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On Three Definitions

Genocide; Holocaust Denial; Holocaust Obfuscation

There is a discomfiting indistinctness in contemporary European discourse on matters of state that relate to the Holocaust. One lurking danger is a murkiness emerging from imprecision in the use of language. There would be difference of opinion on when and where such inexactness is a political ruse to confuse the issue or cover for some 'unwanted' part of history, and when it is an unchecked trend bereft of ulterior motivation. Instances of the wilful first may in any event readily feed into the stream of the innocent second. The present paper argues for literalist constructions of 'genocide' and 'Holocaust Denial'. Moreover, the term 'Holocaust Obfuscation' is proposed as a cover term for a newly energized European movement to confuse, recombine or equalize phenomena that are empirically and conceptually unequal, in service of the effort to obscure, relativize, minimize or delete entirely 'the Holocaust as such' from European history and consciousness.

The author is a supporter of the Western (and internationally known) narrative of the Holocaust, and of the Survivor community, and rejects the current attempts at revisionism; but, he holds that opponents should not be labelled 'Deniers' if they do not deny the actual occurrence of the mass murders that collectively constitute the Holocaust. They may minimize, trivialize, justify, try to fault the victims for alleged wrongs, and exaggerate and misname other evils to achieve the desired 'equivalence'. Still, they are not 'Deniers'. In mainstream Western civilization, Holocaust Denial per se was dealt a mortal blow in April 2000 when the British Royal High Court of Justice ruled in favor of the eminent American historian Deborah Lipstadt. It was in those days, at the dawn of the new century, that a sophisticated replacement for Denial was being developed in what was soon to become the new east of the European Union. The

phenomenon now merits a term to help understand the local ideas that underlie it; to distinguish between it and classical Denial; and to expose a disturbing trend in Europe that has not yet been subject to adequate scrutiny.

The Holocaust Obfuscation campaign in Europe has diffused westward from various elite circles of the new-accession European Union and NATO states that had suffered Soviet domination or outright annexation. The set of ideas emanates particularly but not exclusively from the Baltics. Critiques of the campaign should not be taken to reflect in any way on the noble, long-suffering, and hard-working peoples of these successful countries, which have made such enormous strides, and whose long litany of torment under the evil regimes of communism began, or was relaunched, in the mid 1940s, just as the fortunate western nations were celebrating postwar freedom and nearly boundless prospects for prosperity. Proper recognition in the West of all that communism inflicted on the peoples under Soviet domination remains a vital project that deserves fully-focused attention, rather than, as at present, incorporation into an assortment of wily Holocaust reductionist campaigns, which in the end do a grave disservice to the victims of all evil regimes.

Rooted in ultranationalist moods – and not infrequently incorporating racist and antisemitic undertones – Holocaust Obfuscation seeks to cover up or deflect attention from massive local participation in the Holocaust in the regions where that participation was proportionately the highest in Europe. It seeks, as it were, to wipe the stain from history; to find fault with its victims and survivors (for example linking them a priori to communism), in the interests of further ‘equalization’; and, most alarmingly, to convince the rest of the world of a bogus ‘equivalence’ of Soviet and Nazi crimes under the banner of redefinition of genocide to encompass all evils. The result is deletion of the Holocaust as a distinct concept, term and category in European history. The movement has an array of names, including Double Genocide, Symmetry, the Evaluation of Equal Totalitarian Regimes, the Red-Brown (or ‘red-equals-brown’) movement. The nexus of antisemitism and today’s Holocaust issues in Eastern Europe are explored in the seminal papers by Zuroff (2005) and Donskis (2006). Coming from substantially different scholarly traditions, both expose the interrelationship of failure to

deal accurately with the Holocaust and local antisemitism (see also Donskis 2004, 2006). This paper goes to press just after the appearance of an outstanding essay by European philosopher Leonidas Donskis, an essay that is one of the most important on the subject in recent years. It has once and for all debunked the efforts to inflate the notion genocide to cover an array of evildoings (Donskis 2009b). It is huge credit to Lithuania that this contribution comes from a proud Lithuanian citizen of proud multicultural heritage, and one who has recently been elected to the European Parliament.

