Amsterdam this past August, he faced similar charges in the Netherlands for having questioned the veracity of Anne Frank's diary. But the proceedings were suspended and Verbeke was sent to Germany in early October.

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