

Berlin Pro-Israel Politician on SWC list of “antisemitic slurs”?

Von Dr. phil. Clemens Heni, 5. September 2017

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Since when is activity to increase trade, business and political relations with Israel part of the antisemitic BDS movement?

This question come to one’s mind if we consider a recent article by Jerusalem Post’s Benjamin Weinthal, who reported that the Los Angeles based Simon Wiesenthal Center (SWC) is considering putting Michael Müller, mayor of Berlin, the capital of Germany, on their 2017 list of the “Top Ten antisemitic slurs”, or Top Ten “worst cases of anti-Israel and antisemitic activity in 2017,” which will be made official in December.

In 2015, Müller and his delegation travelled to Tel Aviv to increase trade relations with the Jewish state. In 2016, when he was re-elected as head of the Berlin chapter of the Social Democratic Party (SPD), the party convention passed a resolution condemning the “antisemitic BDS movement” and declaring “we condemn anti-Zionist antisemitism”, and “we stand in solidarity with Israel.”

In May 2017, Müller was “patron”, alongside with the then Israeli ambassador to Germany, Yakov Hadas Handelsman, of the “Israel Day,” organized by the German-Israel Friendship Society (Deutsch-Israelische Gesellschaft, DIG) in the heart of West-Berlin at Wittenbergplatz.

Of course, Müller should be much more outspoken about

antisemitism, no doubt about this. In general, he is not really a vibrant or good politician (think about the disaster of the still not built Berlin International Airport, BER). He just got really upset, when in summer 2017 a politician of the party of the Greens decided to use parking slots directly in front of Müllers home in the neighborhood of Berlin-Tempelhof, for a better infrastructure for bicyclists. Müller does not want a “war against car drivers.” This makes him really furious ...

Perhaps, BDS may not make him furious – but he never ever is a supporter of BDS. Müller is a pro-Israel politician. His own party attacks BDS, anti-Zionist antisemitism, and stands by israel.

Müller did not prohibit the antisemitic al-Quds rallies, which take place in Berlin every year. Legally spoken, it is unclear, if he could ban it, as we have a judiciary working independently. Many neo-Nazi rallies, for example, which were banned by majors of cities, could take place after a different judgment by courts.

Still, many pro-Israel activists, including myself, pressure Müller to at least symbolically ban the antisemitic al-Quds march. Ironically or not, former head of the Center for Research on Antisemitism (ZfA) at Technical University Berlin, historian Wolfgang Benz, gave the German internet portal Muslim-Markt a supportive and friendly interview in November 2010. Muslim-Markt is among the main supporters and organizers of the al-Quds rally and has been promoting the boycott of Israel at least since 2002, when I first attacked them for their antisemitism.

Contrary to the Simon Wiesenthal Center, most leading pro-Israel activists in Berlin are shocked, outraged or at least irritated by the very idea to put Müller on the list of the worst “antisemitic slurs” in 2017 – as Müller obviously is pro-Israel and has not made any antisemitic statement. Even

the SWC cannot quote an antisemitic statement by him – since when is a non-statement proof for an “antisemitic slur”?

What about the neo-Nazis, the alt-right and others, who shouted “Jews will not replace us”? Who was the American, who then said that “very fine people on both sides” (neo-Nazi versus Antifa) were among those who rallied in Charlottesville?

The very same man intentionally did not mention Jews at Holocaust Remembrance Day 2017. Will the SWC consider to put him on their list of the worst “antisemitic slurs” 2017? Rather not, as they prayed for him, January 20, in Washington, D.C.

Or will the SWC consider to put the major of the village of “Herxheim am Berg” in the south-west of Germany, on their list, a Ronald Becker? As the TV program, Kontraste in the first channel ARD reported on August 31, 2017, he is enthusiastic about a “Hitler-bell” in their church, which has been hanging there for some 83 years. Besides a former organist at the church, no one in that very typical German village has a problem with Hitler. On the contrary, some like it, that Hitler built the “Autobahn” etc.

That church bell has a swastika on it, with the inscription “Alles Fuer’s Vaterland. Adolf Hitler.” (“Everything for the Fatherland...”) The major and the priest are very proud and happy about that bell, as it “sounds so well,” every 15 minutes it indicates the time.

This indicates the pro-Nazi and far right discourse in Germany today. Rejection of the remembrance of the Shoah is widespread. Many do not think honoring Hitler might hurt anyone. On September 24, millions of Germans will probably vote (up to 8 or 10%) for the far right “Alternative for Germany (AfD),” the first right-wing extremist or even neo-National Socialist party to be elected in the German Federal

Parliament, the Bundestag in Berlin.

The AfD has members like Wolfgang Gedeon who promotes the antisemitic Protocols of the Elders of Zion, some agitate like Goebbels (Björn Höcke), others want to expel German politicians of the Federal Government (born in Germany to immigrants) and “dispose” them in “Turkey” (Alexander Gauland), and head of the party Frauke Petry likes the core word of National Socialism “völkisch” – think of the leading paper of Nazi Germany, the “Völkischer Beobachter”.

However, as there is much more on stage here. We can see a nasty campaign against the Left (whatever left-wing means) by many conservative and far right activists and authors in the pro-Israel camp in Germany, and the US. In Germany, in June 2017, many praised a ridiculous, poorly made pro-Israel propaganda film, full of historical distortions. Others, like Marxist Gerhard Scheit from Vienna and his ally Alex Feuerherdt, a blogger, felt hope after the election of Trump. Reuven Rivlin talked to Gabriel.

Former Israeli ambassador to Germany, Shimon Stein, who formerly was a favorite speaker at the pro-Israel community, alongside with historian Moshe Zimmermann accused the German anti-antisemitism camp to devaluate the very term antisemitism. They also attacked that pro-Israel propaganda film.

Many in Germany do not accept and understand that left-wing Zionism or the not so pro-Bibi camp, in the US, the UK, Europe, and Israel is part of the fight against antisemitism, Islamism and jihad.

After the 2016 US presidential election, right-wingers think they are the only ones who have anything to say. They embrace the defamation of all leftists, of gender discourse, climate change discourse, anti-racist debates, many equate the Antifa to neo-Nazis and also compare Hitler to Stalin, and distort

the Shoah, as the Washington Post does. The far right also does of course not need any anti-capitalist discourse, and they defame those who fight jihad and antisemitism from an anti-occupation point of view, for example. For some of them, left-wing Zionists are “worse than Kapos.”

The almost fanatical idea to put a politician on a list of “antisemitic slurs”, who in 2017 was “patron” of the “Israel-Day” in Berlin alongside with the Israeli ambassador, speaks volumes about the mindset of the Jerusalem Post, the Simon Wiesenthal Center and their followers in Germany.

The Berlin based correspondent of the Jewish Telegraph Agency (JTA), Toby Axelrod, wrote an article about the Müller/SWC case. She quotes several representatives of the pro-Israel and anti-antisemitic camp in Berlin, who oppose putting Müller on that list, including S. Königsberg, Sergey Lagodinsky, both from the Jewish Community, Joseph Schuster, head of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, who frames the idea of the SWC to put Müller on that list “grotesque.” Anetta Kahane from the Amadeu Antonio Foundation, an antifascist, pro-Israel activist NGO from Berlin, also opposes to put him on that list.

Antisemitism is too serious a problem, we should not let that issue being hijacked by people who want to promote their own agenda, but have not really an idea how antisemitism in Germany looks like today.

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