

50,000 abortions in Israel annually

ONLINE EDITION
JERUSALEM POST

 [Click to Print](#)

Maryland historian links roots of radical Islam with Nazi propaganda

Jul. 1, 2008

Etgar Lefkovits , THE JERUSALEM POST

The diffusion of Nazi ideology in the Middle East during World War II via a well-oiled propaganda machine that was abetted by Arab nationalists was an important chapter in the history of radical Islam which reached full bloom only decades later, according to an American historian.

"A confluence of Nazi anti-Semitism and Muslim fundamentalism did take place during the war which was a mixture of ideological affinity and shared political interests," said Prof. Jeffrey Herf of the University of Maryland during a recent lecture at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem's Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism.

"Though Nazi Germany failed in its military and propaganda advances in the Middle East, the ideas it conveyed to the Arabs found adherence," Herf said, pointing to the charter of Hamas, which was established in 1987 and grew out of the Muslim Brotherhood, as well as Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad repeated calls for the destruction of Israel.

Herf, whose forthcoming book deals with Nazi Germany's propaganda aimed at the Middle East, said that while Islamic extremism could have emerged without Nazism it played an important role in its development.

"The history of radical Islam must include the history of the interaction between fascist Italy, Vichy France and above all Nazi Germany, and the radical Arab nationalists of the wartime years," he said.

Herf detailed Nazi Germany's propaganda outreach to the Arab world, which was designed by the German Foreign Office and broadcast over short-wave radio.

"When the Nazis broadcast propaganda in Arabic, Persian and Turkish to the Middle East, they were taking a narrative that they had developed - rooted in a paranoid fantasy of an international Jewish conspiracy - and presenting it in a different context," Herf said.

The radio broadcasts, primarily in Arabic, sought to create a connection between devout Muslims and the secular political message of Nazi Germany, and quickly outnumbered the Nazis' broadcasts to Europe and the United States, he said.

"The Nazi hardliners saw an affinity between Nazi ideologies and that of a fundamentalist interpretation of Islam," Herf said.

Up until 1941, these broadcasts drew on the expertise of German Orientalists, but lacked the political grasp of local idioms and politics, he said.

The broadcasts were "upgraded" after a group of pro-Nazi Arab nationalists, including Grand Mufti of Jerusalem Haj Amin el-Husseini, arrived in Berlin in the fall of 1941 for a meeting with Hitler and his associates, giving the regime a new asset: native Arabic speakers.

"As they had in Europe, the Arabic-language broadcasts claimed the war was a Jewish war and that an Allied victory would mean Jewish domination of the Middle East," Herf said.

Despite the tensions between the UK and Jews during the British Mandate over the former's blocking Jewish immigration to the Land of Israel, in German propaganda Britain was associated with the Jews, he said.

In 1942, one broadcast was titled, "Kill the Jew before they kill you," Herf said. "The Nazi propaganda narrative in the Arab world combined the political narrative of Nazis with evocations of extremist Islam."

This article can also be read at <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1214726179253&pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull>
[[Back to the Article](#)]

Copyright 1995- 2008 The Jerusalem Post - <http://www.jpost.com/>