

“Nazi Germany and the Arab and Muslim World: Old and New Scholarship”

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The Nazi regime's efforts to gain adherents in the Arab and Muslim Middle East were brief but intense. My paper today is about those efforts. It is part of a sequel to *The Jewish Enemy: Nazi Propaganda During World War II and the Holocaust*, my study that examined the core themes of the radical anti-Semitism produced by the Nazi regime. In working on that book and also observing, among radical Islamists, the peculiar re-emergence of radical anti-Semitic ideas whose origins lay in Europe, I decided to extend the comparative historical enterprise beyond its Eurocentric limit and to explore the similarities and differences between the Nazi regime's radical anti-Semitism and that of the radical Islamism that emerged first in the 1930s and 1940s and which has subsequently come to play such an important role in recent history.<sup>1</sup>

In the immediate aftermath of World War II, in part stimulated by interest in the prominent role played by the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin el-Husseini, the Nazi regime's efforts to spread its ideology to the Arab and Muslim world was the subject of interest at the successor war crimes trials in Nuremberg and in several books.<sup>2</sup> It attracted relatively little interest in the subsequent decades. An important exception was Lukasz Hirszowicz important yet little read classic *The Third Reich and the Arab East* of 1966. He focused on the political, military and diplomatic dimensions of Nazi Germany (as well as Fascist Italy's) efforts to find supporters in the Middle East. The attacks of September 11, 2001 and the role of the Hamburg cell in carrying them out fostered renewed interest. In 2002 in Germany, Mathias Küntzel's *Jihad und Judenhass: Über die Neuen Antijüdischen Krieg* (published in English translation this fall as *Jihad and Jew Hatred: Nazism, Islamism and the Roots of 9/11* traced connections between the impact of Nazism in the Middle East and the emergence of radical Islam.<sup>3</sup> Last year, the German historians Klaus Michael Mallmann and Martin Cüppers published *Halbmond und Hakenkreuz: Das Dritte Reich, die Araber und Palästina*. [Crescent and Swastika: The Third Reich, the Arabs and

Palestine]<sup>4</sup> It is the most deeply researched and important work of historical scholarship on the issue since Hirszowicz. Along with Bernard Lewis' *Semites and Anti-Semites*, and works by German historians such as Gerhard Hopp, Klaus Gensicke on Amin el-Husseini, Israel Gershoni and James Jankowski's work on Egyptian nationalism, and Rene Wildangel's work on the Palestinian response to Nazism in the context of the conflict with Israel, the long disinterest in the connections between Nazism and the Arab world has given way to a flurry of interest in the interaction between Europe and the Middle East.<sup>5</sup>

This willingness to think about the impact of fascism and Nazism on the Arab and Islamic world is a welcome contribution to what has been called "trans-national," "world" or simply comparative historical scholarship. It is a necessary supplement to histories of Nazism that remain Eurocentric, that is, focused exclusively on events and ideas within Europe's geographical limits as well as to histories of militant, political or radical Islam that remain within the bounds of the Arab, Persian, Indian or Muslim world. While military and diplomatic historians have long examined the global dimensions of the war launched by National Socialism, we historians of ideas and politics have been more circumspect, due primarily to the fact that we do not read Arabic. Yet what we can offer, and what I am proposing to offer in this paper and in the subsequent book, is a more complete history of the efforts of the Nazi regime to diffuse its ideology, including radical anti-Semitism, to the Arab and Islamic world. I hope this fosters a much needed dialogue and debate with historians who will be able write a history of measures of reception and rejection of these efforts.

Fascist Italy and even more so Nazi Germany's efforts fell on some receptive hearts and minds. To be sure this reception was among a minority of Arab and Islamic political and intellectual elites and was not great enough to tip the scales of the war in North Africa in 1942. Had the North African battles turned out differently, that minority would likely have been a course of collaboration with a German and Italian occupation of Egypt and perhaps Palestine. As it was, as American and British diplomats understood at the time, Nazi propaganda left behind traces that remained a current of the minority current

alternately called radical or political Islamism. There are ideas that were articulated by radical Islamists during and after World War II that do not derive only from Islamic sources or from the passions of the conflict with Israel but which have their roots in Europe's traditions of anti-Semitism. The details of this synthesis await the work of Arabic reading and speaking scholars. This paper is addressed as much to them as to my colleagues who have worked on the strictly European dimensions of Nazism and the Holocaust. Much remains to be done to foster a fruitful dialogue and common research. We Europeanists can offer a history of diffusion. It will be up to our colleagues who work on the Middle East and the history of modern Islamic politics to adequately examine the history of reception and response in the Arab and Muslim world.

Yet there is one point that I will develop that addresses a puzzle that I imagine many of my fellow historians of the Nazi regime have pondered: How could an explicitly racist regime find any allies? How could Nazi Germany, in contrast to the universalism of liberal democrats or the Communists make any successful appeals beyond Germans whom it considered racially superior to others? In fact, a look at the efforts of Nazi Germany's diplomats and propagandists to find support among these non-European "Semites," calls for revising the sharp distinction between universalism and particularism that we are accustomed to apply to Nazi Germany and its enemies. In fact, at least the propaganda of the Nazi regime, found a way to leap across the conventional barriers of race and to seek allies against common enemies, Soviet Union, Britain the United States and international Jewry said to be the power behind the scenes.

The sources for my paper today are two-fold. First, the surviving archives of the German Foreign Ministry where Arabic language propaganda was shaped and from its *Rundfunkpolitischeabteilung* in which Arabic language broadcasts were written and broadcast; Second, I draw on what I am calling "the Kirk transcripts." These documents are verbatim English translations of Nazi Germany's Arabic language broadcasts that were sent to the office of the Secretary of State in Washington from the American Embassy in Cairo every week from the spring of 1942 to the end of the war. From summer 1941 to early

spring 1942, the Embassy sent detailed summaries. Alexander Comstock Kirk was the Charge d'Affaires of the US Embassy in Berlin in 1939 to 1940 where he reported on the regime's anti-Jewish persecution. On March 29, 1941, Kirk took up his position as "Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary" that is, the United States Ambassador to Egypt in Cairo. He remained in that position for three years, until March 29, 1944.

In the summer of 1941, Kirk and his staff in Cairo became aware of the Arabic language broadcasts coming from Germany and Italy. Kirk sent the first or one of the first of what would become weekly dispatches about it to Washington on September 13, 1941. In it, he summarized themes in the broadcasts of August 18 to September 7, 1941.<sup>6</sup> In April 1942, with a staff equipped with tape recorders, native Arabic speakers, stenographers and translators, 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 dispatches to the Office of Secretary of State Cordell Hull and Under Secretary of State Sumner Welles in Washington every week until March 1944. His successor, Pickney Tuck, continued to do so until spring 1945. The resulting several thousand pages, between 15 and 30 pages a week have been in the archives of the US State Department ever since. As far as I know, these remarkable documents have sat unread and unnoticed in our National Archives for the last half century until I found them this past summer. These English translations constitute the most complete record in German, French or, as far as we know, in Arabic as well, of Nazi Germany's efforts to spread its views to the Middle East during World War II.

