

White House Press Secretary: Hitler didn't "sink to using chemical weapons"

Clara Weiss
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White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer falsely stated at a press conference Tuesday that Nazi leader Adolf Hitler did not use chemical weapons, triggering widespread popular anger and disgust in the US and internationally.

Spicer made the comment as part of a denunciation of Syrian President Bashar al Assad, which the US government accuses, without presenting any evidence, of having carried out a chemical weapons attack in northwestern Idlib province in Syria last week.

Spicer declared, "even someone as despicable as Hitler ... didn't even sink to using chemical weapons." When he was asked by a reporter to explain this patently absurd statement, Spicer clarified: "He [Hitler] brought them [his victims] into the holocaust center, I understand that," but that the Nazi leader "was not using the gas on his own people in the same way that Assad is doing."

That a leading figure in the White House could make such a statement, even in an offhand remark, speaks to the extreme ignorance, backwardness and toxic right-wing atmosphere that prevails at the highest levels of the US state.

Hitler widely used a chemical weapon, namely Zyklon B, to murder millions of Jews on a mass scale—not in "the Holocaust center" but in death camps like Auschwitz, Treblinka, Bełżec, Chełmno, Majdanek and Sobibór.

Before the industrialized use of Zyklon B in these death camps, which started at the turn of 1941-42, the SS would gas thousands of Jews in mobile vans in the occupied territories of the Soviet Union and in Nazi-occupied Poland. In total, between 2.5 and 3 million European Jews—about half of the total number of victims of the genocide of the European Jews—were killed in this way. Added to this must be the thousands

of mentally ill people, Soviet prisoners-of-war and Sinti and Roma who were also gassed with Zyklon B.

Following a public outcry, the White House felt compelled to withdraw the statement and Sean Spicer made a public apology on CNN, saying that he had "mistakenly used an inappropriate and insensitive reference to the Holocaust."

The whole incident was revealing on many levels. It underscores the obscene character of the entire campaign demanding regime-change operation against Assad, which has been based on a tissue of lies and the whipping up of hysteria. While the American media has glossed over in silence the US-backed siege of Mosul, which has taken the lives of thousands of civilians, it has seized upon last week's chemical weapons attack in Syria to beat the drum for war.

No evidence whatsoever has been presented as to who perpetrated the attack, which in all likelihood was a deliberate, imperialist provocation aimed at providing a pretext for an escalation of the regime-change operation in Syria and stepped-up war preparations against both Russia and Iran.

It should also be noted that some of the same so-called liberal outlets who denounced Spicer's comments on Tuesday have been fully implicated in this lying campaign, culminating in their endorsement of Trump's illegal attack on a Syrian airfield on Thursday.

The fact that Spicer now went so far as to basically deny the most notorious aspect of the Holocaust is more than a slip of the tongue. It reflects moods prevailing in the White House that range from callous indifference to the horrendous crimes of the Nazi regime, to more or less open endorsement.

In January, the Trump White House published a statement on Holocaust remembrance day which

ignored the six million Jews that were murdered by the Nazis. The White House likewise kept silent for weeks about a wave of anti-semitic attacks in January and February, before issuing a potted statement about “prejudice and evil.”

The Trump campaign has, from the beginning, critically relied on the support from and encouragement of the far-right. The most notorious embodiment of this alliance is White House Chief Strategist Stephen Bannon, the former editor of the far-right *Breitbart News*, which serves as an outlet for right-wing extremist groups tied to white supremacy and anti-Semitism.

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