

Nazi Germany Propaganda Aimed at Arabs and Muslims During World War II and the
Holocaust: Old Themes, New Archival Findings

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During World War II and the Holocaust, the Nazi regime engaged in an intensive effort to appeal to Arabs and Muslims in the Middle East and North Africa.¹ It did so both by presenting the Nazi regime as a champion of secular anti-imperialism, especially against Britain, as well as by a selective appropriation and reception of the traditions of Islam in ways that suggested their compatibility with the ideology of National Socialism. This lecture and the larger project from which it comes, draws on recent archival findings that make it possible to expand on the knowledge of Nazi Germany's efforts in this region that has already been presented in a substantial scholarship.² It pushes the history of Nazism beyond its Eurocentric limits while pointing to the European dimensions of Arabic and Islamic radicalism of the mid-twentieth century. On short wave radio and in printed items distributed in the millions, Nazi Germany's Arabic language propaganda leapt across the seemingly insurmountable barriers created by its own ideology of Aryan racial superiority. From the fall of 1939 to March 1945, the Nazi regime broadcast short wave Arabic programs to the Middle East and North Africa seven days and nights a week. Though the broadcasts were well known at the time, the preponderance of its print and radio propaganda has not previously been documented and examined nor has it entered into the intellectual, cultural and political history of the Nazi regime during World War II and the Holocaust. In light of new archival findings, we are now able to present a full picture of the wartime propaganda barrage in the course of which officials of the Nazi regime worked with pro-Nazi Arab exiles in Berlin to adapt general propaganda themes aimed at its German and European audiences to the religious traditions of Islam and the regional and local political realities of the Middle East and North Africa. This adaptation was the product of a political and ideological collaboration between officials of the Nazi regime, especially in its Foreign Ministry but also of its intelligence services, the Propaganda Ministry and the SS, on the one hand, with pro-Nazi Arab exiles in wartime Berlin, on the other. It drew both on a confluence of perceived shared political interests and ideological passions, as well as on a cultural fusion, borrowing and interaction between Nazi ideology and certain strains of Arab nationalism and Islamic religious traditions. It was an important chapter of the

political, intellectual and cultural history of Nazism during World War II and comprises a chapter in the history of radical Islamist ideology and politics.

In wartime Berlin, radical anti-Semitism of European and German speaking provenance found common ground with radical anti-Semitism rooted in Koranic verses and the commentaries on them in the traditions of Islam. Just as Nazi anti-Semitism was a radicalization of already existing elements within European culture, so the anti-Semitism of the pro-Nazi Arab exiles resulted from a radicalization of already existing elements within the traditions of Islam. In both cases, these twentieth century extremists, in patterns familiar to historians of reception, engaged in what Raymond Williams called “the labor of selective tradition.” That is, they actively reworked and appropriated received traditions, emphasizing some elements and diminishing others.³ As a result of their shared passions and interests, they produced texts and broadcasts that they could not have produced on their own. Through this active labor or conserving and reworking their own while incorporating foreign traditions, the Nazis and their Arab collaborators created found common ground which produced the texts and broadcasts that accompanied the Axis military and propaganda offensives in North Africa and the Middle East during the war.⁴ Cultural and intellectual historians of Nazism have long demonstrated that it can neither be separated from nor reduced to its European, German and Christian predecessors. These were one necessary but not sufficient conditions for its emergence. The same was true to the radical nationalism and Islamism of the Arab exiles who joined forces with Hitler’s regime. Their political outlook could neither be separated from nor reduced to its Arabic or Islamic background. The historical conjuncture of World War II brought them together in the shared project of radicalizing their own past traditions. In contemporary academic language, the meeting between Nazism and militant Islam and Arab nationalism in Berlin was a chapter in the history of trans-nationalism and cultural fusion, one that brought out the worst elements of the two civilizations.⁵

The Nazis taught the Arab exiles the finer points of twentieth century Jew-hatred, above all, its

paranoid, conspiracy theory and how to apply it to ongoing events. The Arabs and Muslims in Berlin taught the Nazis that their hatred of the Jews was not as unique as they might have imagined and thus that they had found allies in unexpected and unforeseen places. Nazism became less euro-centric while Arab and Islamic radicalism drew on modern, European totalitarian ideology. The Nazi leadership sought ways to burst the bounds of nationalist particularism and even of the doctrine of the Aryan master race in order to appeal to Arabs and Muslims. The Arabs and Muslims in Berlin engaged in a variant of what I have called “reactionary modernism” as they demonstrated a mastery of modern propaganda techniques in the interest of advocating a revival of a fundamentalist version of Islam.⁶ Radical anti-Semitism did not first enter Arab and Islamic politics because of the cleverness of Nazi propagandists. On the contrary, their cleverness lay partly in understanding that some currents in both Arab politics and the religion of Islam created offered points of entry for a positive reception of Nazism’s message. Nazi officials working with the Arab exiles in Berlin as well as the Orientalists working for the SS and the Foreign Ministry believed that the founding text of Islam, the Koran, as well as commentaries and oral folk wisdom offered powerful points of connection with modern European anti-Semitism. By referring to these texts, they believed they could supplement secular appeals to Arab nationalists with religiously based appeals to Muslims as Muslims.

Neither Nazis or the Arab exiles could have achieved alone what their alliance made possible. The Nazi regime lacked native speakers of Arabic as well as familiarity with the details of local politics in the Middle East, deficiencies made up by the presence of the Arab exiles. The Arab exiles from Palestine and Iraq had no way of reaching a mass audience in their home countries. Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany’s short wave radio transmitters, their printing presses, and from 1940s to 1943, their armies fighting in North Africa made that possible. Nazi Germany’s Arabic language propaganda was not primarily the result of translation of Nazi ideology and canonical texts into Arabic. Although *Mein Kampf* and the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* were translated into Arabic before 1939, neither figured

prominently in Arabic propaganda. Indeed, neither did Hitler's speeches or Goebbels' essays. The most important text, the work that offered the entry point of Nazism's propaganda to Arabs and Muslims was its selective reading and quotation of the Koran and the traditions of Islam. There were German diplomats who preferred to limit Arabic language propaganda to appeals to secular Arab anti-imperialism directed against Britain and the United States or to Arab anti-Communism. Others were more comfortable with explicit appeals to the traditions of Islam. In practice, the distinction between secular and religious dimensions blurred into insignificance. In the same texts and broadcasts, the Nazis spoke the secular language of attacks on American, British and "Jewish" imperialism while also appealing to what they depicted as the ancient traditions of hatred of the Jews in Islam itself. Nazi Germany presented itself both as an ally of Arab anti-imperialism as well as a soul mate of the religion of Islam. The events in North Africa and the Middle East and their interaction with the war in Europe have long preoccupied military and diplomatic historians of the World War II.⁷ In 1965, the East German historian Heinz Tillmann in *Deutschlands Araberpolitik im Zweiten Weltkrieg* drew on then available German archives to examine the policy of "German imperialism" in the Middle East from the 1930s up to spring 1943.⁸ In 1966, Lukasz Hirszowicz' *The Third Reich and the Arab East* presented an enduring synthesis of military, diplomatic and political history up to the end of World War II.⁹ He established the chronology and key causal arguments concerning the prospects for victory by and the causes of defeat of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany in the region, especially in Iraq and Egypt. In 2007, two German historians, Klaus Michael Mallmann and Martin Cuppers, drawing on German diplomatic, military and SS archives that had been opened and declassified in the interim, published *Halbmond und Hakenkreuz: Das Dritte Reich, die Araber und Palästina*.¹⁰ Reflecting the shift in historical analysis which led to much greater attention to the connection between the Holocaust and World War II, Mallmann and Cuppers revealed that the SS had plans to extend the Final Solution to encompass the 700,000 Jews of North Africa and the Middle East. The question of whether or not they would be able to do so depended on the outcome of the battles

