

:היקום של אלי אשד



לכאן קל להיכנס אבל קשה מאוד לצאת.

EYAL SIVAN EICHMANN, LIES, AND VIDEOTAPE 



by

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The controversy over whether director [Eyal Sivan](#) should be [publicly funded](#) prompts me to write the following lines. Some of Sivan's supporters have dredged up his defence to my claims about his work on "The Specialist," which were widely reported in

early 2005. Sivan falsely labeled some of my claims lies and I wish the record set straight. Contrary to Sivan's heavy insinuations that I am not to be trusted because I am a slave to Zionist ideology, I neither live in Israel nor am I either affiliated formally, or by sympathy, with any part of the Israeli political spectrum.

Before looking at "[The Specialist](#)" I would like to address two questions that have been widely discussed in connection with the issue at hand: Sivan on Israel's right to exist and his attitude to calls for boycott (on the further questions of his alleged anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism, Sivan does not dispute the former and I shall give some attention later to the latter).

Sivan's statement about a "historical mistake" refers to the 1947 decision to partition Palestine. In February, during "Israel Apartheid Week" in London, he clarified that because Israel is unique among UN member states in that it was founded by international law, it calls into question its own right to exist by not adhering to that law. Sivan made it clear that only Israel is capable of thus delegitimising itself; such a fate cannot befall any other country. Sivan offered this information as a practical solution to a questioner who wanted to know what could be done about Israel's invulnerability and he repeatedly banged the table to emphasize his main point. It is hard to top the hypocrisy of Sivan's investing international law with unquestionable authority when it can be used to delegitimise Israel, but scorning its decision to establish Israel as a "mistake."

Sivan [has falsely claimed not to have supported boycott calls](#) against Israel. He has endorsed a call to boycott all Israeli art and cultural institutions and events until Israel completes a withdrawal to the 1967 borders and dismantles all West Bank settlements. Even if Israeli institutions wish to award him funding, Sivan has a prior commitment to reject such funding.

"The Specialist" is widely regarded as a documentary about the [Eichmann trial](#). Is it? No, it is a work of fiction, for the simple reason that it depicts events that never took place. How has Sivan achieved this, if all his source material is authentic? By the simple expedient of replacing every shot that doesn't match what he wants to show with one that does conform, regardless of original context. He is thus able to shape performances for his main characters. Eichmann is divested of all traits that are not bureaucratic, while Prosecutor Gideon Hausner is villified. A few examples will suffice. Eichmann's reaction shots during witness Franz Meyer's testimony have been replaced to conform to the out-of-context fragment Sivan uses. When Judge Moshe Landau criticizes Hausner after the testimony of witness Abba Kovner, Sivan inserts a weakly interjected "but..." that Hausner did not utter at that point and replaces a shot of him erectly facing the judge with an almost identical one in which he is slightly slumped. While this is going on, Sivan cuts in footage of Eichmann shuffling and straightening his papers with comical intensity. In fact, Eichmann sat and listened in silence. In one scene, Eichmann replies to one of Hausner's questions. Sivan has removed the one shot of Hausner listening that was originally there and replaced it with two others that show him imperiously turning away and gazing into the distance with a vacant look. On more than one occasion, Sivan shows us Hausner rudely cutting off a reply from Eichmann. In all such instances I have so far checked, Eichmann was able to finish his reply; Sivan cut him off, by inserting dismissive-sounding remarks by Hausner from elsewhere in the trial. At no point in "The Specialist" is it safe to assume that any two shots originally belonged together. Most of the reflections Sivan added to Eichmann's glass booth are a misleading attempt to dispel doubt that his reactions could have come from elsewhere.

