

Tony Greenstein's House of Cards

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Tony Greenstein is in a state of panic. This is easily judged from the tone of his reply to my recent paper on Lenni Brenner.¹ Calling me “pathologically demonic,” “rabid,” and so on, while reinforcing his insults with a litany of personal smears – all invented – Greenstein fails to answer even one of my claims about Brenner’s systematic misrepresentation of evidence. Instead he tries to divert attention from his hero’s methods by reciting his standard fictions about conspiracies between Zionists and Nazis. The following will be clear at the end of this rejoinder: (a) Greenstein’s claims are false; (b) he must know that they are false.

Greenstein begins by quoting from “the Introduction to the Nuremberg Laws,” which allegedly affirmed the ideological compatibility of Zionism and Nazism. This is a total fabrication: no “introduction” to the Nuremberg Laws stated anything of the kind. It is no coincidence that he is reduced to citing the communist journal *Khamsin* as his source.²

According to Greenstein, “Saving Jews for the Zionists was conditional on those Jews going to Palestine.” This too is an easily exposed falsehood. Here, for example, is an official demand from American Zionist and non-Zionist organisations in 1943:

The United Nations should, without delay, take steps to designate and establish a number of sanctuaries in Allied and neutral countries to accommodate substantial numbers of Hitler's victims... The possibilities in several British territories, both in Africa and in the Caribbean, should be explored without delay... The United Nations should urge the Republics of Latin America... to endeavor to find temporary havens of refuge for a substantial number of refugees.³

And here is what the Zionist leaders in Palestine were demanding in 1944:

The Allies should publish a declaration expressing their readiness to admit Jewish fugitives to all their territories, and stating that they have in this the support of neutrals (Switzerland, Sweden, Spain, and possibly Turkey), who are prepared to give temporary shelter to Jewish refugees from massacres.⁴

Greenstein is well aware of these Zionist demands, which I reproduced in previous exchanges with him, but he continues to ignore them. The conclusions are obvious.

In his response to my twelve examples of Brenner's misrepresentation of evidence, Greenstein does not even pretend that Brenner used his sources accurately. Instead he tries to substantiate some of Brenner's claims. The ensuing disaster is comical to see.

(i) "Over-concern" for the fate of Germany's Jews

As I showed, Brenner admitted that extricating Jews from Germany was the only option after the Nazi takeover, but then attacked the Zionists for trying to do precisely that. Instead, Brenner argued, Germany's Jews should have been left to their fate. Greenstein does not attempt to justify Brenner's appalling views on this subject.

According to Greenstein, the Labour Zionists who concluded the Transfer Agreement were not interested in saving German Jewish lives but in "saving the wealth' of the Jews and 'rescuing the capital from Nazi Germany.'" This too is false: the Labour Zionists were motivated by the need to save Jewish lives as well as Jewish assets. As Golda Meir put it: "we now have practical possibilities of doing something real to save tens of thousands of Jews."⁵ And as David Remez explained, the Transfer Agreement's Zionist opponents "want to be the firemen and to extinguish Hitler's fire, while we want to rescue German Jewry."⁶

Greenstein disputes the assertion that "two-thirds of German Jews seeking Palestine certificates in the years between 1933 and 1935 were turned down." His quarrel is not with me but with his hero Brenner, who made that claim – while distorting his source.

The Transfer Agreement was the subject of acrimonious debate within the Zionist movement as well as within world Jewry. My own opinion is that its critics were right and that it was naive to conclude any agreement with the Nazis. But the arrangement did save thousands of German Jews, as well as a fraction of German Jewry's assets, from the clutches of the Nazis. Contrary to Greenstein, the boycott of Germany did not save anyone.

(ii) Zionists who “agreed” with Nazi ideology

Here my point was as follows: Brenner cited a historian who directly contradicted him on the very page from which he quoted. Greenstein responds: “Bogdanor cites a historian Poppel to refute Brenner’s thesis but Poppel did no such thing. Unfortunately Bogdanor is so rabid that he cannot read a text and properly comprehend it.”

If Greenstein regards this as a refutation, he is very much mistaken. It was Brenner who cited Poppel, and it was Poppel who contradicted Brenner. As Poppel recounted, “Zionists were unanimous in condemning Nazi brutality and racism.”⁷ Poppel then quoted a declaration by the German Zionists:

Zionism condemns a nationalism whose foundations include the conviction of the inferiority of other national groups... [Zionism upholds] the true national idea: constructive effort and the development of the creative energies of a nation, not a battle of different groups of men against one another... we demand the protection of full equality and freedom, and of the development of our own nature.⁸

Greenstein cannot defend Brenner’s blatant misrepresentation of Poppel, so he tries to distract attention from it by mentioning the German Zionist Federation’s June 1933 memo to the Nazis. Nowhere in this memo is there any hint of Zionist support for the Nazi doctrines of Aryan racial supremacy, racial war against Jews and other groups, and racial extermination of Jews and other groups.

