

Zentrum für Europäische Integrationsforschung
Center for European Integration Studies
Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn



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“The Jewish Enemy”
Rethinking Anti-Semitism
in the Era of Nazism and
in Recent Times

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“The Jewish Enemy”

Rethinking Anti-Semitism in the Era of Nazism and in Recent Times

In this paper I address two questions.¹ First why did the anti-Semitism of the Nazi regime lead to genocide between 1941 and 1945 rather than to another era of persecution. Second, I will examine work in progress about the diffusion of Nazism’s radical anti-Semitism to the Arab and Islamic world during World War II and the Holocaust. Two primary hypotheses have emerged and are emerging from this work. First, the distinctly genocidal and most dangerous aspect of Nazi Germany’s anti-Semitism did not lie in reprehensible racial biology that has understandably received so much attention. Rather it lay in its paranoid, political accusation that a historical actor called “international Jewry” had become the central driving force of modern history and Germany’s main enemy. Attacking and murdering the Jews everywhere was the absurdly logical corollary of this assumption. This idea formed the political and ideological common ground on which the Nazi regime, in particular the officials of its Foreign Ministry, Propaganda Ministry and the *SS* officials in the *Reichsicherheitshauptamt* on the one hand, and pro-Nazi Arab exiles in Berlin, on the other, worked together in attacking “the Jewish enemy” during World War II.

Though the history of the Nazi regime during World War II remains primarily a matter of historical events taking place on the European continent,

1 This essay draws on Jeffrey Herf, *The Jewish Enemy: Nazi Propaganda During World War II and the Holocaust* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2006).

it was not an exclusively eurocentric phenomenon. The issue of the nature of radical anti-Semitism and of its diffusion to the Arab and Islamic world necessarily draws attention to Nazism's European origins as well as impact outside Europe.

Before, during and even for some years after the Third Reich, it is very difficult for many observers to take Hitler's and Nazism's *Weltanschauung* seriously. As Karl Dietrich Bracher pointed out many years ago, the history of National Socialism was also the history of its underestimation before 1933, during the era of appeasement between 1933 and 1939 and then, for many, during the years of the war and the Holocaust.² One of the key conclusions of my study of Nazism's anti-Semitic propaganda confirms Bracher's important insight. He, and Hannah Arendt in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, both understood that the Nazi leadership, did not hide its murderous intentions toward the Jews, on the contrary, it repeatedly announced them openly to cheering audiences. Hitler and his associates, despite the absurdity of their view of the world, meant exactly what they said. The "propaganda" in other words, was not only a tool for accomplishing other purposes. It also expressed their *Weltanschauung* and their interpretation of ongoing events. Besides taking Nazi ideology seriously, Bracher's work on the collapse of Weimar and the Nazi entry into power, like François Furet's work on the French Revolution, presents us with a conjuncture of ideas, events and circumstances. In light of his work's immersion in this conjuncture of ideas and political events, his work was not accurately described as "intentionalism," if by that term was meant a kind of idealist determinism that dispensed with the interaction of long and short term factors. On the contrary, Bracher's *Die Deutsche Diktatur* specifically addressed the interaction of the long term trends of German history with the specific crises of the Weimar era.³ He asked not just why Weimar collapsed

2 Karl Dietrich Bracher, "The Role of Hitler: Perspectives of Interpretation," in Walter Laqueur, ed., *Fascism: A Reader's Guide* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), pp. 211-225. Also see his *Zeitgeschichtliche Kontroversen: Um Faschismus, Totalitarismus, Demokratie* (Munich: Piper, 1976).

3 Karl Dietrich Bracher, *Die Deutsche Diktatur: Entstehung, Struktur, Folgen des Nationalsozialismus*. (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1969).

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but why it collapsed when it did and how that collapse might have been prevented.

Such questions about conjuncture and timing are central themes of my recent work, *The Jewish Enemy: Nazi Propaganda During World War II and the Holocaust*.⁴ I have addressed the intersection of long and short term issues in the history of anti-Semitism. Why did anti-Semitism between 1941 and 1945 for the first time in its long history lead to genocide rather than to another era of persecution? The scholarship on anti-Semitism offers abundant explanation for the climate of hatred, disdain and contempt which produced the indifference of the German and European majority as the Jews were murdered. Now well known terms and the books from which they come – *völkisch* ideology, cultural despair, redemptive anti-Semitism, the hour of authoritarian biology and even reactionary modernism – take us only to the Nuremberg race laws and the November pogrom of 1938 or at best, in George Mosse’s words, “towards the Final Solution.” They do not take us “to” the Final Solution and to the convictions of Hitler and the radical anti-Semites around him who took the decisions and offered legitimations for murdering all the Jews of Europe.⁵ *The Jewish Enemy* is a history of the translation of radical anti-Semitic ideology into the Nazi narrative present in the daily and weekly news about the Second World War. It depicts radical anti-Semitism as not only a bundle of hatreds and prejudices but as an interpretive framework through which the Nazi leadership misunderstood ongoing events. From the beginning to the end of the war which he and his government had launched, Hitler and his associates concluded that their paranoid fantasy of an international Jewish conspiracy was the key to contemporary history. Their interpretation of the actual events of the Second World War through the distorted and paranoid prism of radical

4 Herf, *The Jewish Enemy*, op. cit.

5 See Saul Friedlander, *Nazi Germany and the Jews, Volume 1: The Years of Persecution* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997); Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984) George Mosse, *The Crisis of Germany Ideology* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1964); Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961); Helmut Plessner, *Die Verspätete Nation* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1974).

anti-Semitism pushed German anti-Semitism beyond its past eras of persecution to one of genocide.

In the jargon of historians of the Holocaust and Nazi Germany, I'll call this approach one of *modified intentionalism*, and do so for three reasons.⁶ First, doing so places causal weight on Nazi ideology yet situates ideas in the conjunctures of events and circumstances created by Hitler's decisions to start the Second World War; second, it focuses on the radicalization and changes in Nazi anti-Semitism between 1939 and 1941 and how and why the resulting outlook was distinguished from its long-standing precedents; and third and consequently it asserts that the connection between the war and the Holocaust in the minds of the Nazi leaders was inherent in their radical anti-Semitism and was not a contingent result of timing, geography and opportunity, even though all of those factors were present. Christopher Browning, Richard Breitman, Phillip Burrin and Gerhard Weinberg have all connected Holocaust decision making to Hitler's wartime policies.⁷ Their work makes it possible and essential that we "intentionalists" who focus on the causal import of ideology respond to our critics who have taken us to task for offering a negative, teleological determinism in the realm of ideas which presents much of German and European history as the pre-history of the Holocaust. I propose that we are now able to do for the Holocaust what François Furet did for the French Revolution: move from the search for origins to an examination of ideas, intentions and circumstances that produced a novel event.