The fall of the totalitarian and repressive Soviet regime, and the rise of a number of democratic states that relatively rapidly earned their way into the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, made way for the freedom of expression that allowed for numerous previously 'limited-discussion' topics, including the Holocaust, to be discussed openly. In Lithuania, a number of bold truth-tellers from the country's Lithuanian majority came forward to discover, reveal and teach what it was that had happened, that resulted in their country having the highest rate of genocide of the Jewish population of any country in Europe (a percentage in the mid nineties, leaving today's tiny remnant Jewish community close to extinction). Among others, Saulius Berzinis, Ruta Puisyte, Vaidotas Reivytis, Vytautas Toleikis, Liudas Truska, Linas Vildziunas and Rimantas Zirgulis have made important contributions during various periods within the last two decades (see e.g. Puisyte 1997; Morkus and Reivytis 2000, 2001). Vildziunas established an innovative and successful NGO, the House of Memory, whose accomplishments include nationwide projects with Lithuanian school pupils (Vildziunas 2002; 2003; 2007). Truska boldly exposed the record of distortion by various historians, and reported with remarkable courage and straightforwardness on the facts of the Holocaust in Lithuania (in English see e.g. Truska 2001). The path forward had been presaged in Soviet times by the eminent exile Lithuanian scholar and poet, Tomas Venclova of Yale University, writing in the United States in the 1970s (see now Venclova 1999).

As in the other Baltic states, however, such initiatives have been overwhelmed and not seldom replaced by state-sponsored efforts. These include government supported commissions on Nazi *and*

Soviet crimes. The plot lines are not identical in the three Baltic states but analogous patterning is evident. Scholars, dignitaries and international Holocaust organizations were persuaded to either join these efforts or support them, in order to promote 'Holocaust Studies' in each of these countries. Verily, some excellent research volumes were published and important activities undertaken, in education and in public commemoration. But those constructive phases, themselves haunted from the start by the presumption of 'equivalence' or at least 'parallelism', were a prelude a very different political agenda: to persuade the European Union to accept a revisionist Equal Genocides model of twentieth century history in which the Holocaust, in a macabre semantic hat trick, disappears and then reemerges as one of two equal genocides.

At local level, in the little-known state languages, Soviet crimes and antisemitically motivated vast exaggeration of Jewish participation in them are in fact promoted as being 'genocide' while the Holocaust is obscured, minimized or omitted altogether. The situation in Estonia has been studied by Stevick (2006). The following remarks will focus on Lithuania, where wholly unexpected events of recent years provide ample empirical reason, first for precision in conceptualizing the notions of Genocide and Holocaust Denial; and, just as importantly, to begin to conceptualize and deconstruct the now steamrolling Holocaust Obfuscation tendency. At this point in time, it needs to be understood more by its deeds, words and intentions than by any precise dictionary definition. Nevertheless, first attempts at definition, or as a point of departure, description, cannot no longer be shirked.

Within Lithuania, the noble initiatives of individual Lithuanian champions of historic truth were overrun and largely eliminated by the state's 'International Commission for the Evaluation of the Crimes of the Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes in Lithuania', established by presidential decree in 1998. The commission is housed in the Foreign Ministry, in effect leaving the state and politicians in charge of history when it comes to this subject. Independent minded historians could be left out in the cold. Younger talents could be forgiven for being concerned about their career prospects if their views should conflict with the state's de-facto commission of 'historic truth'. The commission's name is itself somewhat Orwellian: the effort to acquire

legitimacy from 'international' sources for what needs to be acknowledged at national and local level; the circularity that incorporates the desired conclusion (parallelism) into the very name of the enquiry; and last but not least, the stated delimitation to crimes of 'occupation regimes', obscuring in the title not only the voluntary initiatives of local forces and individuals, but the sadly well documented outbreak of barbarity against Jewish civilians in dozens of locations in Lithuania in the time from the morning of Sunday 22 June 1941 onward, and even before Nazi German forces arrived or had taken control, an event that occurred in different localities at various dates and times during the ensuing week (see e.g. Arad 1976: 234-272; Gilbert 1987: 154-155, 234-235; Garfunkel et al 1984; Kwiet 1998: 11; Levin 1996; MacQueen 1998: 34-37; Porat 1996; Rubenstein and Altman 2008: 277-315; cf. now also Arad 2009, Sutton 2009).

This multilayered and habitually unchallenged misuse of language in the naming of commissions may become a useful example of the kind of Eurospeak that can sometimes be employed to manage discourse at the European Parliament and other institutions. Informally, diplomats have taken to calling the three Baltic commissions 'the Red-Brown commissions', an archetypal instance of replacing a long obfuscating name with a critically motivated short one, with the intentional ring of a touch of satire.