at El Alamein and later in Tunisia between Germany's Rommel's *Afrika Korps* and the Allied armed forces. As the Israeli historian Tuvia Friling has pointed out, in 1942 given the proximity of Rommel's *Afrika Korps*, the fear of German invasion of Palestine among its Jewish population was "indeed real." The mutual attraction between Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany and Arab radicalism had emerged during the Arab revolt in Palestine between 1936 and 1939. Then both German and Italian propaganda, and probably also with money and arms, supported the rebellion and attacked the British Mandate while Husseini and his supporters deepened their enthusiasm for the Nazis and the Fascists.¹¹ In light of the tensions between the British and the Jews in Palestine, and British refusal to allow increased Jewish emigration to Palestine during the Holocaust, it is ironic to note that Britain and Australia's victory at the battle at El Alamein, was both a decisive turning point in the history of World War II as well as in the successful effort to prevent the extension of the Holocaust the 700,000 Jews of the Middle East.¹²

A significant historical scholarship has also documented the actions and beliefs of the most important public face and voice of Nazi propaganda aimed at Arabs and Muslims, Haj Amin el-Husseini, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem.¹³ The mutual admiration between Husseini and Hitler and his virulent Jew hatred are a matter of public record. Details about his collaboration with Heinrich Himmler and his knowledge about the Holocaust came to light after the war as well. Husseini was also key figure in finding common ground between the ideology of National Socialism, on the one hand, and that of Arab nationalism as well as doctrines of militant Islam. While the Mufti was a key figure in this historical episode, so too were many other German intelligence officers, diplomats, military officers, members of the German Foreign Ministry's division of political radio, announcers, writers, editors along with mostly anonymous native Arabic speaking radio announcers and writers.¹⁴ The broadcasts were the result of a cooperative effort including German officials working in the Division of Political Radio in Joachim von Ribbentrop's Foreign Ministry with occasional assistance from the Joseph Goebbels' Propaganda Ministry. They received assistance from Orientalists in the cultural division in Heinrich Himmler's Reich

Security Main Office, and from German Orientalists who advised the Foreign Ministry and worked in the SS research offices.¹⁵ The pro-Nazi Arab exiles gave the Nazis a resource they had not had before or possessed in such abundance, namely native Arabic speakers and readers who could make Nazism's message understandable in fluent, colloquial Arabic to Arabs and Muslims.

The Arabic propaganda campaign, especially with short wave radio, was far more extensive than the previous focus on the Mufti alone would suggest. Fascist Italy broadcast Arabic programs from 1934 to 1943. Nazi short wave Arabic broadcasting began in October 1939 and continued until February or March 1945. "Berlin in Arabic" and the "Voice of Free Arabism" and other stations broadcast a mixture of music, news and commentary seven days and nights a week. They broadcast about two hours of news and commentary each evening. Information about the size of the listening audience remains scarce. In August 1941, the United States Office of War Information (OWI) report estimated that there were about 90,000 short wave radios in the region: 150 in Aden, 55,000 in Egypt, 4000 in Iraq, 24,000 in Palestine, 6,000 in Syria, 6,000 and 25 in Saudi Arabia.¹⁶ Radios were often heard in cafes and other public places and listening was a kind of collective experience. Radio was crucial to propaganda efforts in the Middle East in this period because rates of illiteracy in the region were so significant. Government surveys conducted after World War II still found illiteracy rates were almost 80% in Egypt and 85% in Libya. In Palestine, the British mandatory government census of 1931 put the overall literacy rates among Arabs seven years and older at about 20%. Among Muslims, it was 14% (25% among men and only 3% among women.) By 1947, another observer assessed the literacy rate among Palestine's Arab community to be 27% and 21% for Muslims (35% for men and 7% for women).¹⁷ Therefore short wave radio reached a far larger audience than did print materials. However, throughout the war, Axis propaganda aimed at the Middle East also included the distribution of millions of Arabic language leaflets and brochures. Some were dropped from the air by the *Luftwaffe*. Others were distributed on the ground by propaganda companies accompanying the Axis armed forces, diplomats in the German Embassies in Tunisia, and by

networks of German secret agents and Arab collaborators moving on railways and on small boats on the Mediterranean.¹⁸

Between 1940 and spring 1943, the Axis armed forces were present in North Africa. After their defeat in the Battle of Tunisia, that presence ended. At no point during the remainder of the war were the Germans or Italians on the ground in the Middle East. So for most of the war for most of the region, and especially for its most politically volatile places, notably Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, (and Iran with Persian language broadcasts) the most effective means of reaching a broader Arabic public were short wave radio broadcasts, most of which originated in Berlin, or to be more specific, from the even safer and more secure small town of Zeesen, just outside the capital. From the thousands of hours of this six year long propaganda barrage, transcripts from only 1940 and 1941 are to be found in German government archives. The rest of what had been a massive output was either never recorded or transcribed, or it was lost, fell victim to Allied bombing or was intentionally destroyed by German officials themselves in the last months of the war.

Beginning in summer 1941, under the direction of recently arrived American Ambassador to Egypt, Alexander Kirk, American diplomats at the Cairo Embassy began to transcribe and translate the Axis—that is Italian and German Arabic broadcasts. Kirk took up his post in Cairo on March 29, 1941. He had been Charge d'Affaires of the United States Embassy in Berlin in 1939 to 1940. In that capacity, he had sent informative memos to Washington about Nazi anti-Jewish persecution. He remained the American Ambassador to Egypt until March 29, 1944. Kirk sent the first or one of the first of his dispatches about Nazi radio broadcasts in Arabic to the Office of Secretary of State Cordell Hull in Washington on September 13, 1941. In it, he summarized themes in the broadcasts of August 18 to September 7, 1941.¹⁹ 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 the texts to

Washington every week until March 1944. Thereafter until the end of the war, his successor, Pickney Tuck, continued to do so. As far as I have been able to determine, the resulting several thousand pages comprise the most complete record anywhere in any language of Nazi Germany's efforts to influence the Arab and Islamic world via its most important propaganda program, the shortwave radio broadcasts. The Axis Broadcasts in Arabic transcripts were placed in the United States National Archives in College Park and declassified in 1977 but have not previously entered into historical scholarship.²⁰ They are an indispensable source for examination of Nazism's efforts to extend its appeals to the Arab and Muslim societies.

Before the Nazis could appeal to Arabs, Persians and Muslims in general, they needed to clarify if their "anti-Semitism" extended to the non-Jewish Semites of the Arab, Persian and Muslim world. In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler thought it did. He spoke with disdain about hopes for "any mythical uprising in Egypt" or the idea that "that now perhaps others are ready to shed their blood for us." English machine guns and fragmentation bombs would bring such a Holy War "to an infernal end." It was, he continued, "impossible to overwhelm with a coalition of cripples a powerful state that is determined to stake, if necessary, its last drop of blood for its existence. As a völkish man, who appraises the value of men on a racial basis, I am prevented by mere knowledge of the racial inferiority of these so-called 'oppressed nations' from linking the destiny of my own people with theirs."²¹ Hitler's famous book gave anti-Semitism a broad meaning, one that applied first and foremost to the Jews, but that also encompassed non-Jewish "Semites" such as Arabs and Muslims.