6 In a sense this is a counterpart to what Christopher Browning calls a modified functionalist approach in his recent works. See his "Beyond 'Intentionalism' and 'Functionalism': The Decision for the Final Solution Reconsidered," in *The Path to Genocide: Essays on the Launching of the Final Solution* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 86-121).

7 See Richard Breitman, *The Architect of Genocide: Himmler and the Final Solution* (New York: Knopf, 1991); Christopher Browning, *The Origins of the Final Solution: the evolution of Nazi Jewish policy, September 1939-March 1942* with contributions by Jürgen Matthäus, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press ; Jerusalem : Yad Vashem, 2004); Phillip Burrin, *Hitler and the Jews: The Genesis of the Holocaust*, trans. Percy Southgate (London: Edward Arnold, 1994); and Gerhard Weinberg, *Germany, Hitler and World War II* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

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These conclusions rest on examination of everything the Nazi leadership said in public and private about the Jews during the war and Holocaust. This includes all of Hitler’s speeches that included comments about the Jews; essays and speeches by Joseph Goebbels; the thirty volumes of Goebbels diaries; (and also less familiar documents such as) thousands of daily and weekly orders given to journalists by Otto Dietrich’s Reich Press Office and the Propaganda Ministry; dozens of propaganda posters printed in editions of 125,000 on a weekly basis and distributed in eye-catching public places in Germany and Nazi occupied Europe between 1937 and 1943; the most important books and essays dealing with the Jews published by the Propaganda Ministry and Nazi Party; and the headlines and lead articles of the government’s official newspaper, the *Völkischer Beobachter* before and during the years of World War II and the Holocaust; and essays in *Die Judenfrage*, the key magazine for the anti-Semitic intelligentsia in Nazi Berlin. The result, *The Jewish Enemy* is the most extensive study to date on the Nazi interpretation of the role of the Jews in World War II and on the role that explanation played in justifying a publicly declared intention to “exterminate” and “annihilate” them. Despite the abundant and excellent German scholarship on anti-Semitism, there is no comparable work in German.⁸

One result of this work is the need to revise the meaning of the phrase “the war against the Jews,” a phrase made famous by Lucy Dawidowicz in 1975 in her book by that title. Since the publication of Dawidowicz’ work the phrase became synonymous with the Holocaust.⁹ Yet when *the Nazi leaders* spoke of the war against the Jews, they were not only referring to the Final Solution. Rather in their public statements – and the evidence suggests in their deepest convictions as well – the war against the Jews meant the Second World War itself, that is, the war against the Allied anti-Hitler coalition as well as the destruction of European Jewry as two parts of one battle to the death between Germany and “international Jewry.” Hitler and

8 Despite the massive literature on the subject, no comparable work exists in German. A translation would be an important contribution to German language discussions.

9 Lucy Dawidowicz, *The War Against the Jews: 1933-1945* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1975).

his associates pointed to an allegedly real political subject which they called, “international Jewry” as the power behind the scenes, the driving force and the glue that bound the Soviet Union, Great Britain and the United States together. On numerous occasions, Hitler and other leading officials publicly threatened to and then proudly announced that they were in the process of exterminating the Jews of Europe. They presented this policy as an act of retaliation against the war of extermination which, they claimed, “the Jewish enemy” had launched whose purpose was to exterminate the German people. In Nazi eyes, this “Jewish enemy” was a political actor no less real than the governments of the Allied powers. The Final Solution was, in their view, an act of fully justified retaliation. Throughout World War II and the Holocaust, paranoia and projection remained handmaidens of Nazi aggression and mass murder.

As I indicated above, the key to the radicalization of Nazi anti-Semitism lay in this *overwhelmingly political* accusation, namely that “international Jewry,” had started and escalated the Second World War in order to exterminate Germany and the Germans. The regime’s frequently discussed biological racism was important primarily because it pointed to a bond said to exist among all Jews. Yet racial biology, though crucial for a variety of forms of persecution and violence, was not central to the justification for mass murder. While caricatures of the Jewish body filled the pages of *Der Stürmer*, the distinctively genocidal components of radical anti-Semitism derived from beliefs about what “international Jewry” was alleged to have done, not how Jews looked. The Jews, as Goebbels asserted in one of his most important anti-Semitic tirades, practiced “mimicry,” that is, they were experts at camouflaging their actual identity and passing as non-Jews.¹⁰ (His nightmare was a Jew with blond hair and blue eyes.) It was precisely because the Nazis did not really believe that they could tell who was and was not a Jew by reference to biological features that they required Jews in Nazi occupied Europe to wear the yellow star. It was the Jews’ alleged actions, not their stereotyped physical features that have preoccupied so much

10 Joseph Goebbels, “Mimikry,” July 20, 1941, in Goebbels, *Die Zeit ohne Beispiel: Reden und Aufsätze aus den Jahren 1939/40/41*, (Munich: Zentralverlag der NSDAP, 1941), pp. 526-531.

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scholarship, that stood at the center of the Nazi commitment to mass murder.

The radical anti-Semitism of the Nazi regime comprised an albeit paranoid, explanatory narrative that seemed to solve key riddles of contemporary history. Why did Britain ally with the Soviet Union after Germany attacked the latter in June 1941? Why did Roosevelt help the English and do all he could to prevent an early Nazi victory? Why did an alliance emerge between the Soviet Union, on the one hand, and the arch capitalist societies, England and the United States, on the other? Why did the anti-Hitler coalition persist even after 1943 as the Red Army began to move towards and then into Europe and Germany? Radical anti-Semitism was one of those closed systems whose internal consistency proved immune to empirical refutation. It seemed to provide an explanation of the central paradox of the Second World War in Europe, namely the emergence, deepening and persistence of what Churchill called “the unnatural alliance” between the Soviet Union and the Western democracies. In the eyes of common sense, Franklin Roosevelt and Churchill decided to make a pact with the lesser evil, Stalin’s Soviet Union, in order to defeat a greater evil, Hitler’s Nazi Germany.¹¹ For the Nazi leadership, for Hitler, Goebbels but also for Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop, the anti-Hitler coalition between the Soviets and the Western democracies, along with the entry into the war by the United States were the two most powerful pieces of evidence that international Jewry had created and sustained “the unnatural alliance.”

