

Germany alone started WW II – Why is TOI running riot against Yad Vashem?

Dr. Clemens Heni, The Times of Israel (Blogs) | Feb 10, 2020, 6:34 PM

In an article for the Times of Israel (TOI), journalist Sam Sokol, with the help of JTA and TOI staff, chastises Holocaust memorial museum Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, for supposedly inaccurate or even “revisionist” videos, screened at the 5th Holocaust Forum at Yad Vashem on January 23, 2020, commemorating the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. Sokol’s article “Scholars urge transparency to restore Yad Vashem credibility after Putin fiasco” raises questions about the quality of TOI’s journalism as well as about the political culture of Holocaust remembrance in Israel and among Jews.

I am not talking about the speeches or remarks at the event (including troubling facts or completely false numbers of Jewish victims in the Soviet Union by Putin in his speech) in question on January 23, 2020, at the 5th World Holocaust Forum. I am only analyzing the major video of that day (7:45 minutes), which is now attacked by the Times of Israel and Sam Sokol and many others, quoted in Sokol’s piece.

We already know about the attempts of gentiles to distort the Shoah. It started shortly after 1945, when Germans compared Auschwitz to the bombing of Dresden. Then, historian Ernst Nolte wrote in the 1970s that Stalin was first, not Hitler and the Germans. This Red equals Brown has become a major ideology of the European Union in the last few decades.

In 1997, French anti-communist (former Maoist) Stéphane

Courtois edited the “Black Book of Communism,” claiming that communism killed many more people than Nazism and the Germans: Communism was worse than the Shoah – that is the antisemitic ideology of that kind of people. Those people deny the unprecedented character of Auschwitz, Sobibor and Treblinka, where for the very first time in world history, an entire people was chosen to be eliminated: Germans wanted to eradicate Jews and Judaism from the earth. They almost succeeded and killed six million Jews in the Holocaust. Post-colonialism, for those interested in the field, follows an equally troubling denial of the unprecedented character of the Shoah, by the way.

In 2008, the Prague Declaration, signed by Vaclav Havel and Joachim Gauck, along with Czech, Lithuanian and other politicians and activists, urges the EU to rewrite all textbooks and to warn everyone about the evils of both Nazism and Communism. That downplaying of National Socialism is common among many in Europe and the US.

Professor Dovid Katz dealt extensively with the dangerous “double Genocide ideology” of the Prague Declaration, Baltic politics and European activists alike.

It is to some extent news, however, that Jews and Israelis join the chorus of downplaying the role of Nazi Germany when it comes to the Second World War. Sokol claims that the Soviet Union holds a co-responsibility for the outbreak of WWII because of the Hitler-Stalin-Pact from August 23, 1939. That is a lie, though – as Germany wanted to invade and destroy Poland and the Soviet Union and other states in the East anyway. Realpolitik did not change Hitler’s and Germany’s intention to invade Eastern Europe and to kill European Jews, who were seen behind both Western capitalism and Eastern communism.

While it is unclear how many and which videos he talks about, the main video of that event is linked in the article. It is a

7:45 minute video about the development of German antisemitism and the rise of Nazi Germany to power. The video depicts some famous Jews like Einstein, Freud and Walter Benjamin to emphasize the role Jews played in European culture prior to World War II.

It shows how antisemitism spread in Nazi Germany, from boycotts (1933) and harassment to racial laws, the nights of pogroms (Nov. 9, 1938) to deportation, ghettos, starving, torture, murder and extermination. It then shows Sir Winston Churchill who spoke about the importance to stand "together" against Germany.

Then, the video deals with the fact that only an allied pact of the West and East, the US, Great Britain and the Soviet Union was able to fight, stop and finally defeat National Socialism. Correctly, the video says that the Red Army was the first one to fight back against the Germans.

From the time of the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941 through to the first landings at Normandy in June 1944, millions of Soviet troops and citizens perished in the battle to push the Nazi armies back. D-Day, June 6, 1944, is correctly shown as the start of the major Western front against the Germans, alongside the Eastern front and the Soviet Union that had been fighting effectively from later 1941 onward.