Over the years the commission in Lithuania published some excellent, though minimally distributed, volumes (e.g. Dieckmann and Suziedelis 2006). But then, the principal activity turned political, in partnership with the commissions of the other two Baltic states and like-minded politicians in other new-accession states. The political project generates declarations, resolutions and new laws in the European Union that would in fact delete the notion of the Holocaust and have it replaced by various formulations of Two Equal Genocides. Periodically and incrementally, the Vilnius-based commission 'contributes' to the European Union one or another 'point of equality' in the proposed equalization of nazism and communism (see e.g. Commission 2008 on the 'equality of victimhood').

The rest, as they say, is history. The commission, with the active help of top-tier Lithuanian statesmen, persuaded Yitzhak Arad, a prominent Israeli Holocaust scholar, himself a survivor and resistance hero, to

join. He was subsequently, and absurdly, accused of war crimes by the antisemitic press, in 2006, based on passages cited and distorted from his own published memoir (Arad 1979), and soon thereafter 'investigated' by the state's prosecutor responsible for war crimes. To the present day the commission has not publicly condemned the defamation of its own founding member. When international pressure forced the suspension of 'part' of the 'investigation', state prosecutors issued a defamatory statement against the octogenarian anti-Nazi resistance hero (Prosecution Service of the Republic of Lithuania 2008).

In 2008, the antisemitic press clamored for the prosecutor to pursue two additional Holocaust survivors, Fania Yocheles Brantsovsky and Rachel Margolis. On 5 May 2008, in a lowpoint of modern Lithuanian history, armed plainclothes police came searching for the women at a Vilnius address, and later that month, prosecutors announced to the press (ridiculously) that their whereabouts could not be determined (e.g. Balsas.lt 2008). This calumny has not been corrected to this day. Brantsovsky (born 1922) is librarian of the Vilnius Yiddish Institute. Margolis (born in 1921), is a biologist and Holocaust historian who rediscovered and published the lost diary of a Polish Christian witness to the mass murders of Vilna Jewry at Ponar (now Paneriai outside Vilnius), and is unable to return to Lithuania because of fears of harassment from prosecutors. The diary subsequently appeared in English translation (Sakowicz 2005). None of the Holocaust survivors defamed has been charged or subpoenaed, as natural justice would demand. The strategy seems to be to send them to eternity as 'suspected war criminals' as part of the wider strategy of generating mendacious 'equal paper trails' of Nazi and Soviet crimes in service to the perfidious red-equals-brown movement. This is particularly untenable in Lithuania, where not a single Nazi war criminal has been punished (see Zuroff 2009b). These sad events have been reported and commented upon widely in the Western press (see e.g. Foxman 2009; Gersten and Perelman 2008; Ginaite 2008; Gloder 2008; Katz 2008; Keene State College 2009; Lucas 2008; Weitzman 2008; Zuroff 2008). Antony Polonsky has commented: 'The dispute certainly demonstrates how difficult it is both for the Lithuanian elite and for the public at large to come to terms with the painful legacy of Lithuanian complicity in the mass murder of the country's Jewish population' (Polonsky in press).

There have been protests internationally in response to actions by organs of the one state in the world that attempts to prosecute Holocaust survivors who are alive because they joined the anti-Nazi Soviet-led partisans. These survivors are recognized as heroes throughout the free world. Protests have included a number from the Congress of the United States (including Hodes, Wexler and Berman 2008). The Jewish Community of Lithuania responded with swift and gallant rejoinders (see Alperovich and Jafet 2009a; 2009b). The accused partisan veteran still resident in Vilnius, Ms. Brantsovsky, has been honored, among others, by the American, Austrian, British, and Irish embassies in Vilnius. Significantly, and sadly, the episode represents the first occasion since Soviet times that a citizen maligned by state organs is conspicuously honored by western nations in this part of the world.