As the Second World War continued and the toll of death and destruction on Germany’s armed forces and civilians on the home front grew, the Nazi anti-Semitic narrative focused rage and hatred that were the byproducts of the war the *Allies* were waging against the Third Reich onto the supposed actual decision maker, international Jewry. Hitler began the Final Solution in a spirit of self-righteous indignation which placed this most extraordi-

11 Jeffrey Herf, “If Hitler Invaded Hell: Distinguishing between Nazism and Communism during World War II, the Cold War and since the Fall of European Communism,” in Helmut Dubiel and Gabriel Motzkin, eds. *The Lesser Evil: Moral Approaches to Genocide Practices* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 182-195.

nary of events into an ordinary sequence of attack and retaliation in war. Denial of the uniqueness of the Holocaust was one of its constitutive elements. As a result of this narrative, it was to be expected that as the fortunes of war turned against Germany, hatred of Jews persisted in Germany up to the end the war. At bottom, like many criminals, the Nazis justified mass murder as an act of legitimate self-defense.

They said so quite bluntly. To be sure, infamous euphemisms, such as “the Final Solution” or “special handling” and “deportation to the East” played a role. Yet, as Hannah Arendt pointed out soon after the war, the public language of the Nazi regime was quite frank. Two key verbs and nouns in the German language were the core of this language of mass murder. Neither, in any context is a euphemism. They were the verbs, *vernichten* and *aussrotten*, and the nouns *Vernichtung* and *Ausrottung*. Whether taken on their own from the dictionary meaning or placed in the context of the speeches, paragraphs and sentences in which they were uttered, the meaning of these terms – extermination, annihilation, destruction, murder – was unambiguous. When Hitler and other Nazi leaders and propagandists uttered them, they projected these very intentions and plans onto “world Jewry” and its plans to “exterminate” or “annihilate” not the Nazi regime, or Nazi party or the German armies but the German people as a whole. Political sophistication during the war too often amounted to assuming that Hitler was a latter day Machiavellian who merely said these things in order to accomplish other purposes.

The narrative came first and foremost from Hitler himself and was amplified by Joseph Goebbels and the Propaganda Ministry including the very important Reich Press Office directed by Otto Dietrich.

Though less well known than Goebbels, Dietrich, was crucial for translating Hitler’s radical anti-Semitism into a narrative of ongoing events, that is, into the daily news, a fact established in his important and rarely examined war crimes trial in Nuremberg after the war. Unfortunately Dietrich’s contribution has remained on the margins of scholarship on the subject, dominated as it has been by Goebbels’ celebrity. Yet as Chief of the Reich Press Office, Dietrich worked every day in Hitler’s office (Goebbels saw Hitler

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personally only once every few weeks). Every morning he gave him a daily digest of the international press. Hitler then offered suggestions which Dietrich conveyed phone and telex as orders to his staff in Berlin. They in turn elaborated these into *Presseanweisungen* or “press directives” to be handed out at a daily noon “press conference.” During the war there were tens of thousands of such directives on every conceivable subject, including that of the Jews. They were telexed to editors at hundreds of newspapers and periodicals each day or week. Journalists and editors who did not follow the directives risked losing their jobs or worse. Government control of the press was thus a daily – and as far as magazines was concerned a weekly – and highly detailed exercise in dictatorial control. They are fascinating reading and have not been intensively used in the scholarship.

The directives included broad themes regarding the power of the Jews as the driving force of the anti-Nazi coalition as well as detailed instructions about word choice.¹² One example was important for Nazi policy in the Middle East. In the *Zeitschriften-Dienst* (Periodical Service) of June 13, 1939, the Press Office instructed editors not to use the term “anti-Semitism” because doing so undermined efforts to establish friendly relations with the Arab world. Instead it was best to describe Nazi policy as “defense against the Jews” or “hostility to the Jews” (*Judengegnerschaft*) and to describe the Nazis themselves as *Judengegner* (“enemy of the Jew”).¹³ As we will see, for Hitler, Goebbels and Ribbentrop, shared hatred of the Jews as a presumed political actor predominated over the different variety of fanatics in the regime’s *Rassenpolitisches Amt* who hounded German women during the war who fell in love with or had children with Arabs and other foreigners. The officials of that office destroyed all of their files in the last months of the war.

If newspapers did not comply with the anti-Semitic campaigns, they received a directive from Otto Dietrich like the following of August 13, 1943.

12 For a full discussion of the press directives see Herf, *The Jewish Enemy*, op. cit., especially chapters 2, 6 and 7.

13 “Antisemitismus” in *Zeitschriften-Dienst*, June 13, 1939, 6, Nr. 222.

“Although the word of the day from the Reich Press Chief of August 9, 1943 again clearly pointed out that Bolshevism and capitalism are the identical Jewish world swindle only operating under different names, in the treatment of Bolshevism themes the newspapers repeatedly succumb to the illusion that capitalism and Bolshevism are two different and antagonistic perspectives. In particular, communist agitation is repeatedly given a boost because the press takes Bolshevism statements seriously, as if Bolshevism really wanted to destroy capitalism. In reality, both of these Jewish systems are working hand in hand with one another. Now the German press must finally put an end to this false and dangerous tendency which sabotages the line of our policy. Editors who violate this word of the day will be held personally responsible for doing so.”¹⁴

The Jewish Enemy offers the first extensive examination of the hundreds of press directives that directly concerned the supposed role of the Jews during the war.

Hitler established the core narrative of the war in his infamous “prophecy” first uttered on January 30, 1939. In that speech to the Reichstag, he publicly threatened to “exterminate” all the Jews of Europe in the event that “international finance Jewry inside and outside Europe,” provoked “another” world war, in fact, the same war which he at that moment was planning to unleash¹⁵ Hitler publicly repeated the genocidal prophecy on at least seven different occasions between January 30, 1939 and February 24, 1943.¹⁶ As if to underscore the link in his own mind between World War II and his policies toward the Jews, he erroneously dated the first utterance of the prophecy as September 1, 1939, the day he ordered the invasion of Poland. On January 30, 1941, he said ““not to be forgotten is the comment I’ve already made on September 1, 1939 in the Reichstag that if the world were to be pushed by Jewry into a general war, the role of the whole of Jewry in Europe would be finished...Today, they [the Jews] may still be laughing about [that statement] just as they laughed earlier about my

14 Sünderman, *Tagesparolen: Deutsche Presseanweisungen, 1939-1945*, p. 255-256.

15 Max Domarus, ed., *Hitler: Reden und Proklamation, 1932-1945*, 2 vols. (Wiesbaden, 1972), p. 1058.

16 For the text of the January 30, 1939 speech and the repetitions and variations of the prophecy on January 30, 1941, January 30, 1942, February 15, 1942, September 30, 1942, November 8, 1942 and February 24, 1943, see Domarus, *Hitler: Reden und Proklamationen, Bd. 2*, see, pp. 1058, 1663-1664, 1843, 1920, 1937, 1992.

