

Mr. Dominik Wichmann
Editor in Chief
Stern

Sir,

May I congratulate to you, Bernhard Albrecht, Nikolas Pilos and Daniel Mayer, you are talented students of Dr. Göbbels. Your *Juden in Ungarn. Wiederkehr des Hasses* is a masterpiece of mixing truth, lies, historical falsifications and insinuations.

May I add some comments.

I agree with your main conclusion: Jews are not endangered in Hungary. The readers' excited fantasy had to be satisfied with insignificant street photos and rhetoric, instead of bloody scenes or dead bodies; vain search for explosives, instead of bombing; preparation in fights instead of violence. Your arguments are limited to fears, one oral, one written, one political and one physical insult and the fact that Hungarian Jews are considering emigration.

I do not want to understate these phenomena; it is shamefully enough for a country if people have to live in fear. And I don't want to be cynic neither. But is there any place where Jewish people are not afraid? Your article reads that "Diese ständige innere Alarmbereitschaft ist tief verankert in András' Seele". (And it is rightly written that this „Alarmbereitschaft“ derives from the fathers' tragedies.)

There is antisemitism in Hungary, no question, probably stronger than in many other countries. But is there any place where there is no antisemitism? Did you ask why the Hungarian is one of the biggest Jewish communities in Europe? (Second or third, according to different sources, running to some 100.000 – 120.000 strong people.) Did you ask, why it happens that since the collapse of the Soviet Union you Germans make your best to attract Russian Jew emigrants (offering them passport and citizenship), still, the size of the Jewish community in Germany is not significantly bigger than the Hungarian? (Despite the much higher wages and much better living conditions.) Did you ask why the Austrian Jewish community is only 8.000 strong (!) and decreasing? In the past decades emigrants from Israel to Hungary always surpassed emigrants from Hungary to Israel, although the gap has been almost closed by now.

Let me mention a special factor. If Hungary is ruled not by socialists and liberals, the Jews suddenly shout antisemitism and fascism. This happened both during the Antall government and the first Orbán government. Due to their inner feeling of danger they feel safe only under socialist and/or liberal rule. One person in your report says: "Wir leben schon heute in einer totalitären Gesellschaft". It would have been completely true if all those lies became true what the social-liberal and partly the conservative media (including you, as a latecomer) says and writes about Hungary. There is no excuse for the antisemitic expressions and deeds. But perhaps, the above condition gives some explanation. When a patriotic (and not nationalist!) government is on power, some Hungarian artists and intellectuals plus journalists of Jewish origin shout all over the world false charges against Hungary. (I mean Konrád, Kertész and Dallos in Berlin or the world famous musicians as András Schiff, Ádám Fischer and Iván Fischer.) In such cases some Hungarians of patriotic feelings really insult Jews as a retaliation because of the lies and untrue charges against Hungary.

Mr. Wichman, your article is rather onesided. Why didn't you ask e.g. the Hungarian Jewish Association, or, e.g. the Embassy of Israel in Budapest? Why didn't you try to divide subconscious fear from realistic fear? Your main argument is the growing threat of the "Jobbik". You refer to a 20 per cent share of this party in the public opinion polls. This is a CAPITAL LIE, Sir. You will not find higher than 7-8 per cents in the total electorate, and 14-15 per cent in the decisive voters in any sources. Besides, Jobbik is permanently declining. I don't think that Stern were professionally so poor. My answer is this: your aim was not to write a fact-based article about the topic, but a piece which proves your preconception. Your aim was to write an article which blames Hungary. I would be ashamed of this.

I do not doubt that those fears and laments voiced by the interviewed people were not true. But besides these subjective feelings (I repeat, I accept them) many arguments which refer to facts, are false. I repeat, Sir, many arguments of the paper ARE FALSE! Therefore I cannot undertake to reveal all of them. I shall concentrate on your falsification of history.