The commission is only one part of the state sponsored 'Genocide Industry' in Lithuania. The Museum of Genocide Victims (popularly 'the Genocide Museum'), on Vilnius's main boulevard, deals in fact only with Soviet crimes (for a critique see e.g. Steele 2008). It includes blatantly antisemitic exhibits (for example, a postwar caricature of a Soviet jeep driven by Lenin, Stalin, and 'the Jew Yankl', with no comment on the racism, this coming *after* the Holocaust). A recent exhibit on the Ukrainian famine showed a woman telling visitors: 'In Auschwitz we were given some spinach and a little bread. War is terrible, but famine is even worse'. And, the Genocide and Resistance Research Centre of Lithuania, located at separate downtown premises, has minimal interest in the Holocaust; of the twenty or so books on display in its window, only one, produced locally, deals with the Holocaust. A popular tourist attraction in the countryside is 'Gruto parkas', popularly the 'Lenin Park', to which statues of Lenin and other Soviet leaders were removed to make for an educational theme park. Its signposting, provided by the Genocide Research Centre, also contains blatantly antisemitic material. In all these cases, the Holocaust is barely mentioned or not mentioned all; there is a condemnation of survivors who resisted, and an application of the word 'genocide' primarily or exclusively for Soviet crimes.

The upshot is, that when it comes to 'back home', it is primarily the Soviet Union and the antisemitically motivated 'sublimated decide accusation' of overwhelming Jewish collusion that are labeled

'genocide'. The actual genocide that occurred in the country, the Holocaust, is ignored, trivialized or implicitly justified. What is inter alia ominous here is that instead of combating the basest folklore of justification of the Holocaust (documented repeatedly in formulations such as 'they were all NKVD [KGB], and got what they deserved'), such sentiment has been remolded by sophisticated scholars and politicians into a Eurospeak that aspires to become twenty-first century standard history – and law – of the European Union area.

Needless to say, the expenditure of a state's resources and powers in favor of one historical model can in fact intimidate individuals and non-governmental institutions alike into not expressing contrary views. The result is diminution of the public feeling of freedom of speech. At the time this paper is submitted (Sept. 2009), there is an unfortunate, and quite incredible piece of proposed legislation before the Lithuanian parliament. It proposes that those who deny or diminish the 'genocide committed by communism and fascism' – packaged together in the law's wording – in speech, in writing, in the media, via posts on the internet, or using other technologies of public access shall be punished 'by fine or limitation of freedom, arrest or imprisonment up to three years' (Lietuvos Respublikos Seimas 2009). Here too, Professor Leonidas Donskis has boldly stood up proudly for his country's integrity, and for the European liberal tradition of tolerance and free speech. He has rightly called such attempts the 'criminalization of debate' (see Donskis 2008b, 2009a). Even if they stand little chance of passing, such proposals have succeeded in stifling the extant free debate. Let such developments at least serve as a warning to the rest of the European Union about where the red-equals-brown movement is headed and what curtailment of freedom of expression it is causing at the local level.

It is unfortunate enough for any state to be expending its nation's precious resources on revisionist history with racist undertones. But in recent years, a number of 'genocide establishments' in new-accession states have campaigned with increasing success to impose the 'new paradigm' on the European Union generally. In January 2008, the 'Common Europe – Common History' group was announced in Tallinn by a press release complaining about the phrase 'Never Again' being, it is implied, unfairly monopolized by Holocaust survivors.

British MP John Mann rapidly saw through the ruse and told the Commons: 'On 22 January, 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. Those are elected MEPs' (Mann 2008).

But there were few voices of dissent in Europe, and frankly few who even noticed the growing effort. In June 2008 the 'Prague Declaration' was proclaimed. Instead of using the opportunity to create new institutions to educate Europe on the evils of communism (and its possible future incarnations), which is of major importance, the undercurrent of the Baltic-origin 'equality' pervades the text. Its provisions include demands for communism to 'be dealt with, in the same way Nazi crimes were assessed by the Nuremberg Tribunal' and for European textbooks to be overhauled 'so that children could learn and be warned about communism and its crimes in the same way as they have been taught to assess the Nazi crimes' (see Prague Declaration 2008). This is a document about calling two very different things 'the same thing'.

The next major step in the obviously orchestrated progression was the 'Vilnius Declaration of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly' of 29 June – 3 July 2009, into which the red-equals-brown movement inserted the language 'in the twentieth century European countries experienced two major totalitarian regimes, Nazi and Stalinist, which brought about genocide [...]' (OSCE 2009: 48). In addition, there was insertion into the document of support for a Europe-wide day of commemoration for both victims of communism and fascism, a day that would inevitably supplant Holocaust Memorial Day and serve to bolster the red-brown construction of European history. This followed on from a little-noticed European Parliament resolution to the same effect of 2 April 2009. There was a rapid response from Zuroff (2009a). Bauer (2009), taking the proposed combined day of remembrance as his point of departure, goes on to demonstrate the plain historic inaccuracy of the underlying communism-equals-fascism construct, particularly with respect to genocide.