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prophecies. Now our racial knowledge is spreading from people to people. I hope that those who still are our antagonists will one day recognize the greater domestic enemy and will then make common front with us: against the international Jewish exploitation and corruption of nations!”¹⁷ The following day, the editors of *The New York Times*, wrote that “inside Germany or outside, no one in the world expects truth from Adolf Hitler...there is not a single precedent to prove he will either keep a promise or fulfill a threat. If there is any guarantee in his record, in fact, it is that the one thing he will not do is the thing he says he will do...Nobody expects consistency from Hitler...”¹⁸ Obviously, Hitler was consistent in ways that *The Times* editors and many other observers did not expect.

On September 30, 1942, Hitler spoke to a sympathetic audience in the Berlin Sportpalast. The speech was broadcast on national radio and to the armed forces, and prominently reported in the German press.¹⁹ The following passage evoked great enthusiasm from the assembled.

“On September 1, 1939 in the meeting of the Reichstag I said two things. First, after we were forced into this war, neither the power of weapons nor the factor of time would defeat us; second, if Jewry unleashes an international world war in order to bring about the extermination (*Ausrottung*) of the Aryan peoples of Europe, then it will not be the Aryan peoples, but rather Jewry who will be exterminated (long applause). The wirepullers of the lunatic in the White House [the Nazi term of abuse for Franklin Roosevelt] have dragged one people after another into the war. To the same extent however an anti-Semitic wave has flooded over the peoples. It will move further and seize one state after another which enters this war. Each will emerge from it one day as an anti-Semitic state. The Jews in Germany once laughed about my prophecies. I don't know if they are laughing today or if the laughter has already gone out of them. I can only

17 Domarus, 2, January 30, 1941, pp. 1663-64. Also see “30.1.1941 Adolf Hitler: Kundgebung im Berliner Sportpalast zum 8. Jahrestag der nationalsozialistischen Machtergreifung,” Roller and Höschel, eds. *Judenverfolgung und jüdisches Leben...* op. cit., pp. 165-66. These paragraphs were featured on the front page of *Die Judenfrage*, then published by the office of *Antisemitischen Aktion*. See “Der Führer sprach; Aus den Rede im Sportpalast vom 30 Januar 1941,” *Die Judenfrage*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (February 10, 1941), p. 1.

18 “When Hitler Threatens,” *The New York Times* (January 31, 1941), p. 18.

19 Domarus, *Hitler: Reden und Proklamationen, II*, “30. September 1942,” p. 1915.

promise one thing. They will stop laughing everywhere. And with this prophecy as well I will be proven right.” (vocal expressions of audience agreement)²⁰

The meaning of the noun extermination and its verb “exterminate,” and the political and temporal context in which Hitler repeated them, as well as his assertion that he was a prophet all indicated that he had already ordered and was then implementing the destruction of the Jews. A benign interpretation of references to Jews not “laughing any more” strained credulity. His audience in Berlin appeared to suffer no such handicaps. Perhaps some wondered what Hitler meant by adding “everywhere” to his promise to end Jewish laughter. Perhaps they assumed that as the Jewish conspiracy was international, he was seeking to extend the Final Solution of the Jewish question in Europe to an act of global genocide against Jews everywhere. In any case, they applauded.

Six weeks later the above quotation from Hitler’s September 30th speech appeared on approximately 125,000 copies of the *Word of the Week* for the end of November 1942 . These “wall newspapers” [*Wandzeitungen*] appeared on a weekly basis from 1937 to 1943 in public places – post offices, railroad stations, company cafeterias, hotel lobbies, on kiosks in city squares. In a nation of pedestrians more than automobile drivers, these posters were an important component of the regime’s anti-Semitic offensive. “*Das Lachen wird ihnen vergehen!!!*” (*They will stop laughing!!!*) appeared in large white letters against a black background. The text is in boldface type set against a telltale yellow background. The word *Judentum* in the key sentence referring to the extermination of Jewry is in enlarged boldface type. An exclamation point follows. On the left above “Jews around Roosevelt” are photos of a smiling and laughing Franklin Roosevelt and men in overcoats and fedoras. At the bottom, “they will stop laughing

20 Domarus, *Hitler: Reden und Proklamationen, II*, “30. September 1942,” p. 1920. Also see “30.9.1942 Adolf Hitler, Ansprache auf einer Kundgebung im Berliner Sportpalast zur Eröffnung des Kriegswinterwerks,” in Roller, et. al., eds., *Judenverfolgung und jüdisches Leben...*, pp. 216-17. The editors of the October 1st issue of *Die Judenfrage* put this quote on the front page. See “*Der Führer sprach,*” *Die Judenfrage*, Vol. 6, No. 19, October 1, 1943, p. 1.

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everywhere!!” appears in larger white type.²¹ We don’t know what readers and listeners made of the speech when they heard or read it or what they thought about the mix of text and images they saw six weeks later when it was distributed into the texture of German daily life. However, we do know that millions of people walked past this wall newspaper for a whole week and that thirty-four other *Words of the Week* with more or less pronounced attacks on the Jews were similarly displayed. We know that if people had not been listening to the radio or reading the paper on September 30, 1942, they had a second opportunity to read this key passage from Hitler’s speech. There is no body of reliable evidence, whether in the form of police reports or memoirs, which will tell us how many people had the intellectual curiosity, political acumen and moral courage to conclude that this wall newspaper was an announcement of mass murder. The evidence does allow us to conclude that in late November 1942, the poster “*They Will Stop Laughing*” was a part of the extraordinary – not ordinary – experience of everyday life for millions of pedestrians walking around the villages, towns and major cities of Nazi Germany.

Another example of Nazi propaganda illustrates these themes with remarkable clarity.

