

A “pro-Israel” Propaganda Film from Germany

Von Dr. phil. Clemens Heni, 28. Juni 2017

[Times of Israel \(Blogs\)](#)

A new and very controversial film in Germany indicates the very low level of the pro-Israel community in Germany. The film “Chosen and Excluded – Hatred of the Jews in Europe today” by filmmakers Joachim Schröder and Sophie Hafner was finally screened on Wednesday, June 21, 2017, in the first German channel ARD after the yellow press Bild had put the film illegally online a few days before. How can we analyze that?

One can whitewash the German guilt for the Shoah by blaming others. For example by saying that the Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin al-Hussaini, inspired Hitler to kill all the Jews. That is of course a lie and a grotesque distortion of German antisemitism and the Shoah. Nevertheless, some people say so. Germans are eager to get rid of their crimes, to distort history. The boulevard daily *Bild* from Germany, Europe’s biggest daily newspaper, was instrumental in promoting the trope of a “bomb Holocaust” by pre-publishing chapters of a book by historian Jörg Friedrich, who promotes that trope (his book is entitled “The Fire”).

Others compare abortion to the Holocaust, animal rights activists like PETA or book authors make fun of Holocaust victims and created terms such as “For the animals it is like Treblinka” or “Holocaust on your plate.” Germans compare the expulsion of Germans from the east after 1945 to the Holocaust. The best know example of German self-victimization is of course the bombing of Dresden. Framing the RAF of England as a Nazi-like institution, Germans portray themselves

as victims of the Allies in World War II. Among pseudo-intellectuals, post-colonial theory is one of the most fashionable forms of Holocaust distortion, including the equation of racism and the Shoah or dangerous and Holocaust distorting analogies ("From Windhuk to Auschwitz").

Critical Theory, Theodor Adorno and his co-worker Peter Schönbach, therefore created the term "secondary antisemitism" around the year 1960. Secondary antisemitism means antisemitism after Auschwitz, insofar as it is related to distort history. "Traditional" forms of old anti-Judaist and modern antisemitism, like conspiracy myths, blood libels or anti-Mammonist, anticapitalist antisemitism, obviously today have the same argumentation than prior to the Shoah. Both traditional and secondary forms of antisemitism exist in Germany and Europe.

What could be better to achieve the goal (intentionally or unconsciously) of getting rid of the German crimes (as a *German* crime!) if one can blame Muslims and Arabs for the Shoah? Everyone knows that the Mufti indeed was a close ally of Nazi Germany. He was of course not at all initial for the Shoah, though! That is bordering to Holocaust revisionism.

The German-French TV channel ARTE had commissioned the film "Chosen and Excluded – Hatred of the Jews in Europe today" by filmmakers Joachim Schröder and Sophie Hafner, and they asked German TV channel WDR, which is the regional channel of North-Rhine Westphalia or Western Germany and belongs to the first channel ARD, to produce the film. J. Schröder, his company and S. Hafner then made film on behalf of the WDR. Arte rejected the film, after the WDR (or perhaps just a single representative there, Sabine Rollberg, without being checked by other co-workers there) had approved the film.

The film is overwhelming; there is no room to think about one

of the many antisemitic examples. The film uses the tactics and cuts of a propaganda film, but this time for Israel, not against it. One could be happy about a pro-Israel film. However, one should be reluctant to embrace a pro-Israel *propaganda film*, as we will learn soon. Propaganda is propaganda, though, and the least thing Israel or the fight against antisemitism need.

Topics in the film are Abbas and a speech, including antisemitic remarks, he gave at the EU Parliament, a few neo-Nazis (some of them rather portrayed as former leftists), many leftist groups and activists, including the Protestant church, Muslim anti-Jewish activists in France, young people in Gaza – some of them decrying corruption of the Hamas regime –, and a happy Palestinian man who is working in an Israeli manufactory for plastics in the settlement of Ariel in the Westbank (he earns 9000 Schekel, imagine!).

At least three crucial lies and mistakes in the film are obvious to every critical viewer:

1) They say, "Christian culture is the mother of all hatred of the Jews." Ignoring Greek anti-Jewish agitators Apion or Epiphanes, the film just wants to pick the Christians, as one of their main enemy are elderly Christian females who support the Palestinian and/or anti-Zionist cause. Not a word about Christians who dealt a lot with their own antisemitic history. Also, if the authors read Robert Wistrich's "A Lethal Obsession," including its subtitle "Anti-Semitism from Antiquity to the Global Jihad" and his remarks about Greek and other pre- or non-Christian old forms of hatred of the Jews, they would never ever have claimed that Christianity is the mother of all hatred of the Jews. Obviously, they had poor scholarly advice or ignored any advice at all.