There have, to be sure, been some isolated critiques in the press of these attempts to replace the Holocaust with a paradigm of two genocides (e.g. Katz 2009a; 2009b; 2009c; Steele 2009; Zuroff 2009a). By and large, however, the European Union and its Parliament, and the wider western alliance, have thus far not scrutinized the motivations or implications of these wordings, and at times, there has been a willingness to bend history to perceived current geopolitical dangers involving Russia's relations with her neighbors. States on Russia's periphery are perfectly justified in their historically based fears. They deserve solid western support for security and independence. These resolutions would best be replaced by new resolutions on the history, legacy and dangers of communism and its potential successors. The untenable equals sign does grave damage to these legitimate aspirations.

The abuse, intentional or unintentional, of terms and concepts, is at the heart of the murkiness now spreading across Europe on these issues. As noted at the outset, the inflation of the word 'genocide' has been boldly corrected by Donskis (2009b) in an essay that will outlive the current debates, and that will help in challenging other inflations bound to be attempted in the future.

'Genocide'

The term *genocide* was coined by Raphael Lemkin in his *Axis Rule* (Lemkin 1944). It first occurs in the preface to the book, itself dated 15 November 1943. In the section 'Genocide - A New Term and New Conception for Destruction of Nations' there is, to start with, a succinct and precise formulation: 'New conceptions require new terms. By "genocide" we mean the destruction of a nation or of an ethnic group' (Lemkin 1944: 79). In subsequent passages of the same chapter, however, rather lesser bars come into an increasingly casual discussion, for example: 'Generally speaking, genocide does not necessarily mean the immediate destruction of a nation, except when accomplished by mass killings of all members of a nation. It

is intended rather to signify a coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups [...] (ibid).

Lemkin's work, based in large measure on his study of the tragedies of the Armenians during World War I and the Jews during World War II, formed a basis for Resolution 260 (III) of the United Nations General Assembly, adopted on 9 December 1948, where Article 2 begins: 'In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such' followed by the acts so considered: (a) Killing members of the group; (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group' (United Nations 1948).'

Murder of an individual or a number of individuals, as a symptom of enmity toward a group to which that individual is assumed to belong, is a horrific enough crime, but if 'genocide' is not to become a mere synonym for say 'a coordinated multiple murder spree', or even more precariously, a cover-term for crimes that do not even rise to murder (e.g. causing serious mental harm to members of a group with intent to harm a national, ethnic, racial, religious or political group; imprisonment; deportation; loss of status or career), then its definition must be restored to the primary, and not the secondary, Lemkenian sense.

The following proposal is meant to be a point of departure for discussion on twenty-first century usage of the term:

Genocide is the mass murder of as many people as possible on the basis of born national, ethnic, racial or religious identity as such; with intent to eliminate the targeted group entirely and internationally; without allowing the victims any option to change views, beliefs or allegiances to save themselves; and with large-scale accomplished fulfilment of the goal. Genocide leaves in its wake an extinct or nearly extinct group within the territory under the control of the perpetrators.

'Holocaust Denial'

The term *Holocaust Denial* arose from a lexical polygenesis, entailing numerous occurrences of strings of words such as 'denying that the Holocaust [or... 'murder of the Jewish population in countries under Nazi control'] actually occurred [in the degree accepted by history as factual]'. The concept of Holocaust (little d) denial is older than the Holocaust per se. There had been denial of what was being prepared and beginning to take shape; then, of what was happening, or had just happened; denial by perpetrators, witnesses and even faraway individuals, groups and national powers. The notion Holocaust [big D] Denial as a historic term can perhaps be dated to the time around the first actual formulations and publications by explicit propagators of Holocaust Denial after the war. These have been carefully chronicled by a number of researchers (especially Lipstadt 1993 and Shermer and Grobman 2009).

Holocaust Denial is by now a commonly known term. Its dissemination into larger popular culture may result in some measure from Deborah Lipstadt's *Denying the Holocaust* (Lipstadt 1993), which led to an internationally covered trial. British Holocaust Denier David Irving brought a lawsuit for libel against her (in London, in 1996, coming to trial on 11 January 2000). In her famous victory of 11 April 2000, the court was able to determine that Irving's falsification of the historical record was 'deliberate' and 'motivated by a desire to present events in a manner consistent with his own ideological beliefs even if that involved distortion and manipulation of historical evidence' (Gray 2000).