Disputes surrounding the Berlin Olympics of 1936 alerted German diplomats that Hitler's broad view of anti-Semitism posed a problem for effective propaganda aimed at Arabs, Persians and Muslims. The Arab belief that the Nuremberg race laws in 1935 discriminated against "non-Aryans" caused consternation in Egypt. Officials in Egypt threatened to boycott the Berlin Olympics in 1936. Why, they asked, should Egyptian athletes travel to a country that regarded them as racially inferior? In a series of

meetings in 1936 and 1937, high ranking officials in the German Foreign Ministry, the Propaganda Ministry, the Nazi Party's office of Racial Politics (*Rassenpolitisches Amt*) and the Himmler's Reich Security Main Office (SS) devoted many hours to finally conclude that Nazi racial legislation distinguished between Germans and Jews, not Aryans and non-Aryans.²² The Nazi regime regarded Arabs (and Persians) and Muslims as simply different, not inferior. The Foreign Ministry devoted considerable effort before and during World War II to convince Arabs, Persians (Iranians) and Muslims that its anti-Jewish policies were not based on a biological racism directed at "non-Aryans" or "Semites" in general. Rather they were only directed at the Jews who were, the Nazis claimed, the common "enemy" of Nazi Germany and the Arab and Islamic Middle East. As was the case in Nazi propaganda in Germany, Nazi anti-Semitism aimed at the Arab and Muslim Middle East focused on a political accusation embedded in a conspiracy theory, one that superseded an anti-Semitism based on racial biology.

Having dispensed with the charge that their racism extended to Arabs and Muslims, Nazi propagandists appealed to them as allies in a common cause, the fight against the Jews. In September 1939, Hitler resolved a dispute between Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels and Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop over control over propaganda aimed abroad in favor of the latter.²³ By October 1939, Nazi Germany was broadcasting fifteen hours of air time in 113 daily broadcasts. By the end of 1940, about 500 people were working in the offices of German radio aimed abroad.²⁴ By 1943, the Nazi regime was broadcasting sixteen such stations in thirteen different languages every day.²⁵ Prominent exile politicians, such as Subhas Chandra Bose from India, Rashid Ali el Khilani from Iraq, and Haj Amin el-Husseini, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, spoke frequently.²⁶ Within the Foreign Office Political Division, the Orient Office, Division VII, oversaw propaganda and political strategy towards Egypt, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Palestine, Syria, Turkey, India, Iran, Sudan, and Ceylon.²⁷ An Office for Political Radio (*Rundfunkpolitischen Abteilung*) existed within the Foreign Office Political Division.²⁸ By September 1, 1943, its staff included 226 employees.²⁹ Kurt Georg Kiesinger, subsequently the Chancellor of the

Federal Republic between 1966 and 1969, worked in the office and was its director from 1943 to 1945.³⁰

The staff met regularly with the Foreign Office Arab Committee, which included experts on the region and officials responsible for contact with prominent Arab exiles such as Husseini and Khilani.³¹ Among the various divisions of the Foreign Office working on foreign language broadcasts, only the Russian division broadcasting to the enormous Eastern Front was larger.³² The director of Division VII throughout the war was Kurt Munzel, a diplomat and Orientalist who had worked in the Dresdner Bank in Cairo in the decade before the war.³³ By 1942 he led a staff of nineteen including (judging from the names) seven native Arabic speakers, and four “scholarly assistants,” that is, Germans with knowledge of Arabic and Islam. Its broadcasts were beamed to Egypt, Afghanistan, Arabia, Iraq, Syria, Cyprus, Palestine, Turkey, India, Iran, Sudan and Ceylon. The office also published, *Barid as-Sarq* (Orient Post) an Arabic language magazine and worked closely with the Arab-Committee in the Foreign Office.³⁴

From September 1939 to fall of 1941, the Arabic broadcasts drew on the expertise of German Orientalists of Arabic and Islamic literature and poetry, the local knowledge gained by German diplomats in the prewar years and on pro-Axis Arabs living in Berlin when the war began. Most of these broadcasts” had the tone of a sympathetic, well informed politically engaged scholar, one eager to please yet not quite able to pick up the ins and outs of local politics. These early broadcasts sent a clear message that the Nazi regime, rather than celebrate the superiority of Aryans over inferior Middle Eastern Semites, was a friend to both Arab nationalists and Muslims. Several examples illustrate key themes. On December 3, 1940, Munzel’s Orient Office VII broadcast “a paper about the English occupation of Egypt.”³⁵ With the incantation “*Oh Mohammedaner*” (Oh Muslims!), the broadcast made a direct appeal to Muslims and not only to Arab nationalists opposed to British rule in Egypt. It did so in the repetitive incantations of a religious sermon that evoked the authority of the “holy Koran” and 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.'³⁶

Nazi broadcasts repeated that the values of Islam, such as piety, obedience, community, unity rather than skepticism, individualism and division were similar to those of Nazi Germany. That this anti-modernist assault was conveyed via the most modern means of electronic communication in 1940 was another example of what I've previously called the "reactionary modernist" character of aspects of Nazi ideology and policy.³⁷ This and other broadcasts conveyed the message that a revival of fundamentalist Islam was a parallel project to National Socialism's political and ideological revolt against Western political modernity. In this effort, a selective and literal reading of the Koran and its application to contemporary events was presented as 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. On December 12, 1940, for example, German radio announced 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 therefore is a just and true nationalism for it calls on the Muslim 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.”³⁸ The priority of “the common welfare” over self-interest was a continuing and key theme of the Nazi Party before 1933 and the Nazi regime afterwards.

The appeals to Islamic themes in these broadcasts would hopefully serve as an entry point into Arabic and Muslim hearts and minds and foster a willingness among Muslims to listen to Nazism’s secular political messages as well. On the same day that Radio Berlin broadcast the above message, it also sent out “A Government Statement for the Arabs”³⁹ 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” so that they could “take their proper place under the sun and to recover the glory and honor in service of humanity and civilization.” The German government’s 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.” This connection was not surprising, the talk continued, because 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 in getting out from under this disgrace and regaining all of its old rights so that Germany’s voice is now heard everywhere and has again taken its old place.”⁴⁰ Nazi Germany was a model to emulate of nation that had been humiliated yet had recovered its independence and unity.

These early broadcasts displayed both the talent as well as the limits of Nazi Orientalism. They lacked a certain political punch and grasp of local idioms and politics. The arrival in Berlin in November

1941 of Haj Amin el-Husseini and Rashid al-Khilani and their entourage ended this shortcoming.⁴¹ They both had much publicized meetings with Hitler and Ribbentrop. They and their associates worked closely with officials in the Nazi Foreign Ministry in its Arab and Orient committees in the Office of Political Radio to fashion radio and print propaganda for Arabs and Muslims.⁴² In a particularly famous meeting with Husseini in Berlin on November 28, 1941, Hitler heard Husseini lavish praise on him, express his support for Nazi Germany in the war and request that Germany and Italy issue a strong declaration in support of Arab independence from Britain. Though Hitler replied that the time had not yet arrived for issuing such a declaration he told Husseini that when the German armies on the Eastern Front reached “the southern exit” from the Caucasus Hitler would “give the Arab world the assurance that its hour of liberation had arrived. Germany’s objective would then be solely the destruction of the Jewish element residing in the Arab sphere under the protection of British power.”⁴³ In other words, in the same period in which Hitler had taken the decision to launch the Final Solution of the Jewish Question *in Europe*, he also made clear to Husseini that he intended to extend it *outside Europe*, that is, at least to the Jews living in Egypt, Palestine, Trans-Jordan and Iraq. Husseini and Khilani and the Arabic language radio writers and speakers accompanying them gave the Nazi regime an asset it had not had before, namely, native Arab speakers who could communicate Nazism’s messages in colloquial, fluent and passionate Arabic. This asset might foster support both for the Axis armies fighting in North Africa as well as for an extension of the Final Solution to the Jews of the Middle East.⁴⁴