Kirk wanted to draw the attention of the highest ranking officials in Washington to the strategic importance of the war in North Africa and the Middle East. In the spring of 1942, he wrote to Hull and Welles of the urgent need to increase American efforts in the Middle East. "I feel that the time has come when I must know if from necessity or merely from lack of a practical realistic concept if this part of the world is being laughed off as a factor in the defeat of Hitlerism" and warned that for the Allies he saw "in

this area...nothing but deterioration.<sup>7</sup> In March 1944, reflecting back on summer 1942, Kirk spoke of

“the dark days when the fate of vital Near and Middle East, as the bulwark between the European and Asiatic segments of the Axis and the source of supply of vitally needed oil, was hanging by a thread so slender that it was felt in many circles, and particularly we had reason to believe, in Washington, that defense was well nigh hopeless and that sending her of urgently needed supplies would only result in prolonging a lost cause to the detriment of other important areas where the supply question was also critical. Convinced that the least adverse effect that would result from the loss of this area would be a prolongation, perhaps of years, of the war, the one main objective to which the Legation bent its efforts until final defeat of Rommel in the autumn of 1942 was to endeavor by every means in its power to emphasize the importance of retaining control of the Near and Middle East and to do everything possible to that end by examining problems in their local aspects and making urgent suggestions and recommendations to the Department and to the American and British authorities both locally stationed and itinerant with whom the Legation was in contact...The period was one of emergency with the accent on action rather than deliberation, and procedure had to be adapted accordingly.”<sup>8</sup>

He added that examination of the “nature and effectiveness of Axis propaganda, particularly as carried by broadcasts in Arabic” as one aspect of the American Embassy’s efforts toward that end.<sup>9</sup>

This past fall, I’ve worked in the archives of the German Foreign Ministry and in the files of the Foreign Ministry, the Propaganda Ministry, the SS and *Reichssicherheitshauptamt* in the *Bundesarchiv* in Berlin, and in the files of the German military, especially of the *Nord Afrikakorps* in the *Bundesarchiv* Military Archive in Freiburg. The German archives, though indispensable, have large gaps, due to Allied aerial bombardment of government offices in Berlin, loss of documents in the Battle of Berlin, loss of documents in North Africa in the fog of war and intentional document destruction by military officers,

officials of various government offices and, most likely as well, by the Arab exiles working in Berlin with the Nazi regime. As far as I have been able to determine, the Kirk transcripts comprise by far the most complete record of Nazi Germany's Arabic language radio broadcasts.

### **Are Arabs Aryan? Can they marry Germans? Discussions of 1936 in Berlin**

Before the Nazi regime could make appeals to Arabs, Turks, Persians or Indians, it had to resolve the issue of how it could possibly make itself attractive to non-Germans. How this could be done was hard to imagine for a government led by the author of *Mein Kampf* which in 1935 passed the Nuremberg race laws. As a result of inquiries from Turkish, Egyptian, Iranian and Iraqi diplomats, German officials early on had to confront the issue of how could a state which had inscribed racism into its laws could seek and sustain sympathy from those who were presumably regarded as inferior to the Aryan master race? How could Nazi Germany get beyond this racist particularism and find any allies at all beyond the confines of the "Aryans" of German speaking Europe?<sup>10</sup>

In 1936, in response to questions from the Turkish and Arab diplomats in Berlin and to critical reports in the press in Ankara, officials in the Foreign Ministry, the Nazi Party's *Rassenpolitisches Amt*, and the Propaganda Ministry discussed the matter of whether Turks were Aryans. The diplomats understood that this "Turkish question" could become "dangerous" for relations with Turkey if the Turks were to be defined as "non-Aryans."<sup>11</sup> The office in charge of making such determinations was the *Rassenpolitisches Amt* of the Nazi Party. On February 4, 1936, its director, Dr. Walter Gross resolved the issue in a memo to the Foreign Ministry.<sup>12</sup> "The new racial law, especially the Nuremberg Laws of September 15, 1935 no longer distinguishes between Aryans and non-Aryans but rather does so between persons of German and those with related blood (*artverwandten Blutes*) on the one hand, and Jews as well as others of alien blood, on the other."<sup>13</sup> He continued that "the Turks are to be seen as a European people



and there therefore in the application of the German racial legislation individual Turkish citizens should receive the same treatment as the members of other European states.”<sup>14</sup>

On June 16, 1936, the Reich Interior Ministry sent another hopefully reassuring note to the Egyptian Embassy in Berlin: the Nuremberg laws used the term “German blood” rather than “Aryan.”<sup>15</sup> In reply to questions from the Egyptian Embassy in Berlin, officials in the Foreign Ministry sent assurances that German racial legislation did not forbid marriages between foreigners, including Egyptians, and a German woman. Marriages between a German man and an Egyptian woman were regulated by the same laws that would apply to a marriage to someone “from any other European state.”<sup>16</sup>

On June 22, 1936, the Foreign Office assured the officials from the Iranian Embassy in Berlin that the correct distinction in the Nuremberg race laws was one between “persons of German and related blood on the one hand and Jews as well as racially alien (*Artfremden*) on the other” rather than one between “Aryans and non-Aryans.” In an indication of the importance it attached to the issue, it sent copies of the note to Hitler’s representative, Rudolf Hess; the Prussian Interior Ministry, the Reich Ministry for Propaganda and Enlightenment, the Reich Justice Ministry, the Prussian Ministry for Scholarship and Education, the Reich and Prussian Labor Ministry, the *Rassenpolitisches Amt* of the NSDAP, *Aussenpolitisches Amt* of the NSDAP as well as the *Auslandsorganization* of the NSDAP.<sup>17</sup>

In June, the German Ambassador in Cairo, Eberhard von Stohrer expressed concern about reports about Germany in “Jewish-French newspapers” in Egypt regarding the Nuremberg race laws.<sup>18</sup> Reports that the German race legislation had classified Egyptians, Iranians and Turks as non-Aryans had caused considerable consternation in the region. German Ambassador in the Middle East reassured their Arab counterparts that the Nuremberg race laws did not, in fact, label Arabs as non-Aryans. Stohrer had been busy putting out the diplomatic fire in Cairo. On June 22, 1936 he sent a copy of a statement by the Egyptian Foreign Ministry to the Foreign Ministry in Berlin.<sup>19</sup> The Egyptian officials now understood that the Nuremberg race laws did not apply to Egyptian. The German Foreign Ministry had reassured

them that “German laws unconditionally allowed marriages between non-Jewish Egyptians with German women just as they did for non-Jewish Europeans. Non Jewish Egyptians could marry Germans under the same terms as non-Jewish Europeans.”<sup>20</sup> On July 4<sup>th</sup>, the *Auswärtiges Amt* sent a formal note to the Egyptian Embassy in Berlin to confirm this interpretation.<sup>21</sup>

In late June, reports in Egypt that the race laws declared Egyptians to be non-Aryans led the chairman of Egypt’s Olympic Committee to express “great disquiet and concern” in a telegram to German officials organizing the Berlin Olympic committee.<sup>22</sup> Walter Gross wrote to the Foreign Ministry to assure it that neither he nor anyone else in the *Rassenpolitisches Amt* had made such claims to the press.<sup>23</sup> On June 24<sup>th</sup>, the German Ambassador to Egypt, Eberhard Stohrer sent a nine page (almost 2,000 word) report about “the alleged application of the Nuremberg Laws to Egyptian citizens.” His theme was “the agitation against Egyptian participation in the Olympic games carried out by the Havas [news] agency in cooperation with the Jewish or Jewish influenced newspapers.”<sup>24</sup> Berlin’s delay in rapidly denying the assertion had caused consternation in Egypt because “the Egyptians reject any effort to place them on the same level as the Jewry” and were concerned about the impact on marriages. Stohrer was especially worried about the impact of the reports on the Egyptian Olympic Committee, whose President announced that Egypt would not participate in the games. Through clarification of the Nuremberg law with Egyptian officials and an article of his own in the Egyptian press Stohrer was able to counter the campaign of “the Jewish press.” and the “Jewish wirepullers.”