In *Denying the Holocaust*, Lipstadt devoted a chapter to the 'future course of Holocaust denial'. She provides multiple examples of a new kind of relativism that she correctly foresaw as potentially evolving out of Denial. Her documented examples include 'historians intent on obscuring the crucial contrasts between Stalinism and Nazism'. Lipstadt's words have proved to be potently prophetic. In fact, this particular tack has grown exponentially, from being a view of some historians to being the established policy of a number of European Union *states* that are able to mobilize the finance, administration and

wherewithal of the state to propagate such views as accepted fact, and to cause to be marginalized or eliminated contrary opinions that lack such support and are readily miscast as somehow disloyal or 'unpatriotic' (or even 'pro-communist'). Lipstadt took note of other Holocaust-diminishing strategies, including what she calls 'yes, but' syndrome: 'Yes, there was a Holocaust, but the Nazis were only trying to defend themselves against their enemies. Yes, there was a Holocaust, but most Jews died of starvation and disease (as is the case in every war) or were killed as partisans and spies. Yes, there was a Holocaust, but the Jews' behavior brought it on them. Yes, there was a Holocaust, but it was essentially no different than an array of other conflagrations in which innocents were massacred' (Lipstadt 2005: 212, 215).

In 2007, Lipstadt followed up with the term *soft-core Holocaust Denial* to cover attempts to minimize the Holocaust (see Paul 2007). It is a perfectly adequate term as used by Professor Lipstadt herself. However, just as in the case of 'genocide', there is danger in letting loose a slipshod definition, when the wider scope that ensues, quite harmless 'in the safe pair of hands of the maker', is prone to abuse by the selfsame potential distorters of history whose devious work these terms were designed, or adapted, to combat in the first instance.

The definition of Holocaust Denial should be retained for those who deny that the documented murders of the victims occurred. The term is self-defining, and its compass is perhaps best not extended to 'soft' or 'hard' core or otherwise. In short:

Denial is denial.

'Holocaust Obfuscation'

In response to the unfolding of events in Lithuania that were briefly summarized above, the author proposed the term *Holocaust Obfuscation* in a February 2008 presentation at the Rothschild Foundation Europe's offices in London, followed by a March 2008 memo

circulated to the US-based Board of the Friends of the Vilnius Yiddish Institute. The term was subsequently used in the BBC radio documentary of Tim Whewell, in the *Economist* by Edward Lucas, by Leonidas Donskis in his 'Hostages to an Ill-Begotten Theory' and by Steven F. Lawson in his 'Muddling the Holocaust in Lithuania' (Whewell 2008; Lucas 2008; Donskis 2008a; Lawson 2009).

'Holocaust Obfuscation' is proposed as adequate to the description of the range of efforts currently underway. Adoption of the notion Holocaust Obfuscation enables the retention of Holocaust Denial *sensu stricto*, for Denial of the Holocaust in the commonly understood sense of 'denying that something happened' which conceptually differs from 'agreeing that something happened but claiming that it was not a unique or singular or important event but one of a number of conceptually identical or analogous events', or, even for example, claiming that 'many of the victims had committed some grave evil'. The following text is offered as a point of departure for the unfolding chain of events and ideas, rather than for a broader theoretical range of eventualities.

Holocaust Obfuscation is the systematic effort to relativize, minimize, obscure, confuse or eliminate the Holocaust, as a distinct historic entity in European history, without necessarily denying any of the documented murders. By the early twenty-first century Holocaust Obfuscation evolved as a major trend of thought in some governmental, political, press, academic and other elite circles of some new-accession states in the east of the European Union. Its ideas have been packaged in a number of declarations and proposed laws aimed at eliciting compliance from Western nations and organizations of nations. The most frequent apparatus includes: inflation of the term genocide to encompass a variety of Soviet crimes; the claim that Nazi and Soviet crimes were inherently equivalent; thereby leaving the Holocaust as a conceptual 'half' in the replacement paradigm. At the local level, variants of the model have included claims of overwhelming Jewish complicity in communism; claims that the murder of the Jewish populations in Eastern Europe was a reaction to alleged Jewish communism; claims that the miniscule percentage of Jews who survived by escaping to Soviet-supported partisan groups in the forests are a priori guilty of 'war crimes' (hence they may be investigated with neither evidence nor charges). The Holocaust Obfuscation movement frequently harbors antisemitic and racist undertones.

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