On July 24, 1941 the Nazi official newspaper, the *Völkischer Beobachter* announced “An enormous Jewish annihilation program (*Vernichtungsprogramm*); Roosevelt demands sterilization of the German people; The Germans are supposed to be exterminated in Two Generations.” The author of *Germany Must Perish*, a book that advocated a plan to “exterminate” the German people was one “Jew Theodore Kaufman” described as the President of something called the “American Federation of Peace.”²² Kaufman, the *VB* continued, was a “close associate of the New York Jew Samuel Rosenman” who was an adviser to President Roosevelt. In “Jewish-literary

21 “*Das Lachen wird ihnen vergehen!!!*,” *Wandzeitung*, “*Parole der Woche*,” NSDAP, *Reichspropagandaleitung*, Hoover Institution Archives, Poster Collection, GE 3848.

22 “*Ein ungeheurerliches jüdisches Vernichtungsprogramm, Roosevelt fordert Sterilisation des deutschen Volkes, Binnen zwei Generationen soll das deutsche Volk ausgerottet sein*,” *Völkischer Beobachter*, (hereafter, *VB*) July 24, 1941, p. 1.

circles in New York, it was an open secret...that Roosevelt himself inspired the main theses of the book and had personally dictated the most important parts of this shameful work.”²³ The plan called for sterilizing German prisoners of war, sending them to labor camps to work on postwar reconstruction of other countries, sterilizing the remainder of the German population so that the Germans would die out in two generations and then dividing up German territory among the neighboring countries.²⁴

Although Kaufman and his book did exist, he was hardly the influential figure depicted by Nazi propaganda. *Germany Must Perish!* was the real Theodore [Newman] Kaufman’s first and only book. No American publisher would publish it. Kaufman founded his own press and distributed the book himself through the U.S. Post office rather than in book stores. The book received only a few, highly unsympathetic reviews. Though sales figures are not available its mode of distribution suggests they were minimal. There was no such organization as “American Federation of Peace” nor was Kaufman known to be involved in any other American Jewish organizations, major or peripheral nor or connected in any way to the Roosevelt administration.²⁵

Goebbels, however, seized the opportunity to assign another proper name, face and a specific text to the abstraction of the international Jewish conspiracy and its alleged plans to exterminate the Germans.²⁶ He transformed Kaufman, the independent writer from New Jersey into a barometer of the mentality of “the enemy.” After reading Kaufman’s book in English, Goebbels confided to his diary on August 3rd, that “he really could not have done it better and more advantageously for us than if he had written the book on order. I will have this book distributed in millions of copies in Germany, above all on the front, and will write a preface and afterward

23 Ibid.

24 On the uses of Kaufmann’s book in Nazi propaganda see Wolfgang Benz, “*Judenvernichtung aus Notwehr? Die Legenden um Theodore N. Kaufman,*” *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 29, Nr. 4 (1981), pp. 615-630. See Theodore Nathan Kaufman, *Germany Must Perish!* (Newark, N.J.: Argyle Press, 1941). Goebbels left off the authors’ less obviously Jewish sounding first name.

25 On this see Benz, “*Juden aus Notwehr,*” pp. 627-629.

26 TBJG, II/1, July 24, 1941, p. 116-117.

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myself. It will be most instructive for every German man and for every German woman to see what would happen to the German people if, as in November 1918, a sign of weakness were given.”²⁷ In an August 19, 1941 conversation with Hitler, Goebbels brought up the idea of a German publication of fragments of Kaufman’s book. Hitler approved.²⁸

Goebbels then assigned Wolfgang Diewerge, director of the radio division in the Propaganda Ministry to edit and comment on Kaufman’s *Germany must Perish*.²⁹ In September 1941, the Propaganda Ministry published Wolfgang Diewerge’s pamphlet with the title, *Das Kriegsziel der Weltplutokratie: Dokumentarische Veröffentlichung zu dem Buch des Präsidenten der amerikanischen Friedensgesellschaft Theodore Nathan Kaufman, Deutschland muß sterben ‘Germany must perish’ (The War Aim of World Plutocracy: Documentary Publication of the Book of the President of the American Peace Society, Theodore Kaufman, ‘Germany Must Perish.’)*³⁰ The front cover collage done by the Nazi poster artists Hans Schweitzer himself, stands as one of the defining anti-Semitic visual images of the era of the war and Holocaust. It displayed a photo of a middle-aged man wearing glasses, vest and tie working at a typewriter. One presumes it is Kaufman himself. In the lower right is a photo of Franklin Roosevelt, Winston Churchill and military leaders during their meeting off Newfoundland during the ceremonies of the signing of the Atlantic Charter. The collage depicts a key anti-Semitic trope: the Jewish brain, safely at home behind the scenes, writes the lines sung by witless non-Jewish front men. Lines from the English language edition of the book including the underlined phrase “Germany must perish forever from this earth!” are evident in the center and right of the image. The thirty-two page pamphlet interspersed quota-

27 TBJG, II/1, August 3, 1941, pp. 168-69.

28 Ibid., p. 271.

29 Theodore Nathan Kaufman, *Germany Must Perish!* (Newark, New Jersey: Argyle Press, 1941).

30 Wolfgang Diewerge’s *Das Kriegsziel der Weltplutokratie: Dokumentarische Veröffentlichung zu dem Buch des Präsidenten der amerikanischen Friedensgesellschaft Theodore Nathan Kaufman, Deutschland muß sterben ‘Germany must perish’* (Berlin: Zentral Verlag der NSDAP, F.. Eher Nachf, 1941). See “Wolfgang Diewerge,” in Ernst Klee, *Das Personenlexikon zum Dritten Reich, Wer war was vor und nach 1945* (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer, 2003), p. 111.

tions from Kaufman's book with Diewerge's comments which "revealed" the book's message concerning "the extermination of the German people including women and children and the division of Greater Germany among its neighbors." Diewerge claimed that Kaufman's book was further proof that "world Jewry in New York, Moscow and London agree on demanding the complete extermination of the German people."³¹ He described Kaufman as an advocate of "Jewish genocide." He had "openly uttered what world Jewry wished and hoped for: the murder of the German people."³² Germany now faced the option of "victory or death." By 1941 the Germans understood that "the international Jew" stood behind the war aims of "world plutocracy and war mongers in all the world." Yet the Germans were determined not to perish. "Who should die, the Germans or the Jews?" There were "about 20 million Jews in the world. What would happen if instead of 80 million Germans, 20 million Jews were treated according to the proposals of their racial comrade Kaufman? Then peace would be secured. For around the whole world the Jew is the one who causes trouble and who destroys peace."³³