2) The film emphasizes that no Palestinian or Arab civilians were killed during the expulsion of Arabs during the War of Independence in 1948/49. Of course, it was essential that

Israel did win that war! However, that may not include the denial of few, but shocking and existing crimes against the Palestinians. Take the massacre at Deir Yassin, April 9, 1948, where some 100-110 Arab civilians have been killed, as best known example. Or take massacres in Lod, Saliha or Abu Shusha. Historian Benny Morris and many others have dealt with that.

This is of course not to say that the "Nakba," a terrible word I would not use, equals the Shoah. Never ever. There was no genocide against the Arabs or Palestinians. That is the correct part of the film, but going so far and to deny that *any civilians were killed* during the expulsions of Arabs – that is a historical lie.

This lie is an essential part of the film, and it is said and emphasized several times by Rafi Eitan, a veteran. By the way, in November 2016, on the occasion of the anniversary of the Nights of Broken Glass on November 9, 1938, he was invited by the right-wing extremist FPÖ party in Austria to talk about Muslim antisemitism ...

3) Then, the film defames Israeli NGO B'tselem, using a statement by journalist Tuvia Tenenbom, based on a story about an antisemitic Palestinian co-worker at that NGO. After B'Tselem took notice of this Holocaust denying statements by one of their Arab co-workers in 2014, they fired him. The film does not even ask B'tselem about their opinion. Is that serious journalistic work?

The worst mistake of the film is perhaps the very fact that they flew to Israel and Gaza in order to learn about *German and European* antisemitism.

To analyze all kinds of antisemitic tropes one does not at all need to fly to the Middle East. Worse, that insinuates for the viewer that the behavior of Jews *might* indeed have an impact on how antisemitic the world is.

They film nice doctors at Hadassah hospital in Jerusalem, who

treat both Arab terrorists and Jewish victims. Why did they film that in a film about antisemitism? It is a strange way of philosemitism and has nothing to do with the analysis of antisemitism.

Hatred of Israel does not stem from this or that action of the Jewish state or from this or that behavior of doctors at Hadassah hospital.

It derives from the rejection of any Jewish presence in the Middle East, a denial of the Zionist dream.

Filmmakers Schröder and Hafner confuse antisemitism and the Arab-Israeli conflict or the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is obviously not only based on antisemitism. Two parties are involved here, and both sides made and make mistakes. Arab rejectionism is not the only problem here, without ignoring the huge threat deriving from UNRWA's policies of a Palestinian right of return and the irrational and unprecedented inflation of the number of Palestinian refugees.

Many mistakes by Israel have to be mentioned, too, including the very fact of the occupation, for over 50 years now. Many Zionists were not happy in 1967, including David Ben-Gurion, about the occupation of land, a part from the existential Golan Heights and perhaps Jerusalem, as Swiss-Israeli author Carlo Strenger recalls in the Swiss *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*. In addition, one might add that some liberal Zionists had not been eager at all to pray in front of old stones (like the Kotel or Western Wall in the old town of Jerusalem), as the film "censored voices" by Israeli filmmaker Mor Lousy, based on original film material from June 1967, has shown in 2016.

That German film, though, is not even trying to understand that German or European antisemitism has nothing to do with the Middle East – if we talk about criticism of the conflict – that is not necessarily antisemitism. Criticism is criticism

and defamation is defamation. To analyze young and not so young Muslims, Arab and Turkish antisemites who praised Hitler during the Gaza War in 2014 one does not need to travel to the Middle East to fight and “understand” that! Praising Hitler, Holocaust affirmation is antisemitic. Comparing Jews and Israel to Nazis is antisemitic, too. It is an inversion of the Shoah, of victim and perpetrator. Period. An obsession to talk about Israel while being silent about all other conflicts for sure is antisemitic as well.

On the other hand: Blaming left-wing criticism of the occupation as antisemitic is simply out of touch with reality. That damages Israel, as the neutral viewer thinks that the occupation is OK (a Palestinian earns some 9000 Schekel in a manufactory there, hey!) and that all Israelis think like this.

Why did Arte and the WDR not show the film as intended and just did so, after the public extremely pressured them? It might have been the missing of all (!) journalist standards in the film. It is for sure not a documentary.

Downplaying of antisemitism might of course also have been among the reasons, if we take a clear antisemitic film about Geert Wilders that was shown on that WDR German channel in March 2017 – it was a BBC production and included an Islamist American activist, Sheikh Khalid Yassin, known for his antisemitic against Jews. In the film, Yassin said that Wilders is a true follower of modern Zionism and its anti-Muslim and anti-Arab ideology. After the screening, the WDR understood that this is clearly antisemitic and cut these parts of the film. But they should have reacted before and should not have aired that film in the first place. Criticism of right-wing extremist agitators like Wilders is important, but why using antisemitism Muslims for that? You cannot fight brown fascism with green (=Islamist) fascism, to be sure.

