

Matthias Küntzel was presented with the ADL Human Rights Award

The Anti-Defamation League's statement and the acceptance
speech

ADL Lauds German Author for Efforts to Expose and Counter Modern Anti-Semitism

Palm Beach, FL, February 11, 2011

A German political scientist and writer who has laid bare the genocidal intent of Iran's nuclear program and exposed a link between the anti-Semitism of the Nazis and of the Iranian regime was honored today by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) for his ongoing research in the roots and manifestations of modern Jew-hatred.

Dr. Matthias Küntzel was presented with the *ADL Paul Ehrlich-Gunther K. Schwerin Human Rights Award* during the League's National Executive Committee meeting in Palm Beach, Florida.

"Matthias Küntzel has a long and distinguished record in speaking out against anti-Semitism and warning his readers in his native Germany and elsewhere about the dangers posed by this age-old virus that has no known cure," said Abraham H. Foxman, ADL National Director, in presenting the award. "His work has been sorely under-appreciated in this country. With this recognition, we hope to acknowledge his ongoing efforts and also let the American public know of the implications of this disturbing trend."

In his award-winning book, *Jihad and Jew-Hatred: Islamism, Nazism and the Roots of 9/11*, Dr. Küntzel analyzed the link between Nazi anti-Semitism and that of radical Islam and the cooperation between Nazi leaders and Muslim extremists, especially the Muslim Brotherhood and the Mufti of Jerusalem, beginning in the 1930s. Dr. Küntzel's research into Nazi influences on Iranian anti-Semitism has produced a unique and potent argument for robust German opposition to the Iranian regime.

"I want to thank you not only for this prize, but for something much bigger: I owe my understanding of anti-Semitism above all to people like you – American survivors of the Holocaust and Jewish intellectuals in the United States," said Dr. Küntzel in accepting the award. "Today's events in Tunisia and Egypt mark a watershed in the development of the Middle East. And it is precisely at such a time – a time of new beginnings – that it becomes more important than ever to publicly raise the issues of the roots and potential consequences of anti-Semitism."

Dr. Küntzel is an external research associate at the Vidal Sassoon International Centre for the Study of Anti-Semitism at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and a member of the Board of Directors of Scholars for Peace in the Middle East. Since 2001, his research and writing has focused on anti-Semitism in current Islamic thinking, Islamism, Islamism and National Socialism, Iran, and German and European policies towards the Middle East and Iran.

"In his writing on the anti-Semitism of the Iranian regime, which he terms the 'stepchild of German National Socialism,' Dr. Küntzel lays bare the genocidal intent of those who are striving for nuclear weapons," said Mr. Foxman. "He makes clear that the link between the anti-Semitism of the Nazis and of the Iranian regime is not just an analogy."

The *Paul Ehrlich-Gunther K. Schwerin Human Rights Award* was established in 1998 by the ADL in conjunction with a descendant of Professor Paul Ehrlich to honor the late Gunther Schwerin, grandson of the renowned German-Jewish scientist, and Dr. Ehrlich, discoverer of the cure for syphilis – a disease that had ravaged people for centuries.

More than a great scientist, Ehrlich was a great humanitarian who represented the best in German and German-Jewish society before the Nazi juggernaut destroyed both. Schwerin upheld his grandfather's legacy to battle intolerance and established the award to honor those who have fought anti-Semitism throughout Germany and Europe.

Past recipients of the *ADL Paul Ehrlich-Gunther K. Schwerin Human Rights Award* include Otto Schily, German Minister of the Interior (2006); Gert Weisskirchen; member of the Bundestag and Vice President, OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (2005); Rudolf Scharping, German Minister of Defense (2000); and Rita Suessmuth, former president of the Bundestag (1999).

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Matthias Küntzel: Words of thanks

Ladies and Gentleman, Director Foxman, dear friends,

Thank you. I feel very greatly honored by your decision to reward my commitment to the fight against antisemitism and racism with the *ADL Paul Ehrlich Günther Schwerin Human Rights Prize*. I will accept it as the strongest possible encouragement to keep on and improve the work I am doing.

However, I want to thank you not only for this prize, but for something much bigger: I owe my understanding of antisemitism above all to people like you - American survivors of the Holocaust and Jewish intellectuals in the United States.

To develop and maintain awareness of the Holocaust is one of ADL's principles. However, for a long time it was not one of mine. Like most non-Jewish Germans I grew up with parents who, until 1945, had believed in Adolf Hitler and thereafter did not talk about the crimes committed against the Jews. Of "Holocaust awareness" there was no sign. This has had consequences, of which I will give two examples.

My first example stems from the 1970s. The "9/11" of my generation took place in 1972. I am talking about the terror attack during the Munich Olympics against the Israeli Olympic team. 11 members of this team were taken hostage and killed by a Palestinian organization called "Black September".