Another high level meeting in Berlin on July 1, 1936 reaffirmed that the Nuremberg race laws applied only to relations between Germans and Jews. Those in attendance included a representative of Rudolf Hess’s office; Reich and Prussian Interior Ministry; the Ministries of Propaganda, and Justice; the Prussian and Education Ministries; and the Nazi Party’s *Rassenpolitisches Amt*, *Aussenpolitisches Amt*, and *Auslands-Organization Amt*.<sup>25</sup> By 1936, Nazi officials agreed that the best option to preserve the purity of German blood was for non-Jewish Germans to marry other non-Jewish Germans. If, however,

Germans married non-Germans no distinction was to be made between marriages say to the French compared to Egyptians, Turks or Iranians. German law had no objections to marriages between Arabs, Turks or Iranians, on the one hand, and Germans, on the other,. These hair-splitting, abstruse discussions of the meaning of blood and race in summer 1936 offered a legal and conceptual foundation for reconciling German race laws with close and ongoing work with non-Jewish Semites, that is Arabs and Muslims, before and during World War II.

In reality, love affairs, sexual relations and marriages between Arab men and German women in Nazi Germany aroused the hostile attention of the *Rassenpolitisches Amt*, whose officials sought to prevent such bonds and, if necessary to imprison or deport the “offending” Turkish or Arab man.<sup>26</sup> At times a racial zealot from the *Rassenpolitisches Amt* made actual practice in Germany a public matter. If and when that happened, it caused problems for German diplomats and soldiers trying to convince Arabs and Muslims that Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany were their friends and allies. In May 1942 a writer in the journal of the *Rassenpolitisches Amt*, *Neues Volk* (New People), replied to a father’s questions sparked by his daughter’s relationship with a Turkish man, about whether racial differences between Germans and Turks meant that a marriage should not take place.

“A marriage or similar connection between your daughter with a Turk is out of the question. A near Eastern blood element (*Bluteinschlag*) predominates among the Turks. Among whom, along side Oriental and Western racial components, mongoloid racial elements also enter. The Near Eastern and Oriental races are alien (*artfremde*) races. The same is true of the mongoloid (*Mongolide*) races. Moreover, in such cases, even when such racial considerations are not present, marriages of German young women with foreigners are not desirable. If you daughter does not want to listen to you, she faces the danger of being placed in protective custody. We emphatically point out to you and to your daughter the serious consequences of this behavior, one that

obviously does not possess the slightest feeling for the honor of the *Volk* (*nicht das geringste völkische Ehregefühl besitzt*).<sup>27</sup>

Upon being informed of this text, Franz von Papen, the German Ambassador to Turkey in Ankara wrote a memo to the Foreign Ministry in Berlin on June 17th.<sup>28</sup> While the judgement about Germans and Turks was, he said, “at least debatable,” the publication of such a comment in a German magazine “has serious foreign policy considerations.” In view of friendly links between Germany and Turkey and of Turkish sensibilities about racial and national issues, the publication causes “irritation and insult” in Turkey. Von Papen hoped that the Turks would not see the publication because if they did it would become a big issue in the press and “our Anglo-Saxon opponents” would not pass up the opportunity to produce “propaganda against us.” He asked the *Rassenpolitisches Amt* not to publish such things in the future.<sup>29</sup>

On May 16, 1942, Franz Rademacher, Director of the Office of Jewish Affairs in the Foreign Ministry wrote to Gross that he “had no objection to the content of the information from a racial-political viewpoint...the fact however that it appears now and uses the example of Turkey is, from a foreign policy standpoint, really clumsy (*denkbar ungeschickt*)” and would have “embarrassing and awkward (*peinlich*) foreign policy implications.” It was a “political blunder” that should not did not happen again.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, the Foreign Ministry Files indicate in the very weeks during which Nazi short wave radio broadcasts to the Middle East and leaflets distributed by the North Africa corps were proclaiming Germany’s sympathy and support for Arab independence and freedom, Nazi officials in the *Rassenpolitisches Amt* and several university officials were determined to prevent “alien” (*artfremder*) students from Arab countries from continuing personal relationships with German women by withdrawing their permission to study at German universities.<sup>31</sup> On July 24<sup>th</sup>, Fritz Grobba, the official in the Foreign Ministry who was responsible for liaison with the former Iraqi politician and leader of a pro-

Axis coup in spring 1941, Raschid Ali al-Gailani, agreed that expelling Arab students during the war was also out of the question. Deportation would have to be to a neutral country where the students “ would fall into the hands of hostile intelligence services.”<sup>32</sup>

During World War II, the United States and Britain waged a war of ideas against the Nazi claims regarding a supposed master race composed of Aryans. On October 23, 1942, Nazi Germany’s Arabic language station, “Berlin in Arabic,” sent the following broadcast to Egypt. It was one of the thousands of such broadcast that were taped, transcribed and translated by American diplomats in the their Embassy in Cairo and sent to the office of the Secretary of State in Washington.<sup>33</sup> Arab listeners learned that following his conversation with Grobba, Khilani then wrote the following to Walter Gross.

“The Axis enemies in their propaganda state that the Germans consider the Arabs among the lower castes. In my capacity as the Premier of Iraq I can give an assurance that the Arabs do not give this claim any importance after what they have seen and felt Germany’s treatment and help to them. But as the enemy propaganda goes on repeating these lies I should like to receive an answer from an official source regarding the German consideration of the Arab race. I should be very grateful to get from you a reply on the opinion of Germany on the subject. Signed. Rashid Ali el Kilani.”<sup>34</sup>

The broadcast then presented Gross’s reply to “H.E. [His Excellency] The Prime Minister of Iraq.” (This was a fiction as Kilani’s coup attempt had been ended by British intervention in spring 1941 and he was now out of power in exile in Berlin.)

“In answer to you Excellency’s letter of 17<sup>th</sup> October 1942, I have the honor to give you the racial theory regarding the Arab caste. The racial policy has been adopted by Germany to

safeguard the German people against the Jews who, biologically, are different from the Middle East races. Accordingly, Europe has been opposing the Jews for decades. The Germans do not fight the Jews because they are Semitic or because they come from the East, but for their character, egoism and their hostility to society...While Germany forbids the entrance of the Jews into her territory, she welcomes all Arabs of Semitic origin and cares for them. The attitude of the Germans for the Arabs is that of respect. Not a single official German source ever stated that the Arabs originated from a lower caste. On the contrary, the racial theory of National Socialism considers the Arabs of a very high caste. The oppression of the Arabs of Palestine is being followed in Germany with great interest and Germany confirms [i.e. supports, JH] the demands of the Arabs.”<sup>35</sup>

The broadcast then turned to an attack British claims to be sympathetic to Islam and to Muslims. The British, in fact, “have shown their hatred for Islam” by allegedly preventing Indians from traveling to Mecca, attacking Mosques in the Arab world, destroying many Mosques in Palestine and “encouraging Jews to say in Islamic countries because they know that they are the enemies of the Moslems [orig. sp, JH] and the Koran....Every Moslem should know that an Allied victory will mean a victory for the Jews and the destruction of the Moslems, but God will never allow the fire of faith to be extinguished by the enemies of Islam.”<sup>36</sup>

The broadcast depicted Nazism not the racist particularism that it was, but as a kind of racist or at least antisemitic internationalism bound together by hatred of the Jews and in this instance the British as well. Compared to Communism and liberal democracy, Nazism was certainly a form of particularism. Yet Nazi propaganda made a different case, namely that the regime’s racial hatred was limited to that of the Jews while non-Jewish Semites, that is Arabs, Persians, Turks, Indians and Muslims in general, were simply different but not for that reason necessarily inferior. This reinterpretation of the meaning of Nazi

racism was a crucial precondition for the paradoxical “Nazi cosmopolitanism” that accompanied alliances with non-German supporters in non-German speaking Europe, as well as in Latin America, Japan and the Middle East. All were bound together in their common hatred of the Britain, the Soviet Union, the United States and the Jews supposedly controlling them. It was also one crucial precondition for the diffusion of anti-Semitism to these other parts of the world.