Sivan adds laughter whenever the fancy takes him, thus embellishing the testimonies .of Leslie Gordon and Joel Brand



Eyal Sivan

Sivan misleads with out-of-context moments. The aforementioned testimony of Franz Meyer shows him telling what an utterly unremarkable bureaucrat Eichmann was, not warm, but always civil. Sivan does not tell his audience that Meyer was telling the court what Eichmann was like in meetings that took place before 1938. Meyer later contrasted this with the Eichmann he encountered again in 1939, who was rude, brutal, autocratic and threatening, but Sivan is careful to include nothing of this nature in his film. In another sequence, Sivan shows the unidentified witness Michael Musmanno saying "He said to me that Eichmann influenced Hitler." Sivan does not tell us that Musmanno was quoting Joachim von Ribbentrop and that several minutes were taken at that point in the trial to establish that Musmanno had not believed what Ribbentrop had told him.

Sivan also fabricates, as when he shows a witness reacting with silence to a question about his lack of resistance he was never asked. The witness who was asked the question (Yaacov Gurfein) provided an immediate and satisfactory answer, while the witness who was shown (Avraham Lindwasser) was silent because he was recovering from the emotional strain of recounting how he came across his sister's body in a pile of corpses from which he'd been ordered to remove the teeth at Treblinka.

Sivan commits forgery, as when he removes witness Pinchas Freudiger's description of a jack-booted, uniformed, armed and bellowing Eichmann with "reassuring," which originally referred to a meeting without Eichmann.

But hasn't Sivan admitted all this and justified all his alterations as an artistic exploration of a thesis? No. He said my claims about the Freudiger testimony and the added laughter were lies. In the course of giving childish "justifications" for some of the others, he claimed to have used one minute of Hausner's opening address in his film, which is another false statement. The only coherent parts of what Sivan explicitly identifies as Hausner's opening address come from his summing-up, which explains why Hausner seems to be behaving as if the trial were already over before it has even begun. One needs no more than the Freudiger case to establish quite conclusively that Sivan intended to deceive, but analysis of much else he has written and said backs this conclusion up. Sivan's "excuse" for the Gurfein/Lindwasser combination was that "most" witnesses were asked the question, something even Gideon Hausner's son, Amos, did not dispute in a televised confrontation with him. While checking to see whether even one such witness reacted with silence, I discovered that most witnesses were not even asked the question; only four were and that includes Gurfein (none were silent).

Prior to his public exposure as a forger, [Sivan spoke at length](#), but vaguely, about the liberties he took in editing. He never gave a concrete example of what he meant when he said he had remixed or created composite scenes. If he had wanted anyone to know, he could have given the details, as he did most extensively with the special effects. Not only do these function as a diversion from the simple editing with which Sivan fakes exchanges, when one checks what he has said, much is false there, too, and here we completely leave the realm of what can be excused with artistic justification.

Sivan claimed that all reflections on the glass booth are his work. The misleading ones mentioned above are his work, but most of the others are present in the original tapes. Sivan's claim is plagiarism; he claims to have created something that was created by

the original crew that filmed the trial. Sivan claims the original tapes were of extremely poor quality, dark and blurry, and blames both the original crew and the neglect of the [Spielberg Archive](#) for this. The originals from which Sivan worked are of excellent quality, often indistinguishable from what appears in his film and the picture is frequently brighter than what Sivan gives his audience. While he did do digital enhancement to a certain degree, the claim that he "had to" is simply false. To hammer home the false point about the original poor quality, Sivan claimed to have left the five-minute sequence showing dozens of witnesses exactly as he had found it. Examination of this claim reveals that the entire sequence has been significantly reduced in quality. Put bluntly, Sivan has faked poor quality to reinforce his false accusations of neglect and his equally false claim that his work is responsible for all the material that looks good.