(iii) “Favoured children” of the Nazis

Greenstein attempts to justify Brenner’s claim that Zionists were “favoured children” of the Nazis. Again, he cannot deny Brenner’s shameless falsification of a source, so he resorts to quoting Lucy Dawidowicz – who, contrary to his assertion, was not a “Zionist historian” but a supporter of the anti-Zionist Bund. His quotation – for which he gives the wrong page reference – referred specifically to short-lived Nazi toleration of occupational retraining of Bavarian Jews in 1935 with the aim of emigration from Germany to Palestine.⁹ As is well-known, the Nazis wanted to murder all the Jews in Palestine as well as in Europe.¹⁰ But Greenstein cannot bear to admit this: it would destroy his contention that the Nazis backed the Zionists.

In Greenstein’s mental universe, Zionists “didn’t experience the concentration camps like Communists and Socialists.” In reality, thousands of German Jews, both Zionist and non-Zionist, were sent to concentration camps during the 1930s, and millions of Jews, Zionists as well as non-Zionists, were murdered in the concentration and death camps during the Holocaust. But never mind Greenstein’s ideologically motivated denial of Nazi crimes; the relevant issue here is his inability to defend Brenner against my charge of manipulating evidence.

(iv) The Haganah’s “offer to spy for the SS”

Not much needs to be said on this matter. Brenner used an SS intelligence report to accuse the Haganah of offering to spy for the Nazis. In fact, the report showed that the

Haganah member in question, Feivel Polkes, was acting on his own. Greenstein is unable to provide any evidence at all of Haganah support for the Polkes initiative; nor can he deny that the Haganah dismissed Polkes upon learning of his conduct. In his panic, Greenstein is reduced to the smear: “Offering to spy against German Jews rather than for Haganah was, according to Bogdanor acceptable!” Nowhere did I even hint that the offer by Polkes was in any way “acceptable.”

(v) Lehi’s “collusion with the Fascists and the Nazis”

According to Greenstein, I tried to “defend Lehi and its offer” of a military pact with the Nazis in 1941. This is yet another fabrication. The points I actually made were these: Lehi was a tiny fringe group; there was never any collaboration between Lehi and the Nazis; the aim of Lehi’s 1941 offer was to achieve the emigration of millions of Jews from Nazi-occupied Europe; Lehi believed at the time that the Nazis wanted to expel those Jews to Madagascar, not exterminate them; all other Zionist factions were eager to fight the Nazis; and the broadcast offered by Brenner as proof of Lehi-Nazi collaboration was actually a promise by Lehi to go to war against the Nazis.

Greenstein does not deny any of these facts, because he knows them to be true. He is well aware that all Zionists – even Lehi, after 1941 – wanted to join the war against the Nazis. But he cannot concede this, because it demolishes his falsified version of history.

(vi) Ben-Gurion and the Holocaust

Regarding Ben-Gurion's rescue policies, again Greenstein is unable to deny Brenner's dishonesty. Instead he repeats the blatant falsehood that the Zionists opposed saving Jews unless they went to Palestine.

To show that Zionists sabotaged British efforts to find an alternative home for the refugees, Greenstein quotes a letter in the press from an anti-Zionist rabbi. He does not mention the rebuttal of this letter published two days later. In that rebuttal, the author pointed to a 1943 programme for rescue, endorsed by the Jewish Agency and all Jewish bodies in Britain, which made the following demands:

- (1) a request for an announcement by Allied governments that they will afford asylum to refugees who can escape or can be removed from the territories where they are threatened with extermination;
- (2) the provision of visas for use at the discretion of the consulates of respective governments in neutral countries,
- (3) the establishment of refugee camps in territories under Allied control;
- (4) the assurance to neutral countries regarding the earliest practical arrangements for the transfer and settlement of the refugees elsewhere;
- (5) to explore the possibilities of the exchange of refugees against Axis nationals in the Allied countries;
- (6) an approach to be made to the British Dominions and Latin American countries for their assistance in the foregoing measures.¹¹

Greenstein is well aware of the facts, but prefers to suppress them. His methods of falsification are no more convincing than Brenner's.