Apparently in Germany, there were Germans who had converted to Islam and also wanted to become or remain members of the Nazi Party. The question of whether Muslims could be members of the Nazi Party was important enough to have required a decision by Hitler himself. On September 2, 1943, Martin Bormann, the head of the Nazi Party *Reichskanzlei* sent Hitler’s decision regarding “Adherence of Party Members to Islam” to *Reichsleiter, Gauleiter* and *Verbandsführer*. “In response to questions, the Führer had decided that Germans who are believers in Islam can remain members of NSDAP. Belief is a personal matter of conscience. Muslims can be members of the NSDAP just as can members of the Christian confessions.”<sup>37</sup> What probably was a very extensive paper trail of questions, appeals, memos and discussions that must have preceded and followed a decision by Hitler is not present in the *Reichskanzlei* files and probably was lost or destroyed. Yet this laconic statement indicates that in Nazi Germany there were some members of the Nazi Party who wanted both to convert to Islam and to remain Party members. For these people, an elective affinity between Nazism and their understanding of Islam was a matter of conviction and not only a clever tool to woo Arabs in other countries.

High level contacts and expressions of mutual admiration and support between Khilani and Husseini, on the one hand, and high ranking Nazi officials, including Hitler, have been in the public record since 1946 and are well established in the scholarship.<sup>38</sup> Some of Husseini’s speeches on German radio have also entered into the scholarship as have his contacts with Heinrich Himmler. Himmler, in fact, was one of the Nazi leaders who was most emphatic about the commonalities between Nazism and Islam. On January 11, 1944, when he spoke to an SS Herman Göring division he spoke of “the common

goals and ideals” shared by Muslims in Europe and in the whole world” and “we Germans.” Both, he continued, believe that “destiny, that God Almighty—I say to you it is the same God—sent the Führer to the tortured peoples of Europe, the Führer who will first free Europe and then the whole world from the Jews, this enemy of our Reich, who took victory from our hands in 1918 and made two million deaths count for nothing. They [the Jews] are also your enemies, for the Jew was always your enemy.”

### **Arabic Language Leaflets from the *Afrikakorps*:**

In 1941 and 1942, during the fighting in North Africa, Foreign Ministry officials in an intelligence unit connected to Rommel’s *Panzerarmee*, wrote many drafts of Arabic language leaflets. The unit was commanded by Konstantin Alexander Freiherr von Neurath, the son of the Nazi regime’s foreign minister replaced by Ribbentrop in 1938. Dr. Hans Alexander Winkler, with a degree in Oriental studies from the University of Tübingen was his assistant.<sup>39</sup> On November 17, 1941, von Neurath sent the Foreign Ministry the text written by Winkler with input from von Neurath entitled “War and Hunger.” It was intended for distribution in Egypt.<sup>40</sup> It was well received in the Foreign Ministry. In Africa, General Rommel praised. The leaflet was among others that were distributed that summer.<sup>41</sup> Winkler summarized the rationale for the following text in a letter to the Foreign Ministry in August 1942. “The main argument of enemy propaganda against us is the assertion [that we advocate] racial superiority. As the Orientals incline to a feeling of inferiority, the enemy’s agitation has had some success. But the wind can be taken out of the sail of English propaganda through praise of Egyptian cultural accomplishment and emphasis on the Jews as the common racial and for the Egyptians also religious enemy.”<sup>42</sup>

“War and Hunger” sought to counter these British and American claims about German racism. Its first paragraph mimics British and American attacks on Nazi Germany. The war in Europe was “unleashed by Nazi race hatred which sees in everything that is not German or “Germanic” an inferior



animal and treats it accordingly.” Hope lay in the alliance between Russia and Britain. A victorious Germany would “would first crush the peoples of the Orient.” In contrast to the Europeans, “woe to the Oriental people if they were to come under the Nazis’ thumb.” The Nazis would treat them “as born slaves, in accord with the Germans’ boundless delusion of antisemitism which Hitler, Himmler and Rosenberg have advocated.” The text continues as follows:

Arabs, whoever speaks to you in this way, can he be anything other than a son of a Jewess? Who else would lie and turn the facts upside down? What does he want to do other than in his moment of danger hide behind you, with whom he has nothing in common in religion, morals and traditions. The only thing he has in common with you is what he as a parasite has taken from you! Look at how he really behaves!

Germany was tired of its countless Jews which like maggots in meat were present as professors, lawyers, artists, doctors and not least as industrialists and retailers. Since 1933, the Führer has cleaned house. He did not do so with brute force, as the Jew expected but rather honorably and in a German way with laws which determined the part of the alien in the life of the nation. Now they are screaming: Oy veh. And many are going elsewhere in the world where it is “better” for them, to London or New York. There they engaged in propaganda and agitation until they had their war. And now they are trying to draw not only Europe but rather the whole world into the whirlwind. With the help of others they want “revenge” for the “injustice” that came about because a free people in the course of its struggle to survive resisted them.

The Jew’s path is, as always, crooked. Now, son of Arabs, it’s your turn. Egyptians, Syrians and Iraqis! Now they are lying to you about Nazi racial hatred and about anti-Semitism. They want to catch you for their front against the enemies of the Jews. And they want to separate you from

those who also in your interests fight against the holy alliance of the English and the Bolsheviks. “Antisemitism”–yes, this expression comes from Germany but from a time when the Jews who hid behind their “semitic” language, had not yet been recognized as the sole enemy of the nations. And how stupid to claim that with the idea of anti-Semitism, Germany is opposed to the Arabs. As any child in this world knows, Jews and Arabs have nothing in common culturally. Indeed, both a vast gulf of instinct and history divide them from one another!

The German racial idea, which the Jews twist at every opportunity, strive to encourage the racially highest grade of a people, that is, the genuine and true part of a nation, and not only the Germans. It recognizes every people as God given except the corrupt, parasitic Jews. And this German racial idea recognized precisely the *völkischen* values, which led the Arab peoples to such heights and which are illustrated and demonstrated in the scholarly works of the young German generation, which feels so drawn to the Arabs.

This is not only theory. The period since the *Führer* seized up to the outbreak of this war were filled with hard work and were too short for German youth in large measure to have contact with Arabs. Where Egyptian, Syrian and Iraqi youth have had the opportunity to spend time in Germany as students, business people, engineers and officials, they have experienced a reception that smashes the Jewish life about “racism.” Oh, if only you all could once be guests in this Germany!

As you, Arab youth, one day pose the question of your own cultural national identity (*Volkstums*). If you want to be pure in *völkischen* purity and free from alien blood, that is up to you and is something you need to decide. Germany, in any case, will not direct any prejudices against you as

a result of Jewish lies! On the contrary, in a spirit of warm sympathy, Germany will take part in your struggle against the English and the Jews and, God willing, so will others.”<sup>43</sup>

A long winded texts as this comprised minority of Nazism Arabic language messages. It is clearly intended for political and intellectual elites to whom it presents Nazi Germany as the center of a kind of multi-cultural international bound together by hatred of the Jews and apparent respect for different, yet pure and separate nations and races. The “German racial idea” here is said to foster a respect for differences among various peoples, including the Arabs and Muslims, but never the Jews.

Shorter, punchier, easy to read texts mixed with photos and graphics were the rule. On June 30, 1942, von Neurath informed the Foreign Ministry in Berlin that 1.3 million leaflets that were flown to North Africa in four planes had been distributed. “Egypt for the Egyptians,” asserted that “the hour of freedom is here. You friends are close! They’ve come to bring an end to your suffering. They’ve come to confront the common enemy, Egypt’s oppressor, the enslaver of the Egyptian people. There is only one enemy: the English and their hordes they’ve forced into service, their bands of homeless thieves...”<sup>44</sup> A graphic showing Roosevelt, Churchill and Chaim Waizmann pointing to a map of the Middle East was entitled “The New Jewish Kingdom.”