Everyone seems to have believed Sivan's claims that the Spielberg Archive neglected the originals, letting them rot in a toilet for over 33 years, limiting the use of copies claimed as originals and trying to prevent him discovering the truth. Everyone who believes those claims is ignorant of the truth. The tapes returned to the USA after the trial, which was (I was told by the producer of the filming, Milton Fruchtman) according to the company's agreement with the State of Israel. They were later donated to the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith. Some tapes were loaned out, some were not returned. All but those tapes came back to Israel in 1972 to the Rad (later Spielberg) Archive. In a widely-publicised project, funded by the Charles H. Revson Foundation, they were copied to the three-quarter-inch format around 1980. The copying was not selective (Sivan has claimed only 68 or 72 hours were copied); only duplications were omitted. The material was used widely throughout the years Sivan claims it was being suppressed and it was never claimed that the copies were the originals. Both Yad Vashem and the Fritz Bauer Institute in Frankfurt assisted in improving the cataloguing of the tapes during that time and this, too, was given ample publicity. Eyal Sivan first saw the tapes when he visited the Archive for his film on Yeshayahu Leibowitz. I showed him the tapes, both copies and originals, and concealed nothing about their history. The front of the storeroom housing them had been converted into an office, which I occupied, and I told Sivan the "secret" of the area, which he could not otherwise have guessed: it had once been a bathroom. This accounts for one of the very few grains of truth in Sivan's fairytale. Before production of "The Specialist" had been announced, an agreement had been arrived at with Israel's State Archive to preserve the two-inch original tapes to a digital medium. Sivan and his Israeli producer attempted to hijack the project and subvert it to their commercial enterprise. Though they threatened legal action, they never took any and though they were eventually permitted to have a third machine added to the two used in the preservation, any claim that they were responsible for the project, or assisted in financing it is utterly false. The videos would not only have been preserved without them, their presence added a needless complication to an already complex undertaking. A closer look at Sivan's claims shows that they aren't even superficially plausible, let alone true. The Spielberg Archive couldn't have neglected the tapes for 33 years if it only got them in 1972 and preserved them for the second time in the mid-90s. Beyond that, Sivan is claiming that the Spielberg Archive denied the existence of the originals, yet permitted him to search for them freely on its premises. One can only believe Sivan if one avoids thinking about what his words mean.

The DVD release of "The Specialist" includes an interview with the authors, Sivan and his cousin Rony Brauman, a former president of Doctors Without Borders. This showcases many of the false claims mentioned above and, in addition, Brauman explains that no Nazi ever pushed anyone into a gas chamber ("it was all terrifyingly self-administered") and that to absolve Eichmann of responsibility for his deeds is "almost unthinkable." Has Brauman forgotten the meaning of the word "almost," or is he hoping that we have? In the book they published to go with the film, they claim that Yad Vashem was built on the ruins of the Arab village Summeil, destroyed in 1948. I asked Hebrew University Geography Prof. Ruth Kark about this claim and her reply was "nonsense." Sivan has repeated it elsewhere and it is still on his website. I don't know whether or not he believes it, but he is causing others to believe it and thus to believe worse of the Zionists/Israelis/Jews than the facts warrant. Does this qualify as incitement to antisemitism?

It is rumored that Sivan has been stripped of prizes given him for "The Specialist" in Germany. These rumors are premature. Following a broadcast which included comparisons, among them the Freudiger testimony, the Adolf-Grimme-Institut, which had given Sivan a prize for his "documentary," was reported to have called for an investigation as to whether the prize should be revoked. At last report, a decision had been delayed due to personnel changes.

Everything written above is documented and can be proven. It will easily be seen that

nowhere in the film "The Specialist," nor in anything he has said about the film, has Eyal Sivan acquitted himself either honestly or honorably. I am not claiming that deception was his sole reason for making the film, but it was clearly one of the main ones. Only self-deception can prevent that conclusion from being inescapable. We are not children and cannot be fooled, unless we want to be, that blatant untruths are actually only "different" truths. The reason Eyal Sivan got away with it for as long as he did is because the scope of his deception was so wide. Each false statement backed up, or was backed up by, another. Is there anyone among us so gullible as to believe that in all his other dealings Eyal Sivan is scrupulously honest? Sivan should not be judged for his politics, but for his actions. Eyal Sivan has "freedom of speech," but freedom of speech does not mean that those who know the record of this man are obliged to encourage his employment in the fields of media or education. Anyone with a conscience, whether from left or right, is bound to do the opposite

relevant links

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[forgery of Eichman materials by Sivan](#)

[Controversy over Sivan](#)

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