A Contextual View of Holocaust and Genocide Denial

Holocaust and genocide denial are phenomena whose consequences reach far beyond the expression of individual opinions. The views of David Irving, Nick Griffin or Bishop Richard Williamson tend to reach audiences that benefit from denialist arguments for specific political purposes, and the consequences of denialism are not confined to the immediate discourse.

But denialism also carries significance for more than one academic discipline. Historians are directly affected, as deniers frequently claim to carry out "revisionist" historical research against "orthodox" interpretations and thereby pose the question whether their conclusions merit or indeed require a reaction in serious academic debate. To lawyers, denialism raises questions about the limits of freedom of speech – particularly when domestic laws are taken into account which prohibits certain forms of denialism. To political scientists, sociologists or psychologists the motives of deniers and the repercussions of their statements are of particular importance. There is therefore need for a contextual perspective of holocaust denial which fosters a better understanding of the perspectives of these disciplines.

The School of Historical Studies (Stanley Burton Centre for Holocaust Studies) and the School of Law at Leicester University have established an interdisciplinary initiative to investigate denialism, but also other aspects relating to the Holocaust and to genocide. This conference is intended to be an initial meeting and appraisal of this field of research, but it will also facilitate the creation of a network of scholars and expert commentators who are interested in this field.

The Conference will discuss a wide range of aspects regarding Holocaust denial – from early developments of Holocaust denial to recent laws and trials in Europe. Furthermore, the conference will look into a number of case studies regarding the denial of other genocides and what options societies have to deal with genocide denial.