Kirk’s despatch of April 18, 1942 summarized German Arabic broadcasts of the preceding six months, that is, the period since Husseini and Kilani had arrived in Berlin.⁴⁵ He wrote that German propaganda sought to convince the Arabs that the Axis countries had “a natural sympathy with the Arabs and their great civilization, the only one comparable with the civilization introduced by the New Order in Europe, which is now being suppressed by ‘British Imperialism,’ ‘Bolshevik barbarity,’ and ‘Jewish greed’ and more recently ‘American materialism. The Arabs could “never be the friends of Britain

because her promises are false. German Arabic radio denounced the Jews “ad nauseum.” It asserted that the Jews, “backed by Britain and the U.S.A.” were “the arch-enemies of Islam.” They controlled American finance and had “forced Roosevelt to pursue a policy of aggression.” Roosevelt and Churchill were “playthings in the hands of the Jewish fiends who are destroying civilization..”⁴⁶ Throughout World War II, Nazi radio propaganda attacked Britain and the United States in particular for the support they supposedly gave to the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine. Every statement by any public figure in Britain or the United States expressing anger over the persecution of Jews in Europe or support for a Jewish state in Palestine was taken as further proof of the truth that the Jews were in control of the governments of Britain, the United States but also of “Jewish Bolshevism” in Moscow. As was the case in Nazi propaganda in Europe, Roosevelt and Churchill were the main culprits and stooges.

In the spring, summer and fall 1942, as General Erwin Rommel’s *Afrika Korps* had advanced to a point within sixty miles west of Alexandria, Egypt, Nazi Germany’s leaders thought victory in North Africa might be in their grasp. Hitler and Mussolini then decided to issue the public declaration about Arab independence which Hussein and Kilani had been requesting since their arrival in Rome and Berlin the previous fall.⁴⁷ Neither Vichy France nor Fascist Italy had gone to war in order to guarantee independence and sovereignty to the Arabs. Hitler had hesitated in making such a declaration first so as not to offend Britain when he had hopes of reaching an accommodation with it and then in order not to under Mussolini’s hopes of expansion in the Mediterranean. Now that an uprising in Egypt might undermine British armed forces, both of the dictators agreed to go ahead with the declaration in order to assist their military operations in North Africa. On July 3, 1942 “Berlin in Arabic” announced that Germany and Italy resolved that “the troops of the Axis powers are victoriously advancing into Egyptian territory..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.”⁴⁸ Berlin in Arabic 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 [Allied, JH] 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.”⁴⁹

The Americans in the Cairo Embassy monitoring the Arabic broadcasts from Berlin were recording a steady diet of anti-Semitic arguments that echoed the political accusations at the core of Nazi propaganda in Europe. The Nazis claimed that Britain and the US had become stooges of the Jews, that World War II was a Jewish war but that in addition Allied victory would mean Jewish domination of the Middle East. At 8:15 pm Cairo time on July 7, 1942 the Americans recorded one of the most inflammatory broadcasts of the war to that point. The “Voice of Free Arabism” (hereafter VFA) statement “Kill the Jews Before They Kill You” illustrated the links between the general propaganda line in Europe and its adaptation to the Middle East context. It was a statement that equaled that of Hitler and Goebbels in its anti-Semitic radicalism. The broadcast began with a lie, namely 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.”⁵⁰ The statement continued:

“In the face 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 Muslim 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.”⁵¹

Here, applied to the Arab and Muslim 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. It was unusual in the extent to which it voiced the genocidal threats that were more implicit in many other assertions about the venality and power of the Jews that were broadcast on Nazi Arabic language radio. While the anti-Semitic propaganda of the Nazi regime in Germany assured readers and listeners that the regime was making

good on Hitler's threats to "exterminate" and "annihilate" the Jews, the Arabic language propaganda took an even further step in incitement to anti-Jewish violence in its clear appeal for audience participation and that listeners take matters into their own hands.

As Mallmann and Cuppers have documented, in the spring and summer of 1942, German diplomats and intelligence services reported evidence of Arab sympathy for the Nazi cause rooted in hopes that Rommel's victory in the region would lead to expulsion of the Jews.⁵² In view of the evidence they gather regarding the hopes and actions of radical Arabs in these months, the authors draw parallels to the mood among anti-Semitic Lithuanian, Latvian and Ukrainian nationalists in spring 1941 preceding the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June. At the end of 1942, Walter Schellenberg, the chief of foreign intelligence for the *Sicherheitsdienst* (SD) in the *Reichssicherheitshauptamt* (RSHA) reported to the Foreign Office that "the Arabs' extraordinarily friendly mood toward Germany was basically due to the hope that 'Hitler will come' to expel the Jews." Schellenberg reported further that the Arabs still believed in German victory and that "only a few" heard German short wave radio, the broadcasts in "exaggerated and embroidered" fashion spread quickly by word of mouth.⁵³ An *Einsatzgruppe* of SS troops under the command of *Obersturmbannführer* Walter Rauff was prepared to depart to Palestine to murder the Jewish population if Rommel won the battle of El Alamein. Schellenberg and other German officials support from radical Arabs precisely because of the shared anti-Semitic and anti-Zionist goals.⁵⁴ Nazi propaganda had the dual purpose of drawing Arabs and Muslims to the side of the Axis as well as inciting them to support Nazi plans to extend the Final Solution beyond Europe's geographical limits. As had been the case in its propaganda in Germany and Europe, the war against the Allies and the war against the Jews merged into one mutually reinforcing endeavor.⁵⁵

The dramatic threats from German radio in early July built on themes that German broadcasts had been hammering home on a weekly and daily basis. On April 18, 1942, Kirk summarized themes of Axis Arabic broadcasts of the previous six months.⁵⁶ These were themes that continued throughout the war.

German propaganda broadcasts, he wrote, attempted to convince the Arabs of the following. The Axis countries had “a natural sympathy with the Arabs and their great civilization, the only one comparable with the civilization introduced by the New Order in to Europe, which is now being suppressed by ‘British Imperialism,’ ‘Bolshevik barbarity,’ and ‘Jewish greed’ and more recently ‘American materialism.’” Indeed, “one of the main German war aims” was “to release Arab countries from the oppressive grip of Anglo-Bolshevik Imperialism.” It was necessary for “the Arab countries to aid their liberators by uniting against the common enemy.” They could do so with confidence because “the Allies ‘despise but fear’ the Arabs” while German victory and the break-up of the British Empire were becoming more certain. In the scramble that would follow this imminent British collapse” when “Americans, Russians and Jews” would “try to seize the countries now held by Britain, the Arabs may find themselves with new masters if they do not move quickly.” They could never be Britain’s friends because “her promises are false.” Britain had “destroyed Arab unity and murdered Arab patriots; she has handed Palestine over to the Jews and loosed the Communists over Iran and Iraq.” The Arabs remembered “the generous promises made by Britain in the last war.” Those promises were broken while “British oppression” continued into the current period.⁵⁷ Throughout World War II, Nazi Germany presented itself to Arabs and Muslims as a champion of anti-imperialism.