The film by Schröder and Hafner starts with antisemitic remarks by Mahmoud Abbas at the European Parliament (a statement Abbas took back a few days later). In the film, Nazi agitator Julius Streicher is then shown as a direct precursor of Abbas. Contrary to Abbas, Streicher never stepped back after an antisemitic remark. Streicher was a leading agitator and responsible for the Shoah. To compare such a German mass murderer with Abbas is distorting the Holocaust. To make bad matters worse, Social Democrat leader Martin Schulz is then shown applauding Abbas – the German audience shall learn: left-wingers or at least Social Democrats like Schulz, who runs for German chancellor in September, Arabs and Muslims are the true Nazis of our time or at least the heirs of Nazi ideology and agitation.

According to the Jewish Chronicle in England, the film was supposed to deal with contemporary antisemitism, including anti-Zionist antisemitism, in Norway, Sweden, the UK, Hungary and Greece. The film deals with Germany, France – the Gaza strip and the Westbank. Think about it.

Arte and the WDR ordered a documentary about contemporary European antisemitism. To accuse them of censorship and of downplaying antisemitism is indicating the fanaticism of most parts of the German pro-Israel camp these days. Why should Arte and the WDR pay a lot of money for a film about antisemitism, if they are not interested in that topic at all? They are scared about the rise of antisemitism in Europe today, including hatred of Israel.

The film shows mainly hatred of Israel and hatred of Jews in France. These are important topics, of course. However, they are framed in a rather anti-Muslim and anti-Arab agenda. Left-wing Zionist groups who fight the occupation in the Westbank are defamed.

German historian Michael Wolffsohn, who advised the filmmakers, praises the film. Even his former student,

journalist Sylke Tempel, though, has some criticism about the film, without really criticizing it. Head of the American Jewish Committee in Germany, Deidre Berger, compliments the film as do journalists Alan Posener or Richard Herzinger from the daily Welt. The Central Council of Jews in Germany urged the WDR TV channel to screen the film. Almost the entire German pro-Israel blogosphere is promoting that film.

Rabbi Abraham Cooper from the Simon Wiesenthal Center wrote a piece together with Manfred Gerstenfeld, and they go so far and do not even mention neo-Nazi Breivik, who killed 77 people, young socialists, in 2011 in Norway, in their paragraph about Norway and extremism in Norway in our time. As if Islamism is a much bigger threat in Norway compared to Breivik. Islamism is a huge problem all over Europe, but not to mention one of the most shocking massacres in the history of Norway is remarkable. Would they have ignored the massacre if the massacre was done by a Muslim and not by a white supremacist and neo-Nazi? The SWC wants to screen the film in their Tolerance center in Los Angeles.

Writer and journalist Mirna Funk writes in the weekly *Die Zeit*. She is a critic of antisemitism. However, she criticized the film as a kind of "propaganda." The same holds for Tel Aviv based author Sarah Stricker, writing for rather right-wing monthly *Cicero*. Stricker wrote a diary for a leading German daily, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, in 2014 during the Gaza War. She knows what jihad sounds like.

The day, the *Bild* daily put the film on antisemitism online, Stricker received four text messages on her cell phone from friends who urged her to see the film, as she writes in her article. She prepared herself with a pen and some paper to take notes during the film. Later she wanted to inform other friends or family to see the film. Having seen 10 minutes of the film she realized, "that I would not send the link to the film to anybody."

The film is too bad. It is poorly made. She frames her article "gift of doubts." Doubts about the very seriousness of threats deriving of contemporary antisemitism may indeed come to the minds of critical viewers of the film. It is indoctrinating. Viewers, at least those who are not anti-Zionist or antisemitic, may have doubts about the seriousness of the problem.

Antisemitism, including anti-Zionist antisemitism, is a huge problem. It is a German and European problem, too. Arte and WDR TV channels wanted a film about European antisemitism (in specific countries, not including France or Germany, as we already had many reports and documentaries about these two countries when it comes to antisemitism, including jihad). The film failed to do that.

Finally, the sharpest critique of the film comes from former Israeli ambassador to Germany, Shimon Stein, and his co-author, historian Moshe Zimmermann, who published an article on June 26 online with the weekly *Die Zeit*. They see a tendency to de-Germanize and Arabize or Islamize, if one can say so, the Holocaust. They take Bibi Netanyahu's above quoted example of the Mufti who supposedly inspired Hitler to organize the Holocaust, as worst example. They are missing a serious analysis of German antisemitism in the film.