On July 24, 1944, the Red Army liberated the extermination camp of Majdanek, without realizing, before their entry, the unspeakable catastrophe of the Holocaust that transpired there. Then, the Holocaust of Hungarian Jews in some two months in 1944 is reported, with 450.000 Jews being exterminated. Tens of thousands of Jews would then die in the death marches (from the camps westward to Germany).

The video clearly shows the Allies working together in the liberation of Europe. The Red Army liberated Auschwitz-

Birkenau, the US Army Buchenwald and Dachau. British troops liberated Bergen-Belsen. The fall of Berlin (to the Soviet and American armies) and the liberation of Theresienstadt ended the war against Nazi Germany.

I had seen that video – which is linked in the TOI article by Sam Sokol –when it was screened in Jerusalem via the Yad Vashem livestream. I have watched it again now: What is the problem with that accurate video? As in any concise synopsis, many things are of necessity left out. But, it rightly explains how the *Allies*, including, and most importantly in the actual history as it unfolded, the Red Army, liberated Europe from Nazi Germany and indeed, how Auschwitz was liberated on January 27, 1945.

Obviously Holocaust distorting people with a political agenda to “equalize” Nazi and Soviet crimes as per the far right’s campaign led by East European governments, now notice that the Hitler-Stalin pact of August 23, 1939, is missing. Well, for that matter, so are the capitulations of Chamberlain at Munich and all the others. It has nothing to do with January 27, 1945.

Some might see Yad Vashem as nothing but a loudspeaker of Bibi Netanyahu, and I share skepticism about his policies, no doubt about this. However, this is a huge fight about how to commemorate the outbreak of WWII.

If Sokol and his allies succeed in saying that it HAS TO BE MENTIONED that there was the Hitler-Stalin pact when it comes to Auschwitz – antisemitism has succeeded in bringing even Jewish and Israeli scholars and activists in line with right-wing extremist revisionism.

Why? Because that is an antisemitic and far-right revisionist narrative, modified in fine Western style from its far-right East European originators by historian Timothy Snyder, former German President Joachim Gauck and right-wing extremist

historians such as Jorg Baberowski of Germany.

The same people say that fact that Poland was occupied by the Soviets is missing!

Yes, after war's end, completely true. But what has that got to do with a film about defeating Nazi Germany and liberating Auschwitz?

To focus on crimes by Stalin not as a separate issue, but mixed up with the Holocaust, is wrong and historically misleading. It is precisely what German antisemites since Ernst Nolte tried to pursue: both sides are evil, Nazis and Communists, everything is the same, one big mishmash.

Stalin committed many horrendous crimes. These crimes, though, have literally no place in a video dedicated to the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau. The video does not focus on the failure of the US or Great Britain. – It could have mentioned the widespread antisemitism in America and Britain, the closure of the US border as well as Palestine by the British.

However, the aggressive tone of Sam Sokol and many historians he quotes – from Deborah Lipstadt to Dan Michman and even Efraim Zuroff – speaks volume about the intention to follow the revisionist narrative: Red equals Brown. Sokol goes so far and writes:

The videos presented at the ceremony – which was attended by dozens of world leaders, among them Russian President Vladimir Putin – focused almost exclusively on the Soviet Union's role in defeating the Nazis, while downplaying the role of America, Britain, and other countries. They also failed to mention Joseph Stalin's deal with Adolf Hitler in the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact that preceded the war, Russia's occupation of parts of Poland, and other facts uncomfortable for Moscow."

As shown, that is simply incorrect – that video does indeed emphasize the role of the allies! Watch it and you will see.

If Jews now start using anti-Jewish historical revisionism such as that of Ernst Nolte, claiming that Stalin was first or at least as evil as Hitler – then Yad Vashem should stand strongly and clearly against the revisionists.

This is not about belittling the evil intentions of the Stalin-Hitler pact. It is about the misrepresentation by that pact by those in the far right East European antisemitic camp, and their followers in the West, to elevate it to a Holocaust-grade event as part of the effort to downgrade the Holocaust. Many Jews are alive today in Eastern Europe and beyond because from Sept 1, 1939 onward, their forebears escaped from the Nazi to the Soviet held sectors.