Kirk noted the blend of secular and religious appeals from the Axis. “Before Islam” the Arabs had been divided against themselves. “When Mohammed united them they overthrew the Persians, Romans and Jews as they can now overthrow the British, Russians and Americans.” Now they would “be led by their great leaders the Mufti [Haj Amin al-Husseini] and Rashid Ali [Kilani] who are continually exchanging congratulatory messages with Hitler and Mussolini.” Only traitors to Islam would support Britain and later the Allies.⁵⁸ An Axis victory in the Middle East would be “a bad day for traitors when the victorious and righteous liberators of Islam arrive” assisted by “a wide-spread revolt throughout the entire Middle-East” by the Arabs.⁵⁹ Axis radio attacked the Jews “ad nauseam” claiming that the Jews,

backed by Britain and the U.S.A. were “the arch-enemies of Islam.” They controlled American finance and forced Roosevelt to pursue a policy of aggression. Roosevelt and Churchill, though criminals themselves, were “playthings in the hands of the Jewish fiends who are destroying civilization.” It was known that “the White House ‘is full of Jews’ and most eminent figures among the Allies in the Near East are Jews.” The Zionist leader Chaim Weizmann was an “aspirant to the throne of Palestine.” He was “determined that Palestine, Syria and Transjordan will be united as a pure Jewish center that will control the whole of the Middle East and, eventually, the world.” America and Britain supported this plan. The Arabs who had “lost their lands and wealth to the rapacious Jewish settlers in Palestine and their liberty to the British, will now be deported to suffer famine and discomfort in lands even more barren than those palmed off on them in Palestine. “ Five million Jews were soon to be brought to Palestine. The Jews promised to raise an army of 20,000 men “ostensibly to assist the Allies, but in reality to wipe out the Arabs should the Germans advance.” German radio repeatedly claimed that a new Jewish state would expand into the territories of the existing Arab countries.

Axis radio painted a grim picture of Palestine. The conflict over Palestine came to occupy a central place in its wartime broadcasts. It was “swimming in a pool of blood.” Its people lived “in an atmosphere of shame and misery” and were “ruled by a reign of terror dominated by the brutal British and the dirty Jews.” The British violated the Arab “holy places,” spread famine and poverty, and brutally ruled the Arabs whom they were soon going to deport. The Jews were intending to combine Palestine with Syria and Transjordan in a “huge Jewish Home.” Britain’s main aim in the Middle East was “to annihilate the Arabs entirely and to aid in this purpose large numbers of Jews are being enlisted in a Palestine army.” This idea, namely that the Jews were going to participate in the annihilation of the Arabs was a Middle Eastern counterpart to the Nazi assertion that Jews were fighting World War II in Europe with the intent of annihilating the German people. In addition to Britain and the Jews, “a new oppressor in the shape of the U.S.A.” was soon to arrive. It was known “that when the Americans seize the British

Empire they intend handing over Palestine to their masters—the Jews.”⁶⁰

Following the British disaster at Tobruk, President Roosevelt decided to send tanks and other military supplies to aid the British in North Africa. In spring and summer 1942, defeating the Axis in North Africa became an American priority as well. The more the United States entered the fray, the more Axis propaganda linked Franklin Roosevelt to the Jews. On July 2, Fritz Grobba, the head of the Orient Committee in the Foreign Office in Berlin, wrote a propaganda directive entitled “The Jews Are the Wirepullers of the Americans.”⁶¹ He urged that more than in the past, German propaganda in Arabic needed to stress that every American who “comes to the Orient comes in service of the Jews. He is sent here by the Jews, even if he does not know it. The Jews are the wire pullers of the Americans.” His memo called for diffusion into Arabic of the anti-Semitic interpretation of Franklin Roosevelt that had been standard fare in German language propaganda in Germany.⁶² Yet as late as March 1943, officials in the Foreign Ministry in Berlin acknowledged that German propaganda in North Africa was “running into difficulties because leading Arab circles are hostile only to Britain. As in the past they still trust the Americans. Therefore, we should again stress the necessity of using all relevant materials about Zionism. In particular, we should point to the Jews’ desire to establish boundaries [in Palestine] rooted in the Old Testament, that is, [boundaries that extend, JH] to the Euphrates River. This material can be used to gradually shatter the Arab’s confidence in the Americans’ promises.”⁶³ Although the Nazi regime encouraged limited Jewish emigration to Palestine in the 1930s under the Transfer Agreement, its purpose was to facilitate Jewish migration out of Germany but not with the intent of supporting Zionist goals.⁶⁴ Nazi Germany consistently opposed the formation of Jewish state in Palestine, one that it viewed as another potential outpost of an international Jewish conspiracy. Anti-Zionism became both a key theme in its appeals to the Middle East as well as an important aspect of Nazi anti-American propaganda and policy.⁶⁵ Nazi radio broadcasts repeatedly denounced “Roosevelt and the Jews,” at times even going so far as to claim that FDR himself was Jewish and that American policy was an example of “Jewish

imperialism.” German officials viewed the anti-Semitic argument about Jewish domination of the Roosevelt administration as vital for stimulating anti-Americanism in the North Africa and the Middle East.

The question of the impact and reception of the propaganda was one that preoccupied German, British and American officials. British wartime censorship in Egypt and Palestine made it difficult for pro-fascist and pro-Nazi Arabs and Muslims there to express their views publicly. An adequate assessment awaits further work by scholars who read Arabic (and Persian.) That said, reports by American diplomats and intelligence agents in the region indicated that anti-Jewish and anti-Zionist elements of Nazi propaganda found a positive reception in some quarters. The American broadcast efforts in the region were far less extensive than the Germans. The BBC was a much greater Arabic language Allied presence. Yet neither the BBC nor the United States Voice of America broadcasts run by the Office of War Information (OWI) decided to fight a war of ideas with Nazism over the issue of anti-Semitism. Both the Americans and the British thought that Allied identification with the Jews and with Zionism was a hindrance to building Arab and Muslim support for the Allied cause. In a “Weekly Propaganda Directive” of November 14, 1942, the Overseas Operations Branch of the Office of War Information established the following guidelines for Voice of America (VOA) broadcasts for Palestine.⁶⁶ The Voice of America had to

“speak to the people of Palestine with greater tact and caution than elsewhere in the Middle East.

1. Spoken and written words must alike be guided by an honest acceptance of the fact that the subject of Zionist aspirations cannot be mentioned, inasmuch as any serious outbreak of anti-Jewish feeling which might result among the Arab peoples in this area would jeopardize our strategy in the Eastern Mediterranean.
2. Equally taboo, at present, is any mention of a Jewish army.
3. It must be remembered that, as a whole, the Jews are staunchly supporting the cause of

the United Nations: the Arabs are not. Therefore, our words must be addressed primarily to Moslem and Christian Arabs, especially in view of the effectiveness of enemy propaganda.”⁶⁷

VOA broadcasts should “quote Hitler’s own observations in regard to alien races and cultures, and hold them up to ridicule and scorn” while stressing “the paganism of our enemies and embroider our comments with biblical and Koranic phrases of denunciation.” Contrasts should be drawn between “the terrible consequences of German rule upon her own allies and in the occupied countries with accounts of the benefits to be reaped by all people when victory is ours.”⁶⁸ In short, in order to win and sustain support for the Allied cause in Palestine, American OWI officials thought it was essential to not directly challenge the anti-Semitic barrage arriving many evenings from Axis Arabic short wave radio. The assumption behind the OWI directive was that Nazi propaganda was having success in undermining support for the Allies by linking them to the Jews. This concern was a repeated theme in subsequent reports by OSS and American military intelligence agents in the course of the war.⁶⁹