Appalled by this terrorism, I asked myself: How can this be? How can people become so desperate as to attack even the Olympic Games? In 1972, I knew nothing about the Holocaust. I knew nothing about the fact that Jews were killed without any rational cause. I did not know that antisemites do not need a cause in order to kill. As a result of such ignorance, I blamed Israeli policies for the alleged despair of the Munich terrorists. If Israel stopped its policies, I believed, Palestinian terrorism would stop as well. That was how I

thought and, as a result, I joined the anti-Zionist Left in Germany. If I had known more about the Holocaust and its lessons, I would probably have reached different conclusions.

My second example stems from the 1980s. You have no idea of the shock I experienced when I met a Jew for the first time in my life. It was in summer 1983 on a bus in New York City, where I found myself sitting next to a young and very pretty woman. To my small talk remark "I am from Germany" she replied "I am Jewish". These words struck me dumb. After a brief silence, the only thing I could think to say was to ask her why the Israelis were being so cruel to the Palestinians.

Years would pass before I realized what must have happened to me during those seconds. To be confronted by own virulent feelings of guilt out of the blue felt like an assault, so I struck back. The blow dealt by her "I am Jewish" was softened by the notion that cruelty by Jews could somehow cancel out the cruelty against Jews. My companion on the bus had not mentioned the Nazis or the Second World War; nonetheless her mere presence as a Jew was enough to send me tumbling down a whole staircase of intellectual errors. So, on top of the implicit equation of the Lebanon war with the Nazi war, the stereotypical notion of "World Jewry" was clearly at work in me as I made this individual sitting beside me directly responsible for the behavior of the Israeli government. The woman, who had perhaps never previously talked to a German, clammed up and said no more.

Thus I personally experienced – consciously and unconsciously – the consequences of no-awareness of the Holocaust.

It was due to the papers and talks of American-Jewish intellectuals that I eventually saw reason – a kind of private re-education. The turning point came with the so-called "Bitburg affair" in 1984. The failure of the German Left to react adequately to this affair triggered an indignant "Letter to the German Left", written by Moishe Postone who would later become a Professor of History at the University of Chicago. Later, I started a dialogue with Prof. Andrei S. Markovits, as well.

During the 1990s two American scientists changed my attitude towards the Holocaust: Christopher Browning and Daniel Jonah Goldhagen. I read with a group of friends Daniel Goldhagen's book, "Hitler's Willing Executioners", and began to study the history of

antisemitism. Our book on “Goldhagen and the German Left” was published in 1997 and marked the beginning of my departure from the German Left.

Some years later I was – like everyone - shocked by 9/11. I gathered up some 30 or 40 relevant studies about the history of Islamism and the Muslim Brotherhood. I discovered some important links between National Socialism and the Muslim Brotherhood during the Thirties and Forties and published my book on “Jihad and Jew-Hatred - Islamism, Nazism and the Roots of 9/11.” A survivor of the Holocaust – Prof. Dori Laub of Yale University – read the German version of my book and immediately invited me to give a talk at Yale. Prof. Omar Bartov of Brown University quoted my book extensively in The New Republic. Prof. Jeffrey Herf, University of Maryland, wrote the Foreword for the English version of this book. Two other scholars, Dr. John Rosenthal and Dr. Colin Meade, started to translate my writings into English. I met ADL’s Michael Salberg at many conferences on the topic of antisemitism and was invited to present my book at the ADL headquarter in New York City and have now been invited again to receive for the first time in my life such a kind of prize.

I have told you this story in order to underline the fact that it is actually you – American-Jewish intellectuals and survivors of the Holocaust – who deserve this Paul Ehrlich award because your commitment, research and public stand have been essential to me changing my mind and developing an awareness of the Holocaust.

My second remark deals with the most extreme form of non-awareness of the Holocaust: Holocaust denial, which in my opinion constitutes the peak of antisemitic incitement: Whoever denies the Holocaust kills the victims a second time. Whoever declares Auschwitz to be a “myth” implicitly portrays the Jews as the enemy of humankind, who for filthy lucre have been duping the rest of humanity for the past sixty years. Whoever talks of the “so-called” Holocaust suggests that over ninety percent of the world’s media and university professorships are controlled by Jews and thereby cut off from the “real” truth.

In this way, precisely the same kind of genocidal hatred that helped pave the way for the Shoah is being incited. Every denial of the Holocaust thus tacitly contains an appeal to repeat it.

Two of my Israeli friends, Meir Litvak and Esther Webman have recently published the first extensive study on the denial and sometimes even approval of the Holocaust in the Arab world. Did you know that all Arab countries – including Egypt – banned the screening of foreign films that dealt with the Holocaust such as Steven Spielberg’s “Schindlers List” or Roberto Benini’s “Life is beautiful”?