As arguments for the present are rather poor, you added great pieces of historical falsifications to „enrich“ the text. It reads: “Die meisten [Holocaustopfer in Ungarn] wurden im Vernichtungslager Auschwitz ermordet, deportiert mit Unterstützung der eigenen Landsleute, die unter dem Staatschef Miklós Horthy und später dem Marionettenregime der Pfeilkreuzler mit dem deutschen Besatzern kollaborierten“. This is a real Göbbelsian formulation, because although formally it is true, as to the substance, the whole sentence is a total lie. In 19th March 1944 Hungary was occupied by the Germans in the way that Horthy had been invited by Hitler for talks in Klessheim and in the meantime Hitler started the German troops against Hungary. Before this no one Jew had been deported! Deportations were started by the Germans after the country had been occupied. But when during summer of that year the so called “Auschwitz report” appeared and revealed what happened with the Jews in the camps, Horthy suddenly stopped deportations.¹ As a result the ghetto of Budapest and the many Jews who escaped there from the countryside had been saved. Their number was estimated to 280.000 some people! The Pfeilkreuzler were put in power by the Germans after Horthy's intention to jump out from the war failed. Of course, Hungarian authorities are also responsible in the sense that they collaborated with the Germans; helped to collect and transport the Jews. In Eastern Europe it was Hungary who kept its independence from the Germans for the latest times. It should be clearly seen: had Horthy not followed this policy, the whole Hungarian Jewish community would have been lost. (Here you have the explanation, why are there so many Jews living in Hungary.)

The report readily accommodates the well known and frequently repeated charge: “In Ungarn habe es nie eine Aufarbeitung der Nazizeit gegeben”... “schieben viele die Schuld auf die Deutschen”. Those who are restlessly echoing this charge, should like Hungary to acknowledge that the regime between the two world wars was a fascist one, headed by Horthy as a fascist dictator. The problem is that during Horthy both communist and fascist parties were outlawed, their leaders imprisoned and Horthy was not a war criminal. He was summoned to in Nürnberg not as a suspect but as a witness in the process against Veessenmayer.

¹ You may argue that he should have known earlier what happened in the lagers. If yes, the allies also should have known it; why they did not do anything against it, e.g. bombing railway tracks which led to the Vernichtungslagers. You also may argue that Horthy stopped deportations due to other reasons. Anyhow, the deportations were stopped, due to any reason.

You write that “Vor dem Zweiten Weltkrieg erließ Horthys Regierung drakonische Judengesetze und ließ die Deportation von Hunderttausenden Juden zu“. As concerns the conditions of deportations, I have been already telling about them. The laws against the Jews also were enacted under the forceful demand of Hitler. Let me repeat: Horthy’s strategy was to keep the independence of the country as further as possible. Had he not complied with the demands of Hitler or had he abdicated from his position, Hungary would have been occupied earlier and no Jews would have survived that.

I repeat I cannot deal with all your intentional lies and falsifications – maybe sometimes errors. But let me make some comments on your presenting Orbán as Der Provokateur. Without repeating the text, your conclusion is that Orbán is a provocator because he compared Angela Merkel to Hitler. To repeat, in your evaluation it is not Merkel the provocator who referred in a cynic way to a former occupation of Hungary by the Germans, which resulted in the deportation of several hundred thousands Jews. Merkel should not afforded such a disgusting joke.

To understand the case I suggest to consider this option. Let us suppose that somebody is dissatisfied with Israel’s policy concerning Palestina and asks the German chancellor why isn’t she trying to influence Israel more. And the chancellor replies: “We try our best, but we cannot close them in concentration camps”. Would Netanjahu take it as a joke? Of course, the German chancellor should by no means crack such a disgusting “joke” vis-à-vis Israel. But due to some reason she thinks she could afford a similar “joke” against Hungary.² And you vividly agree with that.

Sir, one of the main conditions of democracy is freedom of media. But the German media, concerning Hungary, is full of lies, lies, lies. Is that media free? No, it is not. You feel that it is compulsory to lie. As a result, you are not free. And the German democracy must have some serious problems if it cannot do without lying. I wonder, why is it happening. Is it a herd instinct? Or is it a confrontation of European liberal values with the conservative Hungarian values? The question which bothers me is why it is not enough to write and criticise just the truth? This Hungarian government supplies a lot of actions to criticise. Why are massive lies indispensable in this discussion? In most liberal countries and in case of liberal newspapers these lies are politically motivated. But in case of Germany, I am afraid, your past is haunting. And this is a disgusting combination: to relativize your ugly past you use the methods of Dr. Göbbels. You disorient your public. My only hope is that there are autonomous intellectuals as well in Germany who do not take seriously such articles and such newspapers.

Budapest, June 14th 2013.

dr. Károly Kiss

² I know what was the association of this statement in the German environment. (The former statement of Steinbrück concerning Switzerland.) But Hungarians are not supposed to know all these antecedents and details.