“Arabs, do you recognize this flag? We don’t think you do because it is a new one. It’s the flag of the new kingdom of the Jews that is supposed to be made up of the countries of Palestine, Transjordan, Syria, Lebanon and parts of Iraq and Saudi Arabia. This new kingdom is supposed to be established after the last agreement between Roosevelt, Churchill and Chaim Weizmann in the Middle East under the temporary aegis of ‘King’ Abdullah, this traitor to the Arab cause.”

The New York Jews made Roosevelt the President of the United States. He has become their

strongest tool. With the establishment of the new kingdom, two long pursued goals will be established. The Jews have a large national state. The English and Americans have a secure base from which they can dominate and exploit the Islamic countries and India as well. Every American that goes to the Arab countries, goes there for the interests of the Jews, whether he knows it or not...While England, now as before, promises freedom and independence to the Arabs, Jews from all over the world in ever greater numbers emigrate. With help of money of American Jews, ever more parts of the fertile soil moves into Jewish hands...In the last three months alone, Jews have bought 23,045 dunam of the most fertile soil...But the deception of the Arabs in 1918 will not be repeated...For all of the plans of the English, Americans and the Jews can only succeed if England wins [the war]. With God's help, this time, England will not win the war! For Marshall Rommel, at the head of the brave Axis troops is already knocking at the last gates of English power! ARABS! Help your friends achieve their goals: the destruction of the English-Jewish-American domination. ARABS! GET THE ENGLISH, JEWS AND AMERICANS OUT OF YOUR COUNTRIES!

Such leaflets and many others introduced Jew hatred as a way of understanding World War II as a whole. They interpreted the emigration of Jews to Palestine as part of an overall Jewish plan to wage the war against both Germany and the Arabs. In so doing, they brought the general guidelines of German propaganda to bear on the Middle East.

### **The Foreign Ministry's Radio Division and Arabic Language Broadcasts to the Middle East**

Following a decision by Hitler of October 22, 1941, Joachim von Ribbentrop's Foreign Ministry,

not Joseph Goebbels Propaganda Ministry, received exclusive responsibility for propaganda directed abroad. Goebbels was not happy with this state of affairs but until early spring 1945 (at which point it no longer much mattered what the Nazi propagandists were saying and when the war had long ceased to be fought in North Africa) most of the war propaganda aimed outside the country was discussed, written and broadcast from the Foreign Ministry. As is evident from the “speech rules” and “guidelines” that he approved, Ribbentrop was remarkably involved in shaping the key themes of foreign propaganda. The key division which produced it was called the *Rundfunkpolitischen Abteilung* (Office for political radio). Its budget for 1942-1943, the only year for which figures are available was 6,653.000 Reichmarks.<sup>45</sup> That paid for a staff which, as of September 1, 1943, was composed of 226 employees of whom eleven were high ranking civil servants (*Beamte*) and 156 were white collar employees. (*Angestellte*).<sup>46</sup> (Kurt Kiesinger, subsequently the Chancellor of the Federal Republic between 1966 and 1969, worked in the office and was its director from 1943 to 1945).<sup>47</sup> Original German texts for the Arabic language broadcasts were written in *Referat VII*, the Orient office that was part of the Cultural Division of the *Rundfunkabteilung*. Kurt Munzel, a diplomat who had worked in German banks in Cairo before the war, was its wartime director.<sup>48</sup> In 1942 he and a staff of nineteen included (judging from the names) seven native Arabic speakers, four “scholarly assistants,” that is, Germans with knowledge of Arabic and Islam. It’s broadcasts were beamed to Egypt, Afghanistan, Arabia, Iraq, Syria, Cyprus, Palestine, Turkey, India, Iran, Sudan and Ceylon. The office also published, *Barid as-Sarq*, an Arabic language magazine and worked closely with the Arab-Committee in the Foreign Office.<sup>49</sup> The Orient office was the largest of the thirteen geographically defined divisions (Western Europe, England, Ireland, Spain/Portugal, Italy, Southeast Europe, Eastern Europe, Northern Europe, Orient, Far East, USA, and Africa).<sup>50</sup> The Middle East possessed both vital strategic significance as a theater of war but, for most of World War II was not occupied by German forces. Hence radio became the only way the Nazi regime could send its messages there.

The texts of German broadcasts that survive in the German archives, though only a fraction of what was broadcast, do reveal how much Nazi radio made direct appeals to Muslims, as Muslims. Some examples from December 1940 to February 1941 illustrate this point. On December 5, 1940, listeners in the Arab countries could hear German radio speaking to Muslims in the repetitive incantations that recalled the style of the Koran and evoked past days of piety.

“Oh, God’s servants! Above all of the other commandments, none is more important to the Muslims (Mohammedaner) than piety for piety is the core of all virtues and the bond of all honorable human characteristics. Muslims you are now backward because you have not shown God the proper piety and do not fear him. You do things that are not commanded and you leave to the side things that are. God’s word has proven to be true and you are now the humiliated ones in your own country. This has come about because you don’t have the piety and fear of God as your pious forefathers did. Of them, one can say that they “are strong against the unbelievers and merciful amongst themselves. Oh Muslims! (*Oh Mohammedaner!*) Direct your gaze to the holy Koran and the tradition of the prophets. Then you will see that Islamic law is driven by piety toward God and fear of his punishment. The Koran inscribed piety as above all other commandments. Read, for example, the words: “Oh, believers, be pious and do not die without being a Muslim. Stand by God and don’t be divided.”

Oh Muslims! I call you to piety towards God because it is an inexhaustible source and a sharp weapon. It offers the good and prevents evil. In short, it is Islam, that is, surrender to God! Oh Muslims, you’ve seen how God placed piety at the top of all the commandments and how God has rewarded the pious with victory and success, how he helps him in every situation...

The pious Muslim does what God demands, prays, fasts, gives alms, loves his neighbors as himself, and

at the same time helps Muslims fight those who oppress and humiliate Muslims. Mohammed, God's prophet said: 'Be pious towards God, wherever you are!' Each one of us should pay attention to the words of the prophet that he spoke on his last pilgrimage. 'Fear God, pray the five prayers, fast, give alms, obey your rulers, and then you will enter paradise!'...Oh God, show the Muslims the right path, unite them and help them against their enemies for no one will be humiliated that follows you and no one will be elevated that is your enemy!"<sup>51</sup>

Over the next several months, and probably over the next five years, such explicitly religious appeals stressed, more and less explicitly, that the presumed values of Islam—piety, obedience, community, unity—in place of skepticism, individualism and division—were shared by Nazi Germany. A striking feature of this message was that it came from Berlin, the capital of the most powerful and most scientifically and technologically advanced country in Europe. It was a message from the heart of modernity, yes, a message of the reactionary modernist nature of this kind of modernity. To its listeners it conveyed the implicit message that a revival of fundamentalist Islam was a parallel project to the secular political fundamentalism of the Nazi regime. It was not only or primarily a relic of a backward culture but part of the great movement now in power in Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. Here was a statement that offered evidence of the modernity of fundamentalism.

