

"Mr. Chairman,

A new and insidious combination of antisemitism and Holocaust distortion has been disseminated from the eastern portion of the European Union (the "new accession states"), and in particular the Baltics.

Local Jews are branded communists and demonized as the purveyors of Soviet communism (even when these countries' tiny remnant survivor communities are near demographic extinction).

The disdain for the tiny, aged, remnant Jewish communities is closely tied to a well-coordinated effort to "rewrite history" by persuading the Western European in effect to jettison the historic concept of the Holocaust and to replace it with a model of "two equal genocides (Nazi and Soviet)" which is a sophisticated, new incarnation of extreme forms of local ultranationalism, antisemitism and racism. The goal is to whitewash the massive Baltic nations' participation in the murder of their Jewish populations (the rate of Holocaust murder in the Baltics was the highest in Europe).

State-sponsored Commissions (known informally as "red-brown commissions") seek to "equalize" Nazi and Soviet crimes in addressing western Europe, while at home, in each of these countries' museums, a different tale is told: a bogus account of overwhelming Jewish complicity in Soviet rule, the whitewashing or glossing over of local participation in the killings, and increasingly in recent years, efforts to tarnish Holocaust victims, survivors and

resistance fighters with antisemitic stereotypes of “Jewish Bolshevist conspiracies”. The state-sponsored “Genocide Museum” in central Vilnius, for example, glosses over the Holocaust while permanently exhibiting antisemitic materials

In Lithuania, these efforts have been most pronounced. After persuading Holocaust survivor, resistance fighter and scholar Y. Arad of Israel (founding director of Yad Vashem in Jerusalem) to join its commission, an antisemitic newspaper article in April 2006 called him a war criminal on the basis of misrepresented passages from his own memoir (published in English decades earlier, in 1979). Two months later, prosecutors, in the service of the state’s antisemitic “history changing” efforts, initiated a “pre-trial investigation.” In 2008, the “new investigation” (which has still not included a single charge or subpoena) was expanded, again at the behest of an antisemitic far-right newspaper, to include two women veterans of the anti-Nazi partisan effort, Fania Yocheles Brantsovsky and Rachel Margolis, both now 87. To this day, neither of these investigations has been dropped, and Holocaust survivors remain “under investigation.” This is most disturbing, all the more so when Lithuania, and the Baltic generally, have the worst record for prosecuting Nazi war criminals since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.

It is against the background of history-distorting, victim-blaming that blatant antisemitic activity ( neo-nazi parades accompanied by police and front-page cartoons of a Jew and a Gay “running the world”), that the Baltics, in collusion with far-right politicians in central European new-accession countries, have begun to mislead the European Union and parliament with resolutions that are ostensibly against communism, but invariably contain language and proposed laws whose real purpose is to erase the Holocaust from history, by introducing a new model of equal genocides, and, alarmingly, as the Economist has put it, to “blame the victims”.

In January 2008, the new European Parliament group “Common Europe – Common History” was formed in Tallinn. Its press release complained about the phrase Never Again being monopolized by Holocaust survivors. The group was rapidly exposed by British MP John Mann who told the Commons the same month: “In Tallinn, Estonia, five MEPs from five different countries met to launch a group called Common Europe – Common History. It has the same theme – the need for an equal evaluation of history. It is just a traditional form of prejudice, rewritten in a modern context. In essence, it is trying to equate communism and Judaism as one conspiracy and rewrite history from a nationalist point of view.”

On 3 June 2008, the Prague Declaration was proclaimed. It would propose legislation in the European Parliament that would compel European Union countries to “overhaul [...] European history textbooks so that children could learn and be warned about Communism and its crimes in the same way as they have been taught to assess Nazi crimes”. It would also insist that Soviet misdeeds be judged “in the same way Nazi crimes were assessed by the Nuremberg Tribunal”.

Much of the European Parliament and Union has failed to appreciate the ulterior agenda of the Prague Declaration and the movement for "equality of all evils" has been gathering support through related resolutions being introduced without proper discussion or exposure of the underlying motives. One such effort (April 2009) voted for a new European day of commemoration of Nazi and Soviet crimes equally, the real purpose of which is to supplant Holocaust Memorial Day in Europe.

It is absolutely true that Europe and the world at large still do not appreciate the degree of suffering of the East European nations at the hands of Communism, both before the war and in the Soviet near-half-century after its conclusion. This serious issue needs to be addressed by *separate* exposure, study and commemoration of Soviet crimes and their victims. Such efforts should be initiated.

Given the antisemitic, racist and Holocaust distortionist motives and practice associated with the Prague Declaration and related resolutions and proposals, the Declaration and these associated resolutions should be of urgent concern to the States Parties of the OSCE and the Wiesenthal Centre hereby urges ODIHR to note their pernicious intent for condemnation at this HDIM"

Samuels acknowledged the role of Professor Dovid Katz, founder of the Vilnius Yiddish Institute, as the principal protagonist in containing "the two equal genocides" campaign, which he has termed "Holocaust obfuscation"

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