



PERSPECTIVES

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A Holocaust Denier at the White House

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: It is a historical irony that such a short time after Holocaust Remembrance Day, an unreconstructed Holocaust denier is being welcomed at the White House to promote a peace agreement with the very national movement that he has accused of culpability for the genocide.

Ironically enough, the upcoming White House meeting between Palestinian Authority (PA) chairman Mahmoud Abbas and US president Donald Trump will be held a short time after Holocaust Remembrance Day. It also comes soon after the president's speech to the World Jewish Congress Plenary Assembly in New York, at which he said, among other things, that "We must stamp out prejudice and anti-Semitism" and called the Holocaust "the darkest chapter of human history."

It is unclear whether the president or his advisers know that Abbas, while living in Moscow during the 1980s, penned a doctoral dissertation steeped in anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial, and published it as a book that is still taught in several West Bank universities and featured on the personal website of the man dubbed the "president of the state of Palestine."

It is true that on April 27, 2014, Abbas for the first time issued a statement on the Holocaust in which he called it "the most heinous crime to have occurred against humanity." But it is no less true that the assertion was meant for Western ears only, and that Abbas remains one of the foremost Holocaust deniers of the Arab world.

The first to deny the Holocaust were the Nazis, who wanted to absolve themselves of criminal responsibility stemming from genocide and crimes against humanity. Thus, having escaped the clutches of the Nuremberg Trials and international law, Adolf Eichmann befriended numerous pro-Nazis who published a virulently anti-Semitic magazine in Argentina, *Der Weg* (The Way), which waged a propaganda campaign of "refuting" what they called "the lie about the six million." The magazine claimed that

the Holocaust was a hoax, that there were never any gas chambers in Hitler's Europe, and that the Zionists collaborated with the Third Reich in an attempt to obtain a Jewish state in Palestine. The Zionists, argued the Nazi mass murderer, were even prepared to sacrifice their own people to that end. Numerous Arabs, including Mahmoud Abbas, found Eichmann's conspiracy theory appealing, and apparently it was what inspired Abbas to write his doctoral dissertation on the Holocaust and its denial.

Abbas depicts the Holocaust (in which, he claims, fewer than a million people died) as a conspiracy that was exposed due to internal Zionist squabbles; as an Arab proverb says, "When there are many thieves the theft will be discovered." He maintains that when the ruling Mapai Party in Israel refused to grant rights to the opposition, the latter began to reveal the truth, including the Zionist collaboration with Hitler. Because the subject was taboo, however, whoever in Israel began talking or hinting about it risked his life and, indeed, often paid the ultimate price.

Abbas, letting his imagination run wild, even claims that Eichmann was abducted from Argentina because he had published details of the conspiracy in the American magazine *Life* (which he never did) and was about to divulge them to the entire world. Abbas further "discloses" that the Zionist leader Israel Kastner was murdered by Israel's domestic security service, the Shabak, because he had dared to present the details of the conspiracy in a courtroom.

In Abbas's view, Nazi ideology is the twin of Zionist ideology – same thoughts, same beliefs. With no basis whatsoever in any research or document, Abbas wrote:

[The Zionist movement] did not provide any assistance, economic or other, to the victims of Nazism, nor did it allow any other party to offer assistance of any kind [to the victims]. [The Zionist movement] concealed the information that arrived from within the ghetto walls and the concentration camps, reports that shed light on what was really happening. If it was forced to publish any piece of information, it cast doubt on it and belittled its importance.

When it made efforts to rescue Jews from the slaughter, the Zionist movement adopted the Nazi principle of selection. It made itself the arbiter of the Jews' lives, decreeing who was to live and who was to die.

It goes without saying that all these claims are entirely false, and that to blame Zionism for the Holocaust without substantiation reeks of anti-Semitism.

Throughout the book Abbas based on his doctoral dissertation, he presents his thesis, which is essentially an indictment of Zionism and its leaders. He accuses them of collusion with the Nazis and of having been directly responsible for the murder of their own people in the Holocaust by intentionally thwarting numerous attempts to rescue Jews and fomenting hatred of Jews. The aim, he alleges, was to intensify their persecution and increase the magnitude of the slaughter. All this, Abbas contends, was

done in collaboration with the Third Reich in order to boost immigration to Palestine and hasten the establishment of the Jewish national home there.

Anyone who tried to expose this conspiracy, Abbas claims, was killed by the Israeli establishment. There is obviously no factual evidence for this. But Holocaust denial is not confined solely to the casting of doubt on the credibility of photos from the concentration camps, the number of victims, or the existence of the gas chambers. It also includes the characterization of the genocide as a Zionist plot.

Abbas has always avoided giving his opinion on the Holocaust, has never apologized for what he wrote, and apparently, to this very day, adheres to the anti-Semitic conspiracy theory he propagated. That assessment stems not only from the fact that his book is still to be found on his official website for all who want to read it, but also from his statements on the subject. Thus, for example, in one of his interviews, the PA president claimed he still had 70 books on the links between the Nazis and the Zionists that he had not yet published, a remark that suggests the persistence of his conspiratorial thinking. Moreover, his book is still sold in Arab countries and the West Bank and is even taught in PA institutions.

And there remains, of course, the hostility that the PA, of which he is the president, displays toward the people identified with the Holocaust. Thus, for example, in the territories under the PA's control, the Holocaust is not taught at all and no respectable books on the subject are anywhere to be seen. If one does find any books at all about the Holocaust, they deny that it occurred and glorify Hitler's achievements. Furthermore, anyone who tries to deal with the subject is ostracized, as happened to Prof. Muhammad Dajani of Al-Quds University when he took students on a trip to the extermination camps in Poland. Dajani, who is in favor of Holocaust studies in the PA, had to resign under pressure from regime elements; his car was set on fire and there was an attempt on his life.

Like his predecessor in his post, Yasser Arafat, Abbas speaks one way to his domestic public and an entirely different way to Western audiences, from whom he tries to conceal his conspiratorial thinking about the Holocaust. Indeed, whereas Abbas's other books, which present him as a man of peace, have been translated into dozens of languages, his book based on the doctoral dissertation remains in Arabic only.

It is no doubt a historical irony that, such a short time after Holocaust Remembrance Day, a Holocaust denier is being welcomed to the White House to promote a peace process with the very national movement that he has accused of culpability for the genocide.

Dr. Edy Cohen is author of the book The Holocaust in the Eyes of Mahmoud Abbas (Hebrew).