Most obviously, this and the host of broadcasts that followed, offered evidence that National Socialism was appealing to Muslims as Muslims, not only to Arabs in their struggle against the British. While Nazi propaganda was claiming that a regrettable elective affinity existed between English Puritanism and the Jews, it also postulated an positive and welcome affinity between National Socialist ideology and what it selected from the traditions of Islam. On December 12, 1940, German radio from Berlin broadcast a "religious talk" which like all such talks began with the incantation, "*Oh Mohammedaner,*" It stressed, for example, that Islam "is a religion of the community, not a religion of the individual. It is thus a religion of the common welfare (*Gemeinnutzes*) and not of self-interest

(*Eigennutzes*). Islam is thus a just and true nationalism for it calls on the Muslims to place the general interest ahead of private interests, to live not for himself but for his religion and his fatherland. This is the most important goal that Islam follows. It is at the basis of its prayers and commandments.”<sup>52</sup>

These specifically religious messages would hopefully establish a willingness among Arab and Muslim audiences to listen to Nazism’s specifically political messages. On the same day that Radio Berlin broadcast “Generosity” it also sent out “A Government Statement for the Arabs”<sup>53</sup> From the same station in the same hour, perhaps with the same announcer, Nazi radio moved from the specifically religious to the clearly secular and political. Listeners heard that Germany expressed full sympathy” for the Arabs “struggle for freedom and independence” and to “take their proper place under the sun and to recover the glory and honor in service of humanity and civilization.” Indeed, the German government expression of “love and sympathy” for the Arabs had “found a strong echo among the German people” while strengthening “the bonds of friendship with the Arabs which the Germans have cherished for many years.”

Germans and Arabs shared “many qualities and virtues,” such as “courage in war...heroism and manly character.” They “both shared in the suffering and injustices after the end of the [First] World War. Both of these great peoples had their honor insulted, their rights were denied and trampled underfoot. Both bled from the same wounds and both also had the same enemy: namely the Allies who divided them and allowed them no claim to honor. Now Germany has succeeded to get out from under this disgrace and to regain all of its old rights so that Germany’s voice is now heard everywhere and has again taken its old place.” The German press and media have praised the revolts against British and French colonialism in Egypt, Syria, Palestine, Trans-Jordan and Iraq. “With heartfelt feelings of friendship for the Arabs and with full sympathy for them, Germany has followed, the revolt in Palestine, which England ignited and which the Jews, who want to rob the Arabs of their fatherland, continued with the English. As a result of all of these things, friendship between the Arab peoples and Germany is on a firm foundation. It will



remain so in the future and will bear fruit.”<sup>54</sup> This parallelism of German and Arab humiliation and division following World War I remained a continuing theme as did reference to the emergence of unity and strength under Hitler after 1933. The clear implication was that this model of dictatorship and ideological certainty was one that the Arab and Muslim world should follow if it too want to overcome its past humiliations and defeats.

In June 1942, as the North Africa Korps forces threatened to invade Egypt, seize Cairo, cross the Suez Canal and enter Palestina, General Rommel requested “immediate engagement of active propaganda in Egypt.” He wanted the radio propaganda “strengthened” and requested a massive campaign of distribution of leaflets on the ground and from planes of the *Luftwaffe* radio propaganda should begin. In the ensuing weeks, the Germans distributed 1.1 million Arabic language leaflets, including 500,000 about Rommel himself, primarily in Egypt.<sup>55</sup> The entry of the United States into the war in December and Roosevelt’s decision to send American troops to North Africa to fight alongside the British led to discussions in the Foreign Ministry in Berlin about how to stimulate hostility to the United States given that it had not been a colonial power in the Middle East.

Playing the Jewish card was one answer. The diplomat/propagandists argued that it was necessary to connect Franklin Roosevelt and the United States to Jews and Zionism in order to fan Arab anti-Americanism. In a July 2, 1942 memo, “The Jews are the wire pullers of the Americans,” Fritz Grobba, the former German Ambassador to Iraq, one of the leading Arabists in the Foreign Ministry and its liaison with Rashid Ali El-Khilani, applied Ribbentrop’s general guidelines anti-American themes to the propaganda offensive in the North African theater. Grobba argued that German propaganda in the Arab world need to more strongly emphasize that “the Americans are the Jews’ accomplices (*Schrittmacher* ). Every American actually comes to the Orient in the service of the Jews. He is sent here by the Jews. The Jews are the wire pullers (*Drahtzieher*) of the Americans.”<sup>56</sup> Roosevelt in particular “is devoted to these people [Jews, JH] to whom he owes his own political career.” Grobba then offered capsule descriptions of

Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter; Secretary of the Treasury, Henry Morgenthau; Bernard Baruch, Judge Samuel Irving Rosenmann; New York Governor Herbert Lehman; and Benjamin Cohen, an advisor Roosevelt and attached several friendly public letters Roosevelt had sent to American Jewish organizations.<sup>57</sup> In so doing, he drew on the by now well prepared anti-Semitic German propaganda attacks on these now usual suspects.<sup>58</sup> These attacks on “the Jews around Roosevelt” combined the familiar elements of conspiracy thinking: collection of actual biographical details, including professional and political affiliations and public activities with distortions and a lack of understanding of how American politics operated. They rested on the assumption that the United States had no national interest in going to war against Nazi Germany and that the only reason it would do so was because of the influence of “the Jews around Roosevelt.” Grobba’s memo of July 2, 1942 was also important because of his close connections to Khilani and other Arab exiles.

The role of anti-Semitism in fanning anti-Americanism became evident in a broadcast of “The Voice of Free Arabism” from Berlin on November 26, 1942, on the topic of “Roosevelt and the Jews.”<sup>59</sup> The announcer declared that “Roosevelt has thrown off the mask and proved beyond any doubt that he is a [stooge] toy in the hand of the Jews by his collaboration with the Jewish element in his aggression in North Africa.” The statement went on to cite support in the United States for formation of a Jewish home in Palestine. This all went to “confirm that Roosevelt and the White House are just tools in the hands of the Jews who are conspiring against the Arabs with the object ultimately of laying their hands on Palestine by force. It is therefore the duty of every Arab to be aware of the Jewish danger and to be aware of Roosevelt, who is the right hand of the Jews.”<sup>60</sup>

With anticipation of imminent victory in Egypt, German broadcasts in Arabic took on a more sinister and menacing tone. On June 19<sup>th</sup>, “The Voice of Free Arabism,” claimed that Jews in Egypt were discussing their options “subsequent to the British defeat in Libya” regarding possible emigration and their homes and property in Egypt. The Jews had “every reason to be anxious because it will not be the

Axis Powers that will suppress them, but the Arabs themselves. We, the Arabs, [that is the Arabs speaking from Berlin, JH] will seize the opportunity when the British are driven out of our country and will suppress the Jews. We can add that we know by name every Jew who has cooperated with the British and who has fought against the Muslims. Those Jews will in due course receive their just punishment.”<sup>61</sup>

On June 28<sup>th</sup>, the same station proclaimed that “when the ship rats leave their holes and try to throw themselves in the sea, it means that ship is about to flounder and there is no hope for anyone on board. Jews, as we all know, are the rats of all nations who thrive by plundering the resources of others on the sly. Once they leave a country it means that their country is in a parlous state.”<sup>62</sup> As the Jews of Palestine knew “for certain that the British boat is sinking” they were trying to flee. The Egyptian government should not facilitate “the exit of these Jews from the country with the money which they have extorted from the Egyptians...”<sup>63</sup> Several days later, the same station broadcast the following statement about “the British and the Jews.”

“Arabs, your main object is to achieve freedom and independence. Rommel’s forces are at the gates of Alexandria and Suez and these places will fall after the Axis armies have swept through the British lines at Mersa Matruh. Action! You must all collaborate and hamper the enemy by destroying communications, blowing up bridges, derailing trains, and destroying railway lines and every kind of raw material that may come to your hand. Fellaheen [Fedayeen?, JH] cut the enemy’s telephone lines, attack British convoys passing through your lands and do everything in your power to spread confusion among the British forces. Into action. Into action.”<sup>64</sup>

On July 1, 1942, *The Voice of Free Arabism*,” challenged the Egyptians, in particular the Egyptian army to revolt against the British.