The purpose of Nazi radio broadcasts was to inflame and incite, not inform. They were designed to literally preach to the converted rather than to sway the views of the uncommitted. They offered little, often nothing in the way of hard news, especially regarding Nazi Germany’s military setbacks. However, from 1943 to the end of the war, “Berlin in Arabic” and “The Voice of Free Arabism” presented constant and increasingly desperate warnings of the catastrophe that would befall Arabs and Muslims if the Allies were to win the war. In Germany, Goebbels “Do you want total war?” speech of February 18, 1943 had set the tone for Nazi propaganda faced with setbacks. While the propaganda expressed confidence in victory in the longer term, it turned to increasingly vivid descriptions of the disasters to befall the Germans should they lose the war.⁷⁰ The Arabic language broadcasts focused on the supposedly awful plans the Jews had in store for Arabs and Muslims, in particular following the German defeat in Tunisia in May 1943. On September 8, 1943, for example, Berlin in Arabic described “The Ambitions of the

Jews.”⁷¹ The Jews would not be satisfied until they made “every territory between the Tigris and the Nile Jewish.” Their goal was to “remove the Cross and the Crescent from all Arab countries.” If they succeeded “there will remain not a single Arab Muslim or Christian in the Arab world. Arabs! Imagine Egypt, Iraq and all the Arab countries becoming Jewish with no Christianity or Islam there.”⁷² On September 24, VFA continued this line of attack when it asked “What are the aims of international Zionism?”⁷³ The Jews did not only want Palestine. Rather they sought “possession of all Arab countries in the East and the West” up to the Atlantic Ocean. In the West they sought Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia while in the East they want to connect Syria to Lebanon and then add both to Palestine. This “Jewish plan” was the “greatest danger” that would face the Arabs and Muslim if “our enemies the British, Americans and Bolsheviks emerge victorious.” It was the “sacred duty” of Arabs to unite in order to “repulse this Jewish menace” and prevent “Jewish imperialism” from being established with the assistance of the British. An Allied victory would enable the Jews to realize these dreams and to force the Arabs “to live as nomads.” Predictions of catastrophe if the Allies and “the Jews” won the war remained a key theme of Nazi propaganda and Nazi Arabic language propaganda until the war’s end.⁷⁴

A month later, on November 3, 1943, the Voice of Free Arabism discussed “Palestine between the Bolsheviks and the Jews”⁷⁵ It mirrored the incitement to murder of Nazi propaganda in Germany.

Should we not curse the time that has allowed this low race to realize their desires from such countries as Britain, America and Russia? The Jews kindled this war in the interests of Zionism. The Jews are responsible for the blood that has been shed. Despite this, Jewish impudence has increased to such an extent that they claim that they alone are the sacrifice of this war and that they alone are tasting bitterness. The world will never be at peace until the Jewish race is exterminated., otherwise wars will always exist. The Jews are the germs which have caused all the trouble in the world.”⁷⁶

Not only did these assertions fly in the face of common sense and wildly exaggerate the power of the Jews. They also vastly exaggerated the global significance of the conflict between Jews and Arabs over Palestine. In World War II, especially after the Allied victory in the Battle of Tunisia in 1942-1943, the fighting in North Africa was over and the conflict over Palestine was a sideshow to the main drama of the war in Europe. Yet with this broadcast, VFA found the cause of World War II as a whole to lie in the Zionist aspiration for a Jewish state in Palestine. Hence the only way to establish world peace, and also prevent the establishment of such a state, would be to exterminate “the Jewish race.”

One of Haj Amin el-Husseini’s distinctive contributions to the fusion and diffusion of radical anti-Semitism to the Arab and Islamic societies lay in his ability to combine Nazi ideology with references to the Koran. On November 5, 1943 VFA reported that Husseini had spoken at a meeting in Berlin of “all the Moslems of Germany and Europe” to protest the Balfour Declaration.⁷⁷ The Islamic Central Institute in Berlin published a German text of Husseini’s Balfour Protest speech, and the Foreign Ministry printed thousands of copies of the speech in Arabic and distributed them through its clandestine courier network in the Middle East.⁷⁸ The Mufti made clear that his hatred of the Jews lay both in ancient religious texts as well as in modern secular sources. The Balfour Declaration of November 2, 1917 whose goal was the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine “was the result of a Jewish-English conspiracy in the last war.” The declaration gave Palestine, “an Arab-Islamic country” of great importance to Muslims to the Jews and in so doing broke Britain’s promises to Arab leaders of postwar independence. Husseini poured forth his intense hatred of the Jews. He referred to their “overwhelming egoism” that was part of their character, their “contemptible belief” that they were God’s chosen people, their claim that everything had been created for their own sake and that “other men are animals which could be used for their own purposes.”⁷⁹ As a result of these characteristics, the Jews could not be loyal to anyone or integrate into another nation. Rather “they lived like a sponge among peoples, sucked their

blood, seized their property, undermine their morals yet still demand the rights of local inhabitants. They want every advantage but they won't assume any obligations! All of this brought the hostility of the world down on them and nourished the Jew's hatred against all the peoples that had been burning for two thousand years." He believed that "God's anger and the curse on the Jews mentioned in the Holy Koran" was due to these Jewish characteristics. The Jews who had "tormented the world for ages have been the enemy of the Arabs and of Islam since its emergence. The Holy Koran expressed this old enmity in the following words: 'You will find that those who are most hostile to the believers are the Jews.' They tried to poison the great and noble prophets. They resisted them, were hostile to them and [they] intrigued against them. This was the case for 1,300 years. For all that time, they have not stopped spinning intrigues against the Arabs and Muslims."⁸⁰ Hussein's hatred of the Jews was a central component of his understanding of Islam and his reading of the Koran. For him, Islam rooted in the Koran was an inherently anti-Semitic doctrine. He placed the efforts of Disraeli, Lord Balfour, Lionel Rothschild and Nathaniel Rothschild to establish a Jewish home in Palestine into this longer continuity of Jewish-Muslim enmity. Indeed, he called the Jews "the driving forces of the destruction of the regime of the Islamic Caliphate" in the Middle East." The Jews used their power in finance, politics and the press to this end. The Arabs and Muslims all knew of "Jewish desire" to seize the Islamic holy sights, such as the Al Aksa Mosque and "to build a temple on its ruins."

This cultural fusion of racism, anti-Semitism and religious fanaticism found regular expression on the radio in the last year and a half of the war. On January 29, 1944, Berlin in Arabic broadcast "Arabs and Moslems at war with Jewry."⁸¹ It presented the two as distinct and different not only as religions but also as races. While the Arabs were "lavishly generous" the Jews were "meanly miserly.

While the Arabs are courageous and warlike, the Jews are cowardly and fearful. The differences between the two races were the reason for the enduring enmity which has always existed between

them. We therefore believe that this enmity and strife between the Arabs and the Jews will always be maintained until one of the two races is destroyed. This struggle or war between the Arabs and the Jews is based on beliefs and such conflicts cannot end other than with the destruction of one party. We must also admit that the responsibility for this racial war between the Arabs and the Jews lies on the shoulders of the Jews. The characteristics of the Arabs, their generosity, unselfishness and will to sacrifice cannot lead to war.

Enmity has always existed between Arab and Jew, since ancient times. But it has been accentuated since the appearance of Islam. In Islam, the Jews found a danger to their beliefs, They fought the Prophet and his followers and when they found that the Moslems were gaining strength, the intrigued among them. They even tried to assault the Prophet. This enmity has existed from then till the present day, when Moslems realize that they must free their lands from the evils of the Jews. It is a fact that the Jews preferred paganism to Islam. The speaker then read a saying by the Prophet to the effect that the Jews are the most ardent enemies of the Moslems.⁸²

Both the racial and religious arguments supported the Manichean conclusion that a conflict between Arabs and Jews was total and must end in the destruction of one or the other. The anti-Semitism of the broadcast drew on an interpretation of Islam's view of the Jews and then added modern, secular anti-Semitic arguments about the supposed decisive role of the Jews in World War I and World War II. The anti-Semitism of the broadcasts was both ancient and modern, evoking a continuity that extended back to the founding of Islam yet as up to date as the Nazi regime's twentieth century anti-Semitic conspiracy theories.