Turning to Ben-Gurion himself, Greenstein calls him the “foremost opponent” of rescue outside Palestine, citing a statement from 1938. He knows full well – because I have explained it to him in the past – that when the Holocaust was under way, Ben-Gurion insisted on the admission of endangered Jews to any country willing to take them:

There are German nationals in the United States, in England, in Russia, and other countries. Demand that they be exchanged for the Jews of Poland and Lithuania and other countries under Nazi rule. Allow those who are able to, to escape. Do not close your gates to them. First and foremost, rescue the Jewish children. Bring them into neutral countries. Bring them to your own countries. Bring them here.¹²

It would be easy to go on reproducing examples of Zionist calls to admit European Jews to countries other than Palestine, but the effort is pointless: Greenstein knows the truth.

Greenstein also selectively cites various historians to “prove” that Ben-Gurion did nothing to rescue Jews during the Holocaust. But at least one of those historians says the exact opposite in the very chapter he quotes: the Jewish Agency Executive “spent nearly a million dollars on rescue work.”¹³ Again: Greenstein knows the truth.

Added to the mix is a memo by Apolinary Hartglas, which – contrary to Greenstein – was rejected by the Zionist leadership. As Tuvia Friling wrote in his two-volume study of Zionist rescue efforts:

These [i.e., the suggestions by Hartglas] were not Ben-Gurion’s conclusions. According to his public outcry and his subsequent instructions to the Jewish Agency in the United States and London following the official announcement of the murders, his position was unequivocal and determined: the children had to be saved, first and foremost, whatever the cost.¹⁴

In this case, Greenstein may be genuinely ignorant rather than deceptive, since he has not read Friling’s work, just as he refuses to read anything else challenging his conspiracist worldview.

Greenstein rejects Ben-Gurion’s call for a Jewish army as a “complete irrelevancy.” Actually it is completely relevant to the positions of Brenner and Greenstein, since the whole purpose of a Jewish army was *to fight the Nazis*, contrary to their inventions about “collaborating” with the Nazis.

(vii) The Gruenbaum speech

Here, again, not much needs to be said. As Greenstein is forced to admit, the Zionist leaders in Palestine vehemently opposed Gruenbaum’s refusal to prioritise the rescue work; so Brenner lied by omission. Greenstein protests: “Gruenbaum’s attitude, that Rescue was not something that the Zionist movement should concern itself, other than

having a symbolic Rescue Committee that did nothing, prevailed.” This is another untruth, as Greenstein would have known if he had read Friling’s work. Its thesis is that Gruenbaum’s committee was never meant to be anything but a political lightning rod: the real Zionist rescue work was assigned to the Zionist network in Turkey, since (in Ben-Gurion’s view) it had to be done covertly.

(viii) “Zionist” collaborators in Nazi Europe

Greenstein cites Isaiah Trunk’s famous history of the Nazi-appointed Jewish Councils to the effect that two-thirds of Council members were Zionists. This is yet another example of deception. Trunk was describing the results of a questionnaire he had sent to surviving Council members.¹⁵ *Of those who replied to the questionnaire*, two thirds were Zionists. Needless to say, Jewish Council members who not only survived the Holocaust but also agreed to answer Trunk’s questions were hardly representative of the whole. Nor does Greenstein present any proof that all of the original or surviving Jewish Council members collaborated with the Nazis.

Two Jewish Council leaders who *have* been accused of such collaboration were Adam Czerniakow in Warsaw and Chaim Rumkowski in Lodz. Brenner and Greenstein try to paint both as Zionists. No evidence is offered by either of them that Czerniakow was a Zionist. As for Rumkowski: Greenstein asserts, without quotations or page references, that he was readmitted to the Zionist movement after his expulsion from it. Greenstein has no answer to the fact – emphasised in my paper – that the Zionist factions in the Lodz Ghetto formed a coalition *against* Rumkowski.

(ix) The Slovakia and Europa Plans

Compelled to agree with me, against Brenner, that the Slovakia/Europa Plans were illusory, Greenstein resorts to his previous methods in defending the authenticity of the Schwalb letter. Nowhere in my paper did I dispute the letter's authenticity. I said only that *nearly all Holocaust historians* who address the issue dismiss the letter as spurious, especially since no copy exists in any archive. In my opinion, something vaguely resembling the letter recalled by Rabbi Weissmandel *was* received, but it did not have anything like the sinister meaning attributed to it by the anti-Zionist Weissmandel, and by the likes of Brenner and Greenstein.