“...The time is ripe for the Egyptians to rise against the British and the against the traitors

who have sold themselves for British gold. Today the British in Egypt are weaker than flies. Have the Egyptians not sufficient courage to stand up and defend the rights of their country? If we do not do this we are unworthy of the name 'Egyptians'. Egyptians, the British state that they have decided to destroy our country. Are we not ready to rise up against our already defeated enemy? What are we waiting for? If we do not rise against the British we are not worthy of the Egyptians of 1919 who, during the revolution, proved how strong and great was Egypt.

“The hour has come for the Egyptian people and for the army. The Egyptian army is not well equipped but the British are weaker than one would think. It is time for the army to rise against the British so that our enemies are caught between two fires, the fire of Italy before them and the fire of Egypt behind them. I appeal to the Egyptians to defend their country. They must seize bridges, railways, and other public installations from the British, for these installations belong to the Egyptian people. Britain wishes to destroy your country and set it on fire. Does that please you, you heroes of the Egyptian army? You cannot stand by and watch it happen. Though it may cost you your life you must act. The British have always laughed at the Egyptians and now is the time to prove to the world that Egypt is alive. Prove that the Egyptian blood is running in your veins and fight for your country.”<sup>65</sup>

On July 3<sup>rd</sup>, the Nazi radio station, “Berlin in Arabic” announced that as “the troops of the Axis powers are victoriously advancing into Egyptian territory” German and Italy were resolved “to guarantee Egypt’s independence and sovereignty.” The Axis forces were entering Egypt “to dismiss the British from Egyptian territory...and to liberate the whole of the Near East from the British yoke. The policy of the Axis powers is inspired by the principle ‘Egypt for the Egyptians.’ The emancipation of Egypt from the chains which have linked her with Britain, and her security from the risks of war, will enable her to assume her position among the independent sovereign states.”<sup>66</sup> In other words, Germany and Italy in the

Middle East were presenting themselves as the anti-colonial powers and liberator of oppressed nations much as Germany had done with such success on the Eastern Front of World War I.

The radio then broadcast the following statement by the Grand Mufti of Palestine, Haj Amin el-Husseini:

The Glorious victory secured by the Axis troops in North Africa, has encouraged the Arabs and the whole East, and filled their hearts with admiration for Marshall Rommel's genius, and the bravery of the Axis soldiers. This is because the Arabs believe that the Axis Powers are fighting against the common enemy, namely the British and the Jews, and in order to remove the danger of communism spreading, following the aggression on Iran. These victories, generally speaking, will have far reaching repercussions on Egypt, because the loss of the Nile Valley and of the Suez Canal, and the collapse of the British mastery over the Mediterranean and the Red Sea, will bring nearer the defeat of Britain and the end of the British Empire."<sup>67</sup>

The German and Italian declaration was one that Husseini and Kilani had been seeking ever since they arrived in Rome and Berlin. Given that neither Vichy France nor Fascist Italy had gone to war in order to guarantee independence and sovereignty to the Arabs, Hitler and Mussolini had postponed making any such statement. Now that an uprising in Egypt might undermine British armed forces, the dictators agreed to do so. German and Italian short wave radio repeated the German-Italian declaration every day that week and did so frequently for the rest of the summer. On July 8<sup>th</sup>, for example, "Bari in Arabic" stated that the Axis were "trying to liberate you and give you back the freedom you deserve" from British influence...The Arab nations should realize that the hour has come to get rid of British domination."<sup>68</sup>

As a result of the participation of the Arab exiles led by Husseini and Khilani, German broadcasts could go beyond generalities about Islam to offer remarkably detailed comments about ongoing political disputes. They became less "academic" and abstract and more concrete and filled with local details. The

German broadcasts recorded by the American Embassy in Cairo included detailed comments on Egyptian and Middle Eastern politics, the course of World War II around the globe, as well as repetitions of the anti-Jewish arguments that Britain and the United States had become stooges of the Jews; that World War II was a Jewish war; and that Allied victory would mean Jewish domination of the Middle East.

Yet on July 7, 1942, in its 8:15 pm broadcast (Cairo time) the “The Voice of Free Arabism.” for the first time used the radio to advocate mass murder. The broadcast began with a report (which Ambassador Kirk said was false) that “a large number of Jews residing in Egypt and a number of Poles, Greeks, Armenians and Free French, have been issued with revolvers and ammunition” in order to “help them against the Egyptians at the last moment, when Britain is forced to evacuate Egypt.”<sup>69</sup> The statement continued:

“In the fact of this barbaric procedure by the British we think it best, if the life of the Egyptian nation is to be saved, that the Egyptians rise as one man to kill the Jews before they have a chance of betraying the Egyptian people. It is the duty of the Egyptians to annihilate the Jews and to destroy their property. Egypt can never forget that it is the Jews who are carrying out Britain’s imperialist policy in the Arab countries and that they are the source of all the disasters, which have befallen the countries of the East. The Jews aim at extending their domination throughout the Arab countries, but their future depends on a British victory. That is why they are trying to save Britain from her fate and why Britain is arming them to kill the Arabs and save the British Empire.

You must kill the Jews, before they open fire on you. Kill the Jews, who have appropriated your wealth and who are plotting against your security. Arabs of Syria, Iraq and Palestine, what are you waiting for? The Jews are planning to violate your women, to kill your children and to destroy you. According to the Moslem religion, the defense of your life is a duty

which can only be fulfilled by annihilating the Jews. This is your best opportunity to get rid of this dirty race, which has usurped your rights and brought misfortune and destruction on your countries. Kill the Jews, burn their property, destroy their stores, annihilate these base supporters of British imperialism. Your sole hope of salvation lies in annihilating the Jews before they annihilate you.”<sup>70</sup>

Here, applied to the Arab and Moslem context, was the same logic of projection and paranoia that was the defining feature of Nazism’s radical anti-Semitism. It was impossible to be more blunt. It combined the political accusations of Nazism with evocation of the religious demands of Islam. This statement too had to be approved by the German Foreign Office officials working with the Arab exiles. As Klaus Michael Mallmann and Martin Cuppers have recently informed us, a unit of the SS in Italy would have arrived in Egypt and Palestine to carry out a Middle Eastern version of the Final Solution then being carried out in Europe. Nazi officials expected that they would receive assistance from the local population comparable to that which they were receiving behind the lines of the Eastern Front in Europe.<sup>71</sup>

During the summer of 1942, perhaps due to the imminence of the German threat, the clerical staff of the American Embassy was reduced. Instead of the weekly reports, in October, Kirk sent a summary of the period from June 19<sup>th</sup> to September 24<sup>th</sup>.<sup>72</sup> During the summer “Axis broadcasters had things pretty much their own way” due both to their military successes and shortcomings of Allied radio so that the public turned “more and more to the Axis radio to find out what was actually happening.”<sup>73</sup> The Axis declaration of support for Egyptian independence combined with the Mufti’s statement was, in Kirk’s view, “not without a certain effect but as the imminence of the Axis threat decreased it ceased to attract any particular attention.”<sup>74</sup> In fact, “no important acts of sabotage were committed in Egypt....”

The report on Axis radio that “arms were issued to Jews and other minority groups for protection against the Moslem population was “completely false.”<sup>75</sup> In fact, “the calm of the Egyptians during the crisis”

was noteworthy.

It was due not to Egyptian hopes for liberation by the Axis or confidence that the British would repel the invaders. Rather it was the produce of the apathy of the lower classes “who felt they had little to gain or lose however the situation developed” and fear by “upper property-holding classes” about a breakdown of internal security. As a result many people who had criticized the British “and were even suspected of harboring positively pro-Axis sentiments suddenly became seriously concerned as the Axis threat to Egypt developed and fell into a state of apprehensive immobility.”<sup>76</sup> The outcome of the military battles was decisive. If Rommel had defeated the British armed forces, some part of the Egyptians active in politics, extending from secular nationalists to the Muslim Brotherhood, would have welcomed him and his forces while his defeat kept them on the margins of Egyptian politics.