It is time for the West, Israel and Yad Vashem to understand which modes of discourse signal the very revisionism that is anathema to all that Yad Vashem stands for.

Finally, let me teach you a lesson about fascism in the 21st century: a few days ago, February 5, 2020, the fascist Björn Höcke and the right-wing extremist Alternative for Germany (AfD) voted in favor of the candidate for the head of the State of Thuringia (some 2 million inhabitants) from the conservative-libertarian FDP, a no-name called Kemmerich. Mr. Kemmerich even accepted the vote after it was clear that he did only win because of the votes by the fascists. Shake-hands with wannabe-Goebbels Björn Höcke followed. Shockwaves through the democratic parts of Germany. That was the first time that a Nazi like party voted for a Prime Minister of a German state since 1945 and their vote was crucial. A few days later, the FDP politician had to resign, due to political pressure from the ruling Christian Democratic Party and the FDP, while both parties had supported Kemmerich just a few hours before!

The main reason for the Conservatives and the libertarian-

conservatives to vote alongside with the fascists of the AfD was to avoid the left-wing Prime Minister of Thuringia, Bodo Ramelow from the Party of the Left, who is rather a Social Democrat. The fascists and conservatives frame him as “communist” or “socialist” and preferred fascism over communism or socialism.

Those Israeli journalists or Jewish-American and other historians who claim that the Soviet Union allegedly played a pivotal or any role in the outbreak of World War II follow the very same kind of what I call “existential anti-communism.”

Those who want so speak about the crimes of communism when asked about the liberation of Auschwitz, distort the worst crime in history and follow antisemitic revisionism.

The video in question by Yad Vashem is a video dedicated to teach a big audience about the liberation of Auschwitz and that video is correct in not at all focusing on Soviet policies in other aspects, it does equally not focus on the failure of the US and Great Britain to stop Hitler and the Germans long before September 1, 1939.

Sam Sokol seems to be following the very European antisemitic trope of equating Red and Brown and I am wondering why and if historians such as Deborah Lipstadt (““I am absolutely heartbroken that Yad Vashem, which has such a stellar reputation and stayed above the political fray, should have become part of this politicization of history,” she lamented), Dan Michman (“Unfortunately, the short films that accompanied the event, and especially the film that was meant briefly to present the key points of World War II and the Holocaust, included a number of inaccuracies that resulted in a partial and unbalanced presentation of the historical facts”), or Efraim Zuroff (“Yad Vashem has never engaged in Holocaust distortion; exactly the opposite,” commented Efraim Zuroff, a Nazi-hunter who runs the Simon Wiesenthal Center’s Jerusalem office, surmising that the “material was not reviewed by the

leading historians of Yad Vashem" before being presented publicly") play that game, as he quotes them accordingly.

It is not by accident that historian Dina Porat did not say anything in public so far, which is sad, because she could perhaps tell us a different story about that very video by Yad Vashem.

Nazi Germany was all alone responsible for the outbreak of World War II.

Germans wanted the war, they wanted to invade Poland, the Soviet Union and all of Europe. They wanted to eradicate Jews and Judaism from the earth.

To even mention Soviet or other *realpolitik* when it comes to the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau and to insinuate September 1, 1939 was not Germany's responsibility alone, promotes an old right-wing extremist lie.

Everybody who rejects the historical truth of the *German and only German guilt* of starting World War II is part of the problem.

Dovid Katz puts it splendidly:

While the Soviets' 1939 invasion of eastern Poland was one of thousands of disgraceful and contemptible invasions in world history, it was not "the same" as Hitler's 1939 invasion of western/central Poland. In the German sector, Hitler's forces unleashed the Holocaust, the worst genocide in the history of humankind. In the Soviet sector, all of the various peoples were granted full equality to live equally under (lousy, autocratic, freedom-stifling, wealth-stealing) Soviet law. Any Jew that could flee to the Soviet sector was quick to do so. Many thousands of Jews today exist on the planet precisely because their parents, grandparents and others fled to the Soviet sector.