(x) The Brand Mission

On Eichmann's Goods For Blood proposal to Brand – 10,000 trucks and other goods from the West in exchange for sparing a million Jews – Greenstein again agrees with me that the offer was a Nazi trick designed to split the Allies. So he is left with no choice but to reject Brenner's position that the Brand Mission was an opportunity for rescue. He argues instead that the Jewish Agency walked into the Nazi trap, and here I agree with him: but this is no revelation, since historian Martin Gilbert made the same point decades ago.¹⁶ What Gilbert stressed, and what Greenstein does not dare to admit, is that the Jewish Agency leaders were fooled because they were so desperate to take advantage of any opportunity, however remote, to save the rest of European Jewry – even if this meant not bringing Jews to Palestine.

(xi) The Kasztner Trial

According to Greenstein, “Bogdanor plays down the fact that the [Hungarian] Zionists organised a train of 1,684 Jews, with hundreds, not a few, of Kasztner’s relatives consisting of the Jewish bourgeoisie and the Zionists.” This is a triple falsehood. The Kasztner Train was not an exclusive Zionist project but one involving all streams of the Hungarian Jewish leadership; the train did not include “hundreds” of Kasztner’s relatives; and it did not consist of “the Jewish bourgeoisie and the Zionists,” but rather of Jews from all walks of life.

Greenstein rejects my view that Eichmann’s comments on the issue are “transparently worthless.” He makes the immortal observation, “Just because they are from a Nazi war criminal does not make them invalid.” Is he unaware that Nazi mass murderers – and Eichmann above all – were pathological liars? I think not; he pretends to believe statements by Eichmann solely in order to use them as a propaganda weapon.

“Selectivity,” writes Greenstein, “was a cardinal feature of Zionist policy.” For this he cites Chaim Cohen, whose remit was to defend the Kasztner Train. Unfortunately, Greenstein is now contradicting himself, for he has already accepted that the Labour Zionists were ardent believers in the Goods For Blood offer and the Brand Mission, whose essence was not “selectivity” but the attempt to save a million Jews.

Greenstein thinks he needs to prove that Kasztner was a collaborator. But my paper did not express any view on this. As even Brenner accepted, every movement has its renegades. What Greenstein has to show is that Kasztner, if he collaborated, was doing so on orders from the Zionists. Here he does not dare mention the salient fact:

the Zionist leaders in Palestine repeatedly called for a Hungarian Jewish revolt against the Nazi occupiers, not collaboration with them.

(xii) The Zionist paratroopers (and other rescue activities in Hungary)

Incredible as it may seem, Greenstein wants to claim that Brenner gave the Zionists full credit for sending the paratroopers to Hungary. “Clearly,” he says, “Brenner was not implying that the paratroopers were sent by the British alone.” Is Greenstein admitting here that the paratroopers were sent to Hungary to arrange resistance to the Nazis at the instigation of the Zionist movement? And if so, what does this do to his and Brenner’s position that the Zionist movement collaborated with the Nazis? “Oh, what a tangled web we weave, when first we practise to deceive!”

Greenstein is not finished: “one wonders,” he writes, “why [the paratroopers] were sent towards the end of the war when most Jews had already been exterminated.” In fact the Zionists had been pleading with the British army since January 1943 to send hundreds of commandos to Nazi Europe for resistance and rescue operations. It was British procrastination that thwarted the earlier dispatch of the Zionist paratroopers.¹⁷

Another flagrant falsification is this claim: “Hehalutz [i.e., the Zionist youth] are believed to have saved 5,000 of their own cadres [in Hungary] but that was not rescue of Hungarian Jews in general.” The rescue operations of the Zionist youth, as he is well aware, aimed precisely at saving Hungarian Jews in general, and actually saved the lives of tens of thousands of Jews – as many as 100,000, according to one estimate.¹⁸

So fanatical is Greenstein in denying any credit to the Zionists that he even minimises the role of Moshe Krausz, head of the Jewish Agency's Palestine Office in Budapest, in smuggling the Auschwitz Protocols to the free world. But the facts are well-established: it was Krausz whose copy of this eye-witness report was distributed to the world press in June 1944, triggering the events that ended the mass deportations from Hungary to Auschwitz. And another fact is also well-established: it was George Mantello who disseminated the copy sent to Switzerland by Moshe Krausz. Mantello was also a Zionist. Greenstein suppresses that fact as well.