An adequate answer to the question of the reception of Nazism’s Arabic language propaganda lies beyond the scope of this paper. It requires research in the Arabic language newspapers and political tracts of wartime Cairo and the Middle East. Some beginnings have been made. Much remains to be done.<sup>77</sup> After the war the American Embassy’s observations of the Arabic language press in Cairo and in the Middle East offer clues about the success of Nazi propaganda radical Islamists. In summer 1945, Hussein was being sought by the Allies for his radio addresses and by Tito’s government in Yugoslavia for his work with a Bosnian SS Division. He was arrested in France. Under mysterious circumstances perhaps having to do with pressure from the Saudi government, he “escaped” and arrived in Cairo. In June 1945, the Office of Strategic Services, (OSS) Research and Analysis Branch examined the reaction in the Middle East to a possible war crimes trial for Hussein.<sup>78</sup> The report, “The Near East and the War Crimes Problem” dated June 23, 1945 concluded that “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.” The Allies did want to turn Hussein and his associates into martyrs.



Moreover, “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.”<sup>79</sup> The issue of whether American intelligence agencies made contact with radical Islamists after 1945 due to the latter’s hostility to Communism is beyond the scope of this paper. I’ve seen no evidence that this happened.

American diplomats in Cairo became aware of this very different attitude towards Nazi collaborators in the Egypt and the Middle East as they read and translated published comment about Husseini after he came to Cairo in spring 1946. On June 12, 1946 *Al Kutla*, an organ of the more secular, nationalist Wafd Party welcomed the Mufti “in the field of Jihad...The hearts of the Arabs palpitated with joy at hearing that the Mufti has succeed in reaching an Arab country. The news sounded like thunder to the ears of some American, British and Jewish tyrants. The lion is at last free and he will roam the Arabian jungle to clear it of all wolves.”<sup>80</sup> On June 24, 1946, *Al Misri* reported the following statement of *Al Ikhwan Al Muslimun* [the Muslim Brotherhood] “One hair of the Mufti’s is worth more than the Jews of the whole world: Yesterday’s telegrams stated that the Hagana [Haganah, JH] society had passed the sentence of death on the Mufti. Our correspondents in Palestine, Iraq, Syria, and Egypt asked high Arab sources what would be Arab reaction if this threat against the Mufti’s life were carried out. They all agreed that should one hair of the Mufti’s be touched, every Jew in the world would be killed without mercy..”<sup>81</sup> [I assume that the assertion about the Haganah was false, JH] By June 1946, the facts about the Nazi death camps and testimony about Nazi plans for mass murder had filled newspaper headlines around the world for preceding year. Celebrating Husseini in 1946 had a different meaning than it would have had when such advocates could claim that did not know what the Nazis had done to the Jews. Rather than denying that the Nazis had murdered the Jews of Europe, this praise, combined with the murderous threat to kill all the Jews, imply an implicit approval of what Husseini had done.

Such a conclusion may also be gleaned from a passage in “Our Struggle with the Jews,” and

essay published in 1950 by Sayid Qutb, the most important intellectual of postwar radical Islamism. Qutb combined a close reading of the Koran with reflections on recent history.

“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!!”<sup>82</sup>

As a historian of Europe and Germany, I do not claim competence in exegesis of the Koran. However obviously the idea that Muhammed sent Hitler to rule the Jews was not an idea that stems from the text of the Koran. Moreover, far from denying that something terrible happened to the Jews in Europe, Qutb clearly seeks again to “mete out the worst kind of punishment,” this time to the Jews in the then new state of Israel.

## Conclusion

I return to the issues I raised at the outset regarding the need to pay attention to the trans-national issues of Nazism and to place the emergence and growth of radical Islam in the context of the Second World War and the impact of the Nazi regime. The issues of the impact of Nazism and the diffusion of its

ideas outside Europe has, until recently, received far less attention. With the use of the most modern technology available, the Nazi regime used powerful radio transmitters and leaflets dropped from airplanes to convey a fundamentalist message which they hoped would resonate with both secular Arab nationalists as well as Islamic fundamentalists, often in the heart and mind of the same person. In this sense, the history of the diffusion of Nazi ideology to the Middle East and Islamic world was also a chapter in the history of what I've called reactionary modernist ideology and politics.

A precondition for even the willingness of the Nazi regime to devote money and resources to seeking allies among Arabs and Muslims was an interpretation and clarification of its own ideology in ways that legitimated political appeals to people who were not German, part of Christian Europe (the Turks) or part of Europe at all—Arabs, Persians and Indians or even part of Western civilization. In its propaganda in Europe, the Nazi regime claimed it was defending Western civilization against the Jews, Bolsheviks and the plutocrats. Its propaganda to the Middle East displayed another ubiquitous feature of Nazi ideology during World War II and the Holocaust, namely its ability to combine fanatical devotion to a core belief—hatred of the Jews—with great flexibility in speaking to different audiences. The arabic language broadcasts of radio of the racial state, presumably the bastion of provincial, racist particularism, presented Nazi Germany instead as a friend of the Arabs and of Islam united by shared values and shared hatred of the Bolshevik, the British, the Americans and above all the Jews. We have not paid enough attention to these efforts to leap beyond the language of race in a conventionally understood. In thinking about these issues, we may also come to a better understanding of how a self-described racist regime found non-German collaborators both inside and outside Europe.

The result of the interaction of Nazism and fascism, on the one hand, with elements of Islam, on the other, has had profound consequences for the history of the Middle East and the world since World War II. The resulting melange of Islam with elements of Nazism differs in important ways from Nazism and fascism. Yet the need to respect historical specificity and to acknowledge the uniqueness of the

Holocaust should not be pushed so far that we fail to acknowledge lineages and parallels where the evidence indicates that they exist. The accomplishment of the Nazi propagandists in Berlin and North Africa was to propel the political accusation against “international Jewry” across the apparent abyss of culture, language, religion and race and thus to infuse a tradition rooted in the European traditions onto those of the different but in their own distinctive ways receptive components of Arab and Muslim culture. I defer to historians of the modern Middle East to assess how widespread or narrow this reception was. Yet just as radical anti-Semitism build on old ideas but represented their radicalization, so the emergence radical Islam before, during and after World War II in the Arab and Muslim world should be understood as well as a mixture of break and continuity that is hard to explain without taking the impact of the war and messages from abroad into account. Only a minority of Arabic and Muslim intellectuals responded with enthusiasm to the appeals of Nazism and fascism. But it was, and remains an important minority and one of great interest to intellectual and cultural historians. I hope the results of the work in progress I’m presenting today will stimulate historians of Islam and of politics and ideas in the modern Middle East to examine in more detail how these novel European elements interacted with Arabic and Muslim traditions and culture to produce radical anti-Semitism in an Islamic, Arabic and Persian context. This would be one fruitful result of a history of this period that transcends both a Eurocentric history of Nazism, and an Middle East- or Islamic-centric history of radical Islam.

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 Agypten,” 21 July  
 1942, PA d AA,  
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 G.R. v. Neurath,  
 1942-1943, R 60748.  
 The leaflets and the  
 numbers distributed  
 were: “*Rommel, der  
 Löwe des Sandes,*”  
 500,000; “*Oh  
 Mohammed Ali  
 Saghlul,*” 100,000  
 “*Eine neue Zeit ist angebrochen*” 100,000; “*England, Meister der Lüge,*” 100,000; “*Grün ist die Farbe  
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