Stein has been one of the most prominent speakers at pro-Israel events in Germany in the last years. Many anti-Zionists detest him. That become obvious, for example, in 2014 during the Gaza War. Now, the reactions of the German pro-Israel camp will be silence at best, facing his sharp criticism of the most important public event the German pro-Israel camp has ever seen. THEIR film was finally aired on the first channel, imagine! And now, a former ambassador and well-known pro-Israel author and speaker, criticizes that very film in a truly harsh way.

As already mentioned, Germany has enough examples of

contemporary antisemitism to be dealt with. From the defamation of the Brit Milah by the mainstream, the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung and many others, including substantial parts of the non-Jewish pro-Israel camp in Germany in summer 2012 after a shocking court ruling in Cologne, to the equation of red and brown, communism and National Socialism via the Prague Declaration (signed, for example, by former German president Joachim Gauck), to old-style antisemitism and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion by elected politicians of the right-wing extremist Alternative for Germany (AfD), and their agitator Wolfgang Gedeon. Muslim, Arab, Palestinian and Left-wing antisemitism and the rejection of the very idea of a Jewish state is also a topic, of course, but the film just deals with a tiny group (SAV, "Socialist Alternative Move On") and not with mainstream scholarship that honored Judith Butler in 2012 with the Adorno Prize, for example. Even the Jewish Museum Berlin invited and embraced Butler.

Then, instead of travelling to the Middle East, the filmmakers could have stayed in Berlin. There is the Barenboim-Said Academy in the heart of the German capital, vis-à-vis of the Foreign Ministry. Said was an outspoken enemy of the Jewish state and not just a critique of one or several policies of Israel. He fought the entire Zionist project. To name a leading institution in the heart of the German capital after an antisemite is shocking. Cultural State Secretary of the German government, Monika Grütters, who is also head of the Berlin branch of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), the party of Chancellor Merkel, pays millions for the Barenboim-Said Academy every year, not including the many millions for the establishment of the building. In Haaretz, Barenboim now promotes a distortion of the Shoah by framing Palestinians as victims of Germans (!), because in his view Israel was established because of the Holocaust. That is of course not true. Israel was created despite of the Shoah. The Zionist movement has nothing at all to do with the Second World War and the Holocaust. Historian Yehuda Bauer most recently

attacked Barenboim for his Holocaust distorting trope. In Germany, Barenboim will succeed with his ideology, I am sure.

Jokes and resentment about Jews are common among the elites in Germany, too. There is truly no shortcoming here. A film about European antisemitism could – 90 minutes – could have dealt with at least some of these forms in a serious, scholarly way, as it should have been a documentary. Instead, the filmmakers filmed themselves in ridiculous scenes in the aircraft, the car or at the Gaza border. Their narcissism might be a minor problem, but it distorts the entire project. From the very first minute, it becomes clear that this film is not intended to analyze contemporary forms of antisemitism, but to defame specific groups of people, namely Arabs, Muslims, Christians – and the left.

Shimon Stein and Moshe Zimmermann say that this film is not at all helpful to analyze and fight antisemitism in Germany today. However, I am sure, those activists in the German pro-Israel camp will find a way to defame a former Israeli ambassador to Germany as antisemitic or anti-Israel.

The fanaticism of that political scene now shows its ugly face. They are not at all interested in listening to those Israeli, Zionist voices who believe that Netanyahu and his extreme right-wing government brings Israel in huge trouble. The recent and never seen before clash between Bibi, the Israeli government and the Jewish Agency and Natan Sharansky over the Kotel is just the latest example for that. The German pro-Israel camp rejects to criticize Israel, they are not interested in Zionism at all. They are happy to defame the left, Muslims, Arabs and Christians alike. They rewrite the history of 1948, they embrace the occupation and they accuse institutions like Arte or the WDR TV channels of antisemitism – while being paid by these channels for a film on antisemitism!

The Film “Chosen and Excluded – Hatred of the Jews in Europe

today” by Joachim Schröder and Sophie Hafner is not at all helpful to analyze and fight contemporary European antisemitism. It is a pro-Israel propaganda film, it defames left-wing Zionism, spreads lies about the 1948 war, embraces the occupation and compares Nazi agitators to Palestinian politicians, how bad and antisemitic they ever are.

Fighting Islamist and Muslim antisemitism looks different. A propaganda film does harm the analysis and fight of antisemitism. The reaction of the pro-Israel camp in Germany to the film indicates their fanaticism and unwillingness to deal in a serious manner with all forms of contemporary European and German antisemitism.

©ClemensHenri