But there is no need to dwell on Greenstein's denials of Zionist rescue achievements in Hungary. His insincerity is shown by his refusal to acknowledge one fact noted in my paper: the president of Hungary's Zionist Federation organised the protection of several thousand Jewish children from the fascist terror in special shelters. Greenstein consigns this achievement to an Orwellian memory hole.

Conclusion

That Greenstein does not believe what he writes must now be evident. His arguments are a house of cards, collapsing at the slightest challenge. He denies established facts, ignores evidence, and manipulates the record whenever it suits his purpose.

The same is true of his smears against me. Greenstein claims, for example, that I am attacking Brenner when I note that he spent time in prison for promoting civil rights and marijuana legalisation; in fact I consider this to be a point in Brenner's favour. He

claims that I write for the website *FrontPage*; in fact I have never contributed to this site, which merely re-posted three articles I had published elsewhere many years ago. And so on. Greenstein's fabrications give us the closest approximation to infinity: there is no limit to them.

One last point: Tony Greenstein has the effrontery to compare me with David Irving. Has Greenstein forgotten his open defence of the Islamist who donated to Irving's legal fund? And isn't it Greenstein who now denies, Irving-style, that Zionists were victims in the Nazi concentration camps? Is this a surprise, coming as it does from someone who wants to treat Eichmann – one of the most depraved of the Nazi mass murderers – as a credible witness?

¹ Paul Bogdanor, "An Antisemitic Hoax: Lenni Brenner on Zionist 'Collaboration' with the Nazis," *Fathom*, no. 13, Summer 2016: <http://fathomjournal.org/an-antisemitic-hoax-lenni-brenner-on-zionist-collaboration-with-the-nazis/>; Tony Greenstein, "Why Ken Livingstone Got It Right Over Nazi Support for Zionism," June 17, 2016: <http://azvsas.blogspot.co.uk/2016/06/why-ken-livingstone-got-it-right-over.html>

² There was a similar statement by an official in the German Interior Ministry: see Francis R. Nicosia, *The Third Reich and the Palestine Question* (I. B. Tauris, 1985), p. 53. Greenstein's communist source mangled the quotation.

³ "Program For the Rescue of Jews From Nazi Occupied Europe," *Congress Weekly*, April 30, 1943, pp. 11-12.

⁴ Michael J. Neufeld and Michael Berenbaum, eds., *The Bombing of Auschwitz: Should the Allies Have Attempted It?* (University Press of Kansas, 2003), p. 264.

⁵ Records of the Nineteenth Zionist Congress and the Fourth Jewish Agency Council, Lucerne, August 20-September 6, 1935, Jerusalem, pp. 440ff.

⁶ Meeting of the Zionist Executive, Jerusalem, April 4, 1935, p. 249, Central Zionist Archive.

⁷ Stephen M. Poppel, *Zionism in Germany, 1897-1933: The Shaping of a Jewish Identity* (The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1976), p. 161.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 161-2.

⁹ Lucy S. Dawidowicz, *The War Against the Jews, 1933-1945* (Bantam, 1976), p. 84.

¹⁰ See Klaus-Michael Mallmann and Martin Cüppers, *Nazi Palestine: The Plans For the Extermination of the Jews in Palestine* (Enigma Books, 2009).

¹¹ S. Levenberg, Letters, *The Times*, June 8, 1961.

¹² *Palestine Post*, December 1, 1942.

¹³ Shabtai Tevet, *Ben-Gurion: The Burning Ground, 1886-1948* (Houghton Mifflin, 1987), p. 859.

¹⁴ Tuvia Friling, *Arrows in the Dark: David Ben-Gurion, the Yishuv Leadership, and Rescue Attempts during the Holocaust* (University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), vol. 1, p. 170.

¹⁵ Isaiah Trunk, *Judenrat: The Jewish Councils in Eastern Europe Under Nazi Occupation* (Macmillan, 1972), pp. 29-32.

¹⁶ See Martin Gilbert, *Auschwitz and the Allies* (Mandarin, 1991), pp. 201-61.

¹⁷ See, for example, Yoav Gelber, "The Mission of the Jewish Parachutists From Palestine in Europe in World War II," *Studies in Zionism*, vol. 7, no. 1, 1986, pp. 51-76; Judith Tydor Baumel-Schwartz, *Perfect Heroes* (University of Wisconsin Press, 2010), pp. 3-44.

¹⁸ Giles Lambert, *Operation Hazalah: How Young Zionists Rescued Thousands of Hungarian Jews in the Nazi Occupation* (Bobbs-Merrill, 1974), p. 4.