

World

Prague's declaration of disgrace

A European attempt to equate Communism with Nazism will falsify history



BY THE JC

MAY 21, 2009 14:14

SHARE VIA



Not many have heard about the Prague Declaration, which is currently making the rounds at the European Parliament. Proclaimed last June in Prague (but cooked up in the Baltics), its innocuous theme is “European Conscience and Communism”. Now who would oppose that? The heinous crimes of Communist regimes clearly merit full exposure. Victims deserve recognition. When the grand jamboree of freedom, fun and prosperity got under way for us lucky westerners in 1945, entire nations ceded to Stalin were condemned to totalitarian rule.

However, the declaration insists as a matter of principle that Soviet Communism and Hitler’s Fascism be declared absolutely “equal”, and demands absurd new laws (for example, “fixing” textbooks throughout the EU to agree with this). The states driving this initiative — Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia — are thriving democracies that deserve firm western support for their continued growth, and against possible mischief from a certain unpredictable bear to the east.

But the plot thickens. During the Holocaust, the percentages of their Jewish citizens murdered — mid to high 90s — were the highest in Europe. Bold non-Jewish advocates of truth and reconciliation, individuals and NGOs alike, have recently been overwhelmed by a state-sponsored “Genocide Industry” that promotes Holocaust obfuscation. This is not Holocaust denial but, rather, a ruse to confuse the issue and talk the Holocaust away in a new, cunning paradigm of “equal genocides”.

It started with the “Common Europe — Common History” working group in January 2008. One member of the British Parliament saw right through it. John Mann, intrepid chairman of the All-

Party Parliamentary Group against Antisemitism, told the Commons precisely where this is coming from: “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.”

The “red-equals-brown” movement is sometimes sold by wheeling out ambitious local Jewish politicians whose careers depend on being more ultra-nationalist and anti-Russian than anybody else. These “show Jews” regularly betray the Holocaust’s victims in order to “help” their countries delete the Holocaust from their history, rather than genuinely help reach the maturity of nationhood that includes acknowledgement of the imperfect histories of all our nations.

Frankly speaking, the fine Lithuanian people (among whom I have enjoyed living for a decade) are poorly served by this misguided, state-sponsored industry, which includes (this one is for you, George Orwell) the “International Commission for the Evaluation of the Crimes of the Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes in Lithuania”. It is cosily housed in the Prime Minister’s office, eliminating any distancing from politics of the hour.

A little over a year ago, a far-right daily in Vilnius called on prosecutors to show their manhood by going for two women Holocaust survivors. Why? They escaped the Vilna Ghetto to join the Soviet-supported anti-Nazi partisans. (Regrettably, there were no British or American forces in those parts to take in the tiny numbers who escaped the death machine.)

Then, on May 5 last year, came the low point in modern Lithuanian history. Armed plain-clothes police came looking for the women. One of them, Fania Yocheles Brantsovsky, 86, is librarian of the Vilnius Yiddish Institute. The other, Rachel Margolis, 87, may have been targeted because she rediscovered and published the diary of a valiant Polish Christian who had witnessed the murdering (by enthusiastic local volunteers, called “partisans” here) of tens of thousands of innocent civilians at Ponar (Paneriai), a gruesome mass murder site. Margolis, now in Israel, is unable to return to Vilnius for her annual series of lectures and walking tours of the Vilna Ghetto.

As the Economist put it last August, “Lithuania must stop blaming the victims”. The country’s tiny, aged, and rapidly declining Jewish community is shaken by the antisemitic mood that feeds on the red-brown movement’s campaign against Holocaust survivors.

In recent weeks, the President of the European Parliament, Hans Gert Poettering, “thanked” the Baltic states for enlightening the rest of Europe about these matters. It is high time to enlighten him, and the European Parliament. And, to ensure that these crafty resolutions roundly go down to defeat.

Dovid Katz is professor of Judaic studies at Vilnius University and research director at the Vilnius Yiddish Institute

Read Next



Jewish model Shay Zanco 'kicked out' of Egypt hotel 'because she was Israeli'



Hamas sentences seven people to death by hanging for 'collaboration' with Israel



Israeli tourist attacked in Berlin in possible antisemitic incident



Jeremy Corbyn will 'have a think' about standing to be Mayor of London



German church told to remove antisemitic Judensau carving

SHARE VIA



More from News



Jewish model Shay Zanco 'kicked out' of Egypt hotel 'because she was Israeli'



Hamas sentences seven people to death by hanging for 'collaboration' with Israel



Israeli tourist attacked in Berlin in possible antisemitic incident



Jeremy Corbyn will 'have a think' about standing to be Mayor of London



German church told to remove antisemitic Judensau carving



Have the *JC* delivered to your door

Subscribe Now



Subscribe to our Newsletters

Subscribe Now

News

Israel

Let's Talk

Let's Eat

Life & Culture

Family & Education

Judaism

Archive

Social & Personal

Jobs

SUPPORT US

DONATE NOW

[About us](#)

[Advertising](#)

[Terms & Conditions](#)

[Cookie Policy](#)

[FAQs](#)

[Privacy policy](#)

[Contact us](#)

©2023 The Jewish Chronicle