In the spring of 1944, resolutions were introduced in the United States Senate and the House of Representatives to lift restrictions on Jewish emigration to Palestine and to support creation of a Jewish state there. For Nazi propagandists these initiatives confirmed their assertion that the war was Jewish war.

On Berlin in Arabic on March 1, 1944 Haj Amin el-Husseini stated that the “wicked American intentions toward the Arabs are now clearer, and there remain no doubts that they are endeavoring to establish a Jewish empire in the Arab world. More than 400,000,000 Arabs oppose this criminal American movement...Arabs! Rise as one and fight for your sacred rights. Kill the Jews wherever you find them. This pleases God, history and religion. This serves your honor. God is with you.”(emphasis in original, JH).⁸³ As in the broadcasts of July 1942, Husseini and other announcers on Nazi radio urged Arab and Muslim listeners to take matters into their own hands and engage in murderous violence against Jews “wherever you find them.”

Despite Allied wartime censorship that prevented open expressions of pro-Nazi sympathy in North Africa and the Middle East, American and British intelligence agencies were aware that Nazi Germany’s anti-Jewish and anti-Zionist propaganda struck some responsive chords among in the region. With the lifting of wartime controls, the postwar months and years produced evidence about the aftereffects of the Nazi propaganda campaign. In summer 1945, Husseini fled Germany but was arrested in France. Under suspicious circumstances he “escaped” French custody and arrived in Cairo. In Washington, the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) issued a report on June 23, 1945 about the political response in the Middle East to possible war crimes trials against pro-Nazi Arabs.⁸⁴ The authors of “The Near East and the War Crimes Problem” wrote that “in the Near East the popular attitude toward the trial of [Nazi, JH] 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.”⁸⁵

A year later the Husseini returned Egypt. The reaction offered an example of what the OSS analysts had in mind. Throughout the war, American and British intelligence agencies had been concerned about the pro-Axis sympathies of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. On June 11, 1946, Hassan al-Banna, its leader, sent the following statement to officials of the Arab League.

“Al-Ikhwan Al-Muslimin [the Moslem Brotherhood] and all Arabs request the Arab League on which Arab hopes are pinned, to declare that the Mufti is welcome to stay in any Arab country he may choose and that great welcome should be extended to him wherever he goes, as a sign of appreciation for his great services for the glory of Islam and the Arabs...The hearts of the Arabs palpitated with joy at hearing that the Mufti has succeeded in reaching an Arab country. The news sounded like thunder to the ears of some American, British and Jewish tyrants. The lion is at least free and he will roam the Arabian jungle to clear it of the wolves...What a hero, what a miracle of a man. We wish to know what the Arab youth, Cabinet Ministers, rich men, and princess of Palestine, Syria, Iraq, Tunis, Morocco, and Tripoli are going to do to be worthy of this hero. *Yes, this hero who challenged an empire and fought Zionism, with the help of Hitler and Germany. Germany and Hitler are gone, but Amin Al-Husseini will continue the struggle...* God entrusted him with a mission and he must succeed...The Lord Almighty did not preserve Amin for nothing. There must be a divine purpose behind the preservation of the life of this man, namely the defeat of Zionism. Amin! March on! God is with you! We are behind you! We are willing to sacrifice our necks for the cause. To death! Forward March.⁸⁶

A plausible reading of al-Banna's statement would be that Haj Amin el-Husseini was continuing *the same* struggle that Hitler and Germany as well as Husseini himself, had been waging during World War II. Indeed, for al-Banna, that war and its themes was to be continued in the Middle East, If so, who better to play a leading role than a political and religious leader with experience in fighting the Jewish enemy in Europe. Far from criticizing him for having sided with “Germany and Hitler,” al-Banna expressed admiration for Husseini's wartime activities. Living in wartime Cairo, al-Banna and the members of the Muslim Brotherhood would have been able to hear what Husseini and others on Axis radio had to say

about the Jews and the Allies. He found these words and actions admirable. Moreover, Husseini's survival, "escape" and arrival in Cairo were proof that God approved as well.

Conclusion

The history of Nazi Germany's Arabic language propaganda aimed at North Africa and the Middle East during World War II and the Holocaust was not a story about one man, the "Grand Mufti of Jerusalem," Haj Amin el-Husseini. Rather, it was part of a much broader story of the diffusion of Nazi ideology from Europe to the Middle East and of the Nazi regime's efforts to integrate propaganda with military strategy in its unsuccessful military operations in the region. With the added material from American and German archives, we are now able to offer more detail and texture to the history of Nazi Germany's efforts to extend beyond a eurocentric framework as well as to understand how it interacted with Islamic and Arab radicalism.

The propaganda barrage drew on political and ideological fusion between National Socialist ideology, radical Arab nationalism and equally radically and militant Islam. Just as Nazism rested on a selective reading and appropriation of some elements of European and German traditions, so too did the militant Islam expressed by Husseini and his associates in wartime Berlin. Both represented a radicalization of already existing components of European and Christian, on the one hand, and Arab and Muslim, traditions, on the other. While neither were simply expressions of these traditions in general, they also cannot be understood without also seeing them also as a result of their selective appropriation, reception and radicalization. In wartime Berlin, the improbable diffusion of Nazi ideology and its hatreds to non-Aryan "Semites" in the Middle East presupposed a leap beyond the racial particularism and extreme nationalism for which Nazi Germany was justly famous and resulting appeals to unlikely of allies. The political and ideological cooperation between Nazi officials and their Arab and Muslim allies

in wartime Berlin was an example of what historians in recent years have called “trans-nationalism” or “hybridity” though it perhaps was not what is usually meant by those terms. The radio broadcasts and printed material that emerged from the hothouse of wartime Berlin documented a meeting of hearts and minds of two different traditions that found common ground in hatred of the Jews and liberal modernity despite their starkly different starting points, ethnic differences and linguistic barriers. The Arab exiles aided in this radicalization of their own traditions by pointing out where their understanding of passages from the Koran offered entry points to radical anti-Semitism and hatred of democracy. The Nazi officials, including Hitler, were pleased to learn that cultural components of another civilization produced hatreds similar to their own. Just as the Nazis had learned how to radicalize pre-existing anti-Semitic potentials in European and German culture, so the officials and ideologues working on propaganda aimed at Arabs and Muslims learned how to build on the already existing anti-Jewish themes that comprised one component of the traditions of Islam. An adequate answer to the important question of the impact of this propaganda barrage in North Africa and the Middle East remains beyond the evidence presented in this paper. The evidence is compelling and persuasive that Nazi Germany’s appeal both to Arab nationalism and to the traditions of radical Islam played a central role in its fortunately failed efforts to extend its influence to North Africa and the Middle East.

Endnotes

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Yehoshua Porath, *The Palestinian Arab national movement : from riots to rebellion, Volume two, 1929-1939* (London ; Totowa, N.J. : Frank Cass, 1977). On Britain and Jewish emigration to Palestine, see Bernard Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews of Europe, 1939-1945*, 2nd. ed.. (London and New York: Leicester University Press, 1999).

12.