Goebbels essays and speeches are familiar to many but another look at some familiar texts is instructive. In the November 16, 1941 issue of the weekly journal *Das Reich*, Goebbels published "*Die Juden sind Schuld*," (The Jews Are Guilty).³⁴ The text was the first time that a leading official of

31 Ibid., p. 9. Wolfgang Benz writes the neo-Nazi and radical-right wing figures after 1945 including Paul Rassinier, Erich Kern and most prominently Adolf Eichmann referred to "the Kaufman plan" as if it were an expression of American policy. On this see Benz, "*Judenvernichtung aus Notwehr*," pp. 623-626. In his posthumously published memoirs Eichmann wrote that "Kaufman intended to bring about the complete extermination of our people by total sterilization...If this plan was intended as a provocation, then one can only say that the Jews accomplished their goal. For it is probable that in our highest leadership circles, the Kaufman plan served as a stimulating factor for (our) own extermination plans." Rudolf Aschenauer, ed. *Ich, Adolf Eichmann, Ein historischer Zeugenbericht* (Leoni am Starnberger See: Druffel Verlag, 1980), pp. 177-178.

32 Ibid., p. 25.

33 Ibid., p. 14.

34 Joseph Goebbels, "*Die Juden sind Schuld!*" 16. November 1941, p. 85 in Joseph Goebbels, *Das Eherne Herz: Reden und Aufsätze aus den Jahren 1941/ 42* (Munich: Zentralverlag der NSDAP, 1943), pp. 85-91.

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the Nazi regime publicly announced that the “extermination” (*Vernichtung*) of European Jewry was taking place. He replaced the if-then, hypothetical structure of Hitler’s famous prophecy with an assertion of ongoing action.³⁵

Nazi Germany, he wrote, would wage war on the Jews in response to the war the Jews had launched against Germany. Goebbels put it as follows:

“By unleashing this war, world Jewry completely misjudged the forces at its disposal. Now it is suffering a gradual process of annihilation which it had intended for us and which it would have unleashed against us without hesitation if it had the power to do so. It is now perishing as a result of its [world Jewry’s, JH] own law: Eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth . . . In this historical dispute every Jew is our enemy, whether he vegetates in a Polish ghetto or scrapes out his parasitic existence in Berlin or Hamburg or blows the trumpets of war in New York or Washington. Due to their birth and race, all Jews belong to an international conspiracy against National Socialist Germany. They wish for its defeat and annihilation and do everything in their power to help to bring it about.”³⁶

The Jews had started the war. They were “now” suffering a “gradual process of extermination,” one which they had originally intended to inflict on Germany. In subsequent essays and speeches to public audiences, such as *Das Eherne Herz* delivered in the main lecture hall (*Aula*) of the Friedrich Wilhelm University of Berlin (now Humboldt Universität) and reported in the press and radio, Goebbels repeated these accusations and threats.³⁷ Faced with this looming catastrophe, the Germans must unite behind Hitler and the Nazi regime to prevent their own annihilation and extermination.

In “The War and the Jews,” (*Der Krieg und die Juden*), published in *Das Reich* of May 9, 1943, Goebbels again stressed that if Germany were to

35 Joseph Goebbels, “Die Juden sind Schuld!” 16. November 1941, p. 85 in Joseph Goebbels, *Das Eherne Herz: Reden und Aufsätze aus den Jahren 1941/ 42* (Munich: Zentralverlag der NSDAP, 1943), pp. 85-91.

36 Ibid., p. 88.

37 Joseph Goebbels, *Das Eherne Herz: Rede vor der Deutschen Akademie* (Munich: Zentralverlag der NSDAP, 1942). On Goebbels pleasure with the reception of the speech, see the diary entries for December 2 and 3, 1941 Joseph Goebbels, “December 3, 1941,” Elke Fröhlich, ed. *Die Tagebücher von Joseph Goebbels, Teil II, Diktate 1941-1945, Band 2, Oktober-Dezember 1941* (Munich: K.G. Saur, 1996), pp. 416 and 42; also see “Dr. Goebbels vor der Deutschen Akademie, ‘Wir können, müssen und werden siegen,’” *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, December 2, 1941, pp. 1-2.

lose the war, her enemies were united “in the firm will that Germany must be subjugated, exterminated, killed and wiped out.”³⁸ In May 1943, he assured his thousands of readers and millions of radio listeners that

“we are moving ahead. The fulfillment of the Führer’s prophecy, about which world Jewry laughed in 1939 when he made it, stands at the end of our course of action. Even in Germany, the Jews laughed when we stood up for the first time against them. Among them laughter is now a thing of the past. They chose to wage war against us. But Jewry now understands that the war has become a war against them. When Jewry conceived of the plan of the total extermination of the German people, it thereby wrote its own death sentence. In this instance as in others, world history will also be a world court.”³⁹

“The War and the Jews” repeated the essential projection mechanism of Nazi propaganda. The Jews launched a war to exterminate the Germans. Instead, the Germans turned the tables and were fulfilling Hitler’s prophecies, that is, they were now exterminating the Jews. In these and many other texts, Goebbels combined the big lie or lies – that is, that there was something called international Jewry which was directing a conspiracy against Germany; that Germany had not started the war; and that the allies were lackeys of an unseen but all powerful international conspiracy – with the blunt and truthful assertion that Nazi Germany was at that time murdering the Jews of Europe. By making an inherent causal link between the war and the Jews, Nazi propaganda worked to deepen Jew hatred the longer the war continued. Nazi propaganda laid responsibility for every German death and injury on the Jews. Every German family who lost a father or son at the front, every apartment dweller whose building had been bombed was given a personal reason to hate this dangerous people.