Let me please quote Litvak and Webman:

“Justification of the Holocaust was less prevalent than its denial. Still, its very existence, scope and bluntness ... had no parallel in any other post-war societies. ... As was the case with Arab denial, justification was not confined to marginal or radical circles and media, but appeared among mainstream producers of culture, and did not arouse any significant criticism or condemnation in the Arab public discourse. ... Although expressions of justification declined since the 1970s, they never disappeared, but remained largely confined to Islamists.” (From Empathy to Denial, p. 195)

Islamist movements – especially the Muslim Brotherhood - is the headline issue right now. I do strongly support the people’s fight in Tunisia and Egypt for freedom of opinion and freedom of assembly. But I am at the same time concerned about the tendency of Western governments and media to downplay the Muslim Brotherhood’s antisemitism and Holocaust denial. While antisemitism from the far right occasions justified outrage in the U.S.A. and elsewhere, the very same antisemitism is again and again downplayed and minimized when expressed by Muslims. Many are inclined to excuse these diatribes as a side effect of the Middle East conflict and blame Israel for the antisemitism in the Arab world. Others - such as the London based Professor Gilbert Achcar - even try to excuse the denial of the Holocaust. To quote Professor Achcar:

“Are all forms of Holocaust denial the same? Should such denial when it comes from oppressors, not be distinguished from denial in the mouths of the oppressed, as the racism of ruling whites is distinguished from that of subjugated blacks?” (p. 276)

Achcar’s book on “The Arabs and the Holocaust” has been hailed by many serious scholars in the U.S.A. and the author has been invited to present his views at the most recent “Lessons and Legacies Conference on the Holocaust” here in Florida.

It is true: Today's events in Tunisia and Egypt mark a watershed in the development of the Middle East. And it is precisely at such a time –a time of new beginnings – that it becomes more important than ever to publicly raise the issues of the roots and potential consequences of antisemitism in the Middle East.

Some, however, prefer to talk about a moderate Islamism the model of which is, supposedly, the Turkish ruling party AKP. Turkish Islamism is a topic in Germany right now because of the release of a new installment of the Turkish movie series “Valley of the Wolves” – a series that has received strong endorsement of the current Turkish government. Last week, I sat through the latest movie, entitled “Valley of the Wolves – Palestine”, and have published a dossier on it: Every observer in Germany agrees that we have not seen such blatant anti-Semitic incitement in Germany's cinemas since 1945. The author of the movie's script does not mince words: “This film wants to expose a fascist and racist kind of thinking” - he means Zionism – “and tries to kill it in front of the audience.”

This movie does not only appeal to hatred of Israel but also employs traits of classical antisemitism. It connects Israeli Jews with the ambition to erect a “Greater Israel – from the Euphrates to the Nile” and with the racist notion that Jewish blood is a “holy blood” worth much more than the blood of Arabs. It tries to demonstrate that Israeli Jews are keen on killing kids and that every Jew in the world is controlled by some Zionist leaders in Jerusalem.

Since the Nazi productions of films such as “Jud Süß” it is a well-established fact that there is nothing more suggestive than an antisemitic movie. “The Valley of the Wolves – Palestine” – backed by a democratically elected moderate Islamist government - is now showing in about 100 countries and in more than 300 cinemas in Turkey alone. In Germany about 70 cinemas are disseminating this hate message, which seems to be tailor-made for stirring up the new antisemitism among our Turkish minority.

Moderate Islamism? Yes – as far as political tactics are concerned. We should, however, confront every brand of Islamism with a set of crucial questions such as: Are you in favor of Hamas? Or are you in favor of freedom? Are you fostering antisemitism or mutual respect? Are you going to attack Israel or are you searching for a good relationship with the Jewish state?

Yesterday, the German chapter of an organization called “Scholars For Peace in the Middle East” – which I co-founded and of which I am a Board member– issued a press statement about this film explaining our concerns and asking the German Federal Government to take action. This brings me back to this award which honors Prof. Paul Ehrlich, the most prominent disciple of Prof. Robert Koch who together founded the discipline of microbiology. SPME’s discussion about the “Valley of the Wolves” took place in exactly the same historic room in the Berlin Charitè where, on March 24, 1882, Paul Ehrlich listened to Robert Koch’s famous speech about his findings on tuberculosis.

This little episode also reveals a detail about my work. True, today you do not honor a well-known public official. You are rewarding a political scientist who tries to fight antisemitism not only through books and essays but also at a grassroot level. Many of my German collaborators and friends are more than happy about this prize, which honors their activity as well.

I am thinking here not only of my beloved wife Rosi and my dear friend Fanny England – a 85-years old and most active Holocaust survivor - but also of my good friends who initiated the “Stop the Bomb” campaign against Ahmadinejad’s Iran and my dear colleagues in the United States and elsewhere who share my passion not only to research into but also to overcome antisemitism.

Thank you very much again.