Palestine in 1942, Ben Gurion said: “The Nazis are not far away, but we are being threatened not only by Rommel in North Africa. We are also in danger of invasion from Syria and even Iraq and Turkey,” 64. Robert Satloff has recently described policies of anti-Semitic persecution and the establishment of harsh labor camps during the North Africa occupation by Nazi Germany, Vichy France and Fascist Italy. Yet as terrible as these policies were, the Nazis and their allies were unable to implement plans to engage in mass murder either in the region or via deportation to death camps in Europe were not implemented. See Robert Satloff, *Among the Righteous: Lost Stories from the Long Reach of the Holocaust into Arab Lands* (New York: Public Affairs, 2006). In this sense, thanks to Allied military victories, the Holocaust was not extended to the Middle East.

13.

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30.

31.

2-3. The leading officials in the Foreign Ministry dealing with the Middle East included Erwin Ettel, Fritz Grobba, Werner Otto von Hentig, Wilhelm Melchers, Carl Prüfer, Ernst Woermann,

32.

Ru., Stand vom 1.9.1942, " PAAA Rundfunkpolitische Abteilung, R67477 Referate Ru Pers. Ru Hs, Bd. 1: Verwaltung Organisation 1941-1943, Bde 2-3.

33.

Erforschung des Vorderen Orients in der ersten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2003), 199.

34.

Abteilung, R67477 Referate Ru Pers. Ru Hs, Bd. 1: Verwaltung Organisation 1941-1943, Bde 2-3.

Personnel of the Orient office in the Foreign Ministry's *Rundfunkpolitischen Abteilung*. Kissling became a *Dozent* for history and culture of the Orient and of Turkey at the University of Munich. See, among others, his *The Muslim World* (1969), *Handbuch der Orientalistik* (1959), *Islamistische Abhandlungen* (1974). Also see Kurt Munzel, *Ägyptischer-arabischer Sprachführer* (Wiesbaden, 1958 and 1983).

35.

Rundfunkabteilung, Ref. VIII Arabische und Iranische Sendungen, vorl. 39, Dez. 1940-Jan. 1941, p, 2,

36.

Rundfunkabteilung, Ref. VIII Arabische und Iranische Sendungen, vorl. 39, Dez. 1940-Jan. 1941, p, 2,

37.

38. "Religiöser Wochentalk vom 12. Dez.1940 (arabisch) *Die Friegebigkeit*," broadcast on December 12, 1940, 14-16. Though, most of the Division of Radio Policy files are Political Archive of the German Foreign Ministry, these files from 1940-1941 are in the Bundesarchiv in Lichtenfelde.

39.

1941, Kult.R, Ref. VIII (Orient), Mu/Scha, 11-13.

40.

41.

Klaus Gensicke, *Der Mufti von Jerusalem und die Nationalsozialisten: Eine politische Biographie Amin el-Husseinis* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2007); Mallmann and Cuppers, *Halbmond und Hakenkreuz*, 105-120; and Hirszowicz, *The Third Reich and the Arab East*, 211-228.

42.

43.

Minister and Minister Grobba in Berlin,” Berlin (November 30, 1941), *Documents on German Foreign Policy (DGFP) Series D (1937-1945) Volume XIII, The War Years, June 23-December 11, 1941*, (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1949-1984) 881-882, 884. On the meeting, see Hirszowicz, *The Third Reich and the Middle East*, op. cit., 218-221; and Klaus Gensicke, *Der Mufti von Jerusalem und die Nationalsozialisten*, op. cit., 60-63.

44.

was fully aware of the threat. According to the language of the Genocide Convention adopted by the United Nations after World War II, some of the resulting broadcasts would meet its definition of “incitement” and could thus be described as part of the crime of genocide. Clause 3 in Article 3 of the “Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide,” includes “direct and public incitement to commit genocide” as acts that should be punishable. See [“http://www.hrweb.org/legal/genocide.html.”](http://www.hrweb.org/legal/genocide.html) While the Reich Press Chief, Otto Dietrich, was tried and convicted of “crimes against humanity” for his role in Nazi propaganda in Germany, Husseini and other pro-Nazi Arabs involved in Arabic language broadcasts in Berlin faced no postwar judicial reckoning. On the Dietrich trial see Jeffrey Herf, *Jewish Enemy*, op. cit., 272-274.

45.

1944, 740.0011/European War 1939, Microcopy No. M982, Roll 114, 21414.

46.

47.

48.

General Records, Cairo Embassy, 1942, 815.4-820.02, Box 77..

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superiority went hand in hand with atrocious crimes committed against the non-Jewish, Slavic populations of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. We know that before and during the German invasion of Poland in September 1939 and before and during Operation Barbarossa in June 1941, Nazi propaganda offered ideological justifications for these crimes in the form of in vast amounts of racist propaganda about “Slavic sub-humans.” However, aside from Hitler’s remarks about the Arabs dating from the 1920s in *Mein Kampf*, German propaganda about Arabs and Muslims, whether in Germany or aimed at Arabs and Muslims in North Africa and the Middle East, did not echo the racist ideology directed at Eastern Europeans and citizens of the Soviet Union. On the contrary, German propaganda went to great lengths to convince Arabs and Muslims that Germany was an anti-Jewish, but not an anti-Semitic, regime. If, following a victory in North Africa, Nazi Germany would have treated Arabs and Muslims as racial inferiors, it would have done so without the ideological preparations which accompanied its war crimes in Eastern Europe.

56.

1944, 740.0011/European War 1939, Microcopy No. M982, Roll 114, 21414.

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65.

Historical Perspective (London and New York: Routledge, 2007); 50-71; and Herf, *Jewish Enemy*, op. cit, 72-76, 180-181 and 246.

66.

Military Intelligence Division, (hereafter, MID) "Regional File." 1922-1944 Palestine, Box 2719, Folder 2930.

67.

68.

69.

General Records, 1936-61, 1943: 110.2 to 1943-891 Box 8, 2-3; and George Britt, United States Office of War Information, Beirut, "Political Notes on the Lebanon and Syria," (February 13, 1943) NARA RG84, Lebanon. U.S. Consulate Legation and Embassy Beirut, 1936-1941, Classified General Records 1943: 1943 110.2 to 1943 - 891, 1; and George Britt, "Beirut September to June" (June, 1943) NARA RG84, Lebanon. U.S. Consulate Legation and Embassy Beirut, 1936-1941, Classified General Records 1943: 1943 110.2 to 1943 - 891, 7.

70.

71.

NARA, RG 84, Egypt: Cairo Embassy General Records, 1933-1955, 820.00-822.00, 1943, Box 93. On Goebbels "Do You Want Total War?" speech see Herf, *Jewish Enemy*, 192-196.

72.

73.

September 23 to 29, 1943," NARA, RG 84, Egypt: Cairo Embassy General Records, 1933-1955, 820.00-822.00, 1943, Box 93.

74.

75.

period November 3 to 9, 1943," 1-2, NARA, RG 84, Egypt: Cairo Embassy General Records, 1933-1955, 820.00-822.00, 1943, Box 93.

76.

77.

Broadcasts in Arabic for the period November 3 to 9, 1943," 3-4, NARA, RG 84, Egypt: Cairo Embassy General Records, 1933-1955, 820.00-822.00, 1943, Box 93.

78.

Grossmufti, 1942-1944, 297878-886.

79.

80.

81.

1944,” NARA RG 84, Cairo Embassy General Records, 1936-1955: 1944, 820.02-822, Box 112.

82.

83.

84.

OSS,” 1-28, in NARA, RG 84, Syria: Damascus Legation, Confidential File, 1945: Vol. 1-2, 030-800B, Classified General Records, Box 4, Vol. II, 711-800B.

85.

86.

Intelligence, Field Files, Entry 108A, Box 15, Folder 2.