Hitler’s last will in which he again blamed the Jews and declared that this “really guilty party” would pay for its sins has sometimes been interpreted as evidence of his descent into madness under the impact of impending to-

38 “*Der Krieg und die Juden*,” 9. Mai. 1943, pp. 263-70, Joseph Goebbels, *Der Steile Aufstieg: Reden und Aufsätze aus den Jahren 1942/43* (Munich: Zentralverlag der NSDAP, Franz Eher, 1944). p. 41. The German reads as follows: “*in dem festen Willen und Entschluss daß Deutschland, gelingt es noch einmal, uns niederzuwerfen, vernichtet, ausgerottet und ausgelöscht werden muß.*”

39 Ibid., p. 270.

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tal defeat.⁴⁰ In fact – and utterly contrary to the fiction presented in the film *Untergang* – it was no surprise to his staff. As the young E. H. Gombrich then working at the BBC in London translating German radio propaganda understood at the time, Hitler’s paranoid vision of an international Jewish conspiracy waging aggressive and genocidal war against an innocent Nazi Germany that flowed from Hitler’s pen on April 29, 1945 had been the core element of the text and imagery of the Nazi regime’s anti-Semitic propaganda from the beginning to the end of the Second World War and the Holocaust. It was in the conjuncture of the war that the old traditions of European and German anti-Semitism became radicalized and for the first time in the history of “the longest hatred” assumed genocidal proportions. As I indicated at the outset, it was this radicalized anti-Semitism that formed the common bond between Nazism, on the one hand, and pro-Nazi Arab leaders who fled from the Middle East to Berlin in 1941.

In November 1941, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin al-Husseini, and Rashid al-Kilani, the leader of a pro-Axis coup in Iraq that was overthrown by the British in spring 1941 both arrived with an entourage in Berlin.⁴¹ There they engaged in exile politics, internal intrigues to outdo one another but also worked closely with officials in the Foreign Ministry’s political offices, radio division, and office for Orient affairs and, Husseini in particular, also established connections to Himmler and the SS. It was primarily in the Foreign Ministry that Nazi Germany’s Arabic language radio and leaflet propaganda was prepared in close cooperation with the Arab exiles. Husseini, Kailani and their associates gave Nazi Germany native

40 See the classic account in H.R. Trevor-Roper, *The Last Days of Hitler* (New York: Collier, 1962), pp. 225-65; and more recently, Ian Kershaw, *Hitler: 1936-1945, Nemesis* (New York: Norton, 2000), pp. 820-28.

41 On Haj el Amin al-Husseini and Rashid Ali el Kilani in Berlin see Klaus Gensicke, *Der Mufti von Jerusalem, Amin el-Husseini, und die Nationalsozialisten* (Frankfurt/Main: 1988); Israel Gershoni and James P. Jankowski, *Redefining the Egyptian nation, 1930-1945* (New York : Cambridge University Press, 1995); Gerhard Hopp, *Der Mufti-Papiere. Briefe, Memoranden, Reden und Aufrufe Amin al-Hussainis aus dem Exil, 1940-1945* (Berlin: 2001); Lukasz Hirszowicz, *The Third Reich and the Arab East* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966), pp. 211-228.

Arabic speakers who were familiar with the issues and personalities of local politics in the Arab and Moslem world. They played a central role in the diffusion of Nazi ideology into the idioms and issues of the very different political and cultural context of the Arab world and of Islam.

As this essay reports on work in progress, the following remarks are in the form of a preliminary report. Suffice it to say that American diplomats in Cairo, Egypt were listening to Nazi Germany's Arabic language radio programs. Alexander Comstock Kirk, in particular, had served as Chargé d'Affaires of the American Embassy in Berlin in 1939 to 1940. He had been a careful observer of Nazi Germany's anti-Jewish policies. When he took up his position as "Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary" in the US Legation in Cairo on March 29, 1941 he brought with him a deep knowledge of and opposition to the Nazi regime.

American diplomats in Cairo began to send reports about Arabic language broadcasts coming from Germany and Italy in summer 1939. Kirk sent the first of his dispatches about them to Washington on September 13, 1941. The summaries continued and expanded in length and detail until April 1942 when Kirk's staff at the American Embassy in Cairo began to produce verbatim transcripts in English translation of Nazi Germany's Arabic language radio broadcasts to the Middle East. Kirk sent these verbatim dispatches to Washington every week until March 1944 when his successor, Pickney Tuck, continued to do so until spring 1945. The resulting several thousand pages, between 15 and 30 pages a week have lain unread in the archives of the US State Department ever since.⁴² In the summer of 2007, I found them in the United States National Archives in the Maryland suburbs of Washington, DC. In light of the massive amount of destruction of documents of the Nazi Foreign Ministry both due to allied aerial bombing as well as to intentional document destruction of Nazi government officials,

Klaus Michael Mallmann and Martin Coppers, *Halbmond und Hakenkreuz: Das Dritte Reich, die Araber und Palästina* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2006), pp. 105-120.

⁴² See United States National Archives and Records Administration (hereafter, NARA), Record Group (hereafter RG) 84 Cairo Legation and Embassy, Secret and Confidential General Records, 1939-1945, 820.02-830, Entry 2412, 350/55/6/5.

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the surviving German documentation, though important, leaves important gaps. As far as I have been able to determine, the Kirk transcripts comprise by far the most complete record of Nazi Germany’s efforts to influence the Arab and Islamic world via its wartime radio broadcasts.

The transcripts reveal the intertwining of Nazi ideology and the Nazi narrative of World War II with themes of Arab nationalism as well as those of what we would now call fundamentalist or radical Islam. The transcripts reveal Germany, and fascist Italy’s efforts to present themselves as partisans of Arab independence against British colonialism. Husseini celebrates Rommel’s victories. Many broadcasts repeat the general themes of radical anti-Semitism, describe World War II as a Jewish war and some call on the Arabs to kill the Jews in their midst. Still others reflected Foreign Ministry decisions to promote anti-American sentiment in the Middle East by associating the United States and President Franklin Roosevelt in particular with the Jews.

Mallman and Martin Cuppers note in their important recent work, *Halbmond und Hakenkreuz*, that the *Sicherheitsdienst* and German military intelligence was reporting back to Berlin that if Rommel’s North Africa Corps was victorious and was able to enter Cairo and Palestine, it could count on support from some elements of the Egyptian officer corps as well as from the Moslem Brotherhood.⁴³ They reveal that an *Einsatzgruppe* in Rome was armed and prepared to depart to Palestine to murder the Jewish population there had Rommel been successful at Al Alamein and that the German officials expected as much support for that endeavor as Ukrainians had given to *SS* units on the Eastern Front. There remains much work to be done by scholars who read Arabic and Farsi on the reception of Nazi propaganda and policy during World War II in the Middle East.

In summer 1945, Husseini fled Germany but was arrested in France. Under circumstances that have never been fully explained, he somehow “escaped”

43 On this see Mathias Kuentzel’s *Jihad und Judenhass: Über die neuen Antijüdischen Krieg* (Freiburg: ca ira, 2002); and Mallmann and Cuppers, *Halbmond und Hakenkreuz*, op. cit.

and arrived in Cairo. The Yugoslav government in Belgrade wanted to put him on trial for war crimes for his role in inspiring and organizing an SS division of Bosnian Moslems. In summer 1945, a report by the United States Office of Strategic Services on “The Near East and the War Crimes Problem” arrived at the following conclusions: “In the Near East the popular attitude toward the trial of war criminals is one of apathy. As a result of the general Near Eastern feeling of hostility to the imperialism of certain of the Allied powers, there is a tendency to sympathize with rather than condemn those who have aided the Axis. In the past the Allies have shown a tendency to avoid martyring such individuals by subjecting them to imprisonment or exile rather than to capital punishment. It can therefore be concluded that in view of the present inter-Allied rivalry in the area, the past and potential political usefulness of most, if not all, of the Near Eastern supporters of the Axis will preclude their trial as war criminals.”⁴⁴ There were many people active in political and intellectual life in the Arab world who simply did not share the revulsion for Nazism and fascism that would become more widespread in postwar Europe and the United States. Haj Amin el-Husseini arrived in Cairo in June 1946 and was greeted with enthusiastic editorials in Arabic newspapers such as *Al Mokkattam*, *Al Misri* and *Al Kutla*, the last an organ of the Wafd Party when it had been in power during the war in Cairo.⁴⁵

We are in the early stages of writing the history of Nazism’s impact on the Arab world and in assessing its place in the history of the emergence of radical Islam and the associated diffusion of radical anti-Semitism into an Islamic context. Yet one thing has become more clear. The history fascism

44 “‘The Near East and the War Crimes Problem’: Office of Strategic Services, Research and Analysis Branch, R and A, No. 1090.116, 23 June 1945, Situation Report: Near East, Analysis of Current Intelligence for the Use of OSS,” pp. 1-28, in NARA), RG) 84, Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State, Syria: Damascus Legation, Confidential File, 1945: Vol. 1-2, 030-800B, Classified General Records, Entry 3248A, 350/69/5/6-7, Box 4, Vol. II, 711-800B.

45 “Al Kutla, June 12, 1946, ‘Welcome Mufti in the field of Jihad,’ in Press Comment on the Escape of Haj Amin Al Husseini, American Legation, Cairo, June 22, 1946,” p. 2, NARA, RG 84, Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State, Cairo Embassy, General Records, 1946, 820-820.02, Box 153.

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and Nazism in Europe has a place in the intellectual and political history of militant Islam. In 1950, Sayid Qutb, the preeminent intellectual of political Islam who continues to inspire advocates of violent jihad published an essay in Cairo entitled “Our Struggle with the Jews.” It combined a close reading of the Koran with reflections on recent history. Qutb wrote the following:

“And the Jews did indeed return to evil-doing, so Allah gave to the Muslims power over them. The Muslims then expelled them from the whole of the Arabian Peninsula...Then the Jews again returned to evil-doing and consequently Allah sent against them others of his servants, until the modern period. Then Allah brought Hitler to rule over them. And once again today the Jews have returned to evil-doing, in the form of ‘Israel’ which made the Arabs, the owners of the Land, taste of sorrows and woe. So let Allah bring down upon the Jews people who will mete out the worst kind of punishment, as a confirmation of His unequivocal promise: ‘If you return, then We return’; and in keeping with His Sunna, which does not vary. So for one who expects tomorrow, it is close!!”⁴⁶

As a historian of Europe and Germany, it is not my place to engage in Koran exegesis. However we all know that Qutb here introduces an idea that could not possibly be derived from reading that work, namely that Hitler was sent by Allah to rule the Jews. In these influential lines read by today’s radical Islamists, we hear the traces of National Socialism as well as its enthusiastic reception in the small but over time important ideological currents that contributed to radical Islam.

Conclusion

In the Nazi imagination, the war between Germany and international Jewry encompassed both the conventional military battle with the Allies as well as the Final Solution. For Hitler and his associates and for the ideological vanguard organizations that encompassed tens of thousands of individuals,

46 Sayid Qutb, “Our Struggle with the Jews,” translated by Ronald Nettler in Ronald L. Nettler, *Past Trials and Present Tribulations: A Muslim Fundamentalist’s View of the Jews* (Oxford: Vidal Sasson International Center for the Study of Antisemitism, Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Pergamen Press, 1987), pp. 86-87.

the Nazi “war” against the Jews was both the war against the Allies and against the defenseless, civilian Jewish population of Europe. From the perspective of Nazism’s radical anti-Semitism, there were not two separate events, one called World War II and the other, the Final Solution. Instead these were two aspects of one overarching “war” between Nazi Germany and international Jewry. When the Allied powers defeated the Third Reich – and then when the state of Israel was founded – unreconstructed Nazis and their successors found further evidence of the victory of powerful Jewry. The most important contribution of *The Jewish Enemy* lies in urging us to think anew about these very familiar events and issues. Militant Islamists in the Middle East came to similar conclusions.

In the 1940s, much sophisticated opinion concluded that the Nazis were master propagandists but could not really believe or act on the absurdities that stemmed from radical anti-Semitism. With hindsight, we know better. We know that when political leaders publicly make outrageous threats to murder or wipe out another people or nation, they very well may carry them out. Sophistication today means the ability to understand that as often as not such fanatics mean what they say and say what they mean. Over the course of a brilliant career, Karl Dietrich Bracher stressed the need to take ideological fanaticism very seriously and not to underestimate its causal weight in politics. His arguments remain compelling both as interpretations of the past and as political wisdom for the present. In the face of contemporary forms of fanaticism, whether it comes from secular or religiously inspired totalitarian ideology, the insight that history is not the product of conspiracy and that political events are full of contingencies is a perhaps taken for granted yet still vitally important antidote to counter this most lethal of all ideological poisons.

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The Jewish Enemy. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. 2006. There was, of course, an abyss between Nazi propaganda that presented the Third Reich as the innocent victim of others' malice and the reality of Hitler's long-planned policy of expansion and aggression. In the minds and public assertions of the Nazis leaders, they were fighting a single war that pitted Germany and its allies against a colossal international conspiracy of nonequals. The Jewish Enemy: Nazi Propaganda During World War II and the Holocaust is a 2006 book by University of Maryland professor Jeffrey Herf, in which the author postulates that the Nazi government maintained its hold on the German people by controlling the press and claiming that Germans were already being attacked by an international Jewish conspiracy. Harvard books page. Review by David Welch in The American Historical Review.