

## **Jihadism and anti-Semitism**

The struggle of the Islamists looks back upon decades of anti-Semitic tradition.

What kind of political ideology pushed Mohammed Atta, the ringleader of the 9/11 perpetrators, into acting the way he did? It is precisely this question that the German weekly *Der Spiegel* put to those friends of Mohammed Atta who were members of his Koran group at the Hamburg Technical University .

Their answers were remarkable: „The members of his Koran group attributed a ‚Nazi weltanschauung‘ to him“, according to *Der Spiegel*. „In his opinion, Jews were the wire-pullers not only of the media but also of the financial world and of politics as well. Jews, as he saw it, were behind America’s Gulf War, were behind the Balkan wars, were behind the Chechnyan war, were everywhere. ... He considered New York City to be the center of world Jewry. Mohammed Atta wanted to establish a theocracy between the Nile and the Euphrates which would be free of Jews; his war of liberation had to start in New York.“  
(*Spiegel* No.36/2002, p.117)

Mohammed Atta's obsessive hatred of Jews, shared by his al Qaida instructors and financiers, was obviously the key motive for the massacre of so many innocent people in Washington, D.C. and New York City.

That is not at all surprising, for this pattern of suicidal mass-murder had already taken place before 9/11: On 1st June 2001, two months previously, a member of the Palestinian Hamas movement killed himself and 21 other young people in front of a discotheque in Tel Aviv. On 9<sup>th</sup> August 2001, another Islamist went into the overcrowded Pizzeria *Sabbaro* in Jerusalem and blew himself up, killing 16 people.

Actually, there should have been a feeling that there might be a connection between these three attacks immediately after 9/11.

There is, however, not much debate about the anti-Semitic motives of the 9/11-perpetrators. This is all the more amazing since the history of Islamism has verified in no uncertain terms the interrelations between anti-Jewish hatred and Jihad.

In contrast to a widespread belief, this politico-religious movement did not come into existence during the 1960's but during the 1930's.

The success of this movement was not inspired by the failure of Nasserism but by the rise of Nazism. Up to 1951, all its campaigns to mobilize the people had not been directed against colonial powers but against Jews.

It was the Organization of the Moslem Brotherhood, founded in 1928, which established Islamism as a mass movement. The meaning of this organization for Islamism is comparable to the meaning of the Bolshevik party for Communism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century: Up to now it is the point of reference in terms of ideology and it is the organizational core, which decisively inspired all following islamist tendencies including the al Qaida network and which is inspiring them to this very day.

It is true that British colonial policy produced Islamism as a resistance movement against „cultural modernity“ and triggered the call for a Sharia-based new order. But the Brotherhood did not conduct its jihad primarily against the British; it did not conduct it against the French or against the Egyptian elite who had collaborated with the British.

Instead, the jihad movement of the Brotherhood was focused almost exclusively on Zionism and the Jews. In 1936 they had only eight hundred members but in 1938 they had expanded to an amazing two hundred thousand. Between these years, however, only one big campaign took place in Egypt which targeted Zionism and the Jews exclusively.

This campaign was set off by a rebellion in Palestine which the notorious Mufti of Jerusalem, Amin el-Husseini, had initiated. „Down with the Jews!“ - „Jews get out of Egypt and Palestine!“: these were

the slogans of the mass demonstrations which the Brotherhood had organized in Egyptian cities as a result.

Their leaflets called for a boycott of Jewish goods and Jewish shops. In their newspaper *al-Nadhir* they started a regular column called „The danger of the Jews of Egypt.“ There they published the names and addresses of Jewish businessmen and the publishers of allegedly Jewish newspapers all over the world, attributing every evil – from communism to brothels – to the „Jewish danger“. A lot of patterns of action as well as slogans thus had been borrowed from Nazi Germany. In addition, the Brotherhood made a call to its followers „to be available for the Jihad in defense of the Aqsa-mosque in all parts of Egypt“. This call was unusual and completely new within the Moslem world at that time.

For the Moslem Brotherhood has been the organization which firstly created the idea of a belligerent jihad and the longing for death as an Islamic model for modern times. As early as 1938, Hassan al-Banna, the charismatic founder of the Brotherhood, presented his idea of jihad to the public by publishing an article entitled “The industry of death“. This headline, however, did not refer to the horror of death but to death as an ideal to long for. Hassan al-Banna wrote: „To a nation that perfects the industry of death and which knows how to die nobly, God gives proud life in this world and eternal grace in the life to come.“

This slogan met with enthusiasm within the „Troops of God“ as the Brotherhood referred to itself. Whenever their battalions marched down the boulevards of Cairo in a semi-fascist formation they burst forth into song: „We are not afraid of death, we desire it... Let us die in redemption for Muslims.“ This idea of jihad was not formulated in modern times until the 1930's; it had been interwoven with the anti-Semitic impulse from the very beginning.

The anti-Semitism of the Brotherhood, therefore, was not only influenced by European ideologies but by Islamic roots as well. Firstly, Islamists considered, and still consider, Palestine as being an Islamic territory („Dar al-Islam“) where Jews are never allowed to run one single village let alone a state. Secondly, this new front line between Muslims and Jews evoked old memories of the early history of Islam. Islamists, for example, try to legitimize their aspiration to drive out or kill the Jews of Palestine referring to the example of Mohammed who, as the legend goes, succeeded not only in expelling two Jewish tribes from Medina during the 7<sup>th</sup> century, but killed the entire male population of the third tribe and sold all the women and children into slavery. Thirdly, it was exactly this enmity which seemingly proved right the saying of the Koran that Jews are to be considered the worst enemy of the believers.

It was not until May 8, 1945, however, that the ideological rapprochement between the Muslim Brothers and the Nazis reached a peak. This became obvious as early as November 1945. During this very month the Muslim Brothers committed the most fervent anti-Jewish pogroms in Egypt's history: The center of anti-Semitism was beginning to shift from Germany into the Arab world.

Demonstrators penetrated the Jewish quarters of Cairo on the anniversary of the Balfour-declaration. They plundered houses and shops, attacked non-Muslims, devastated the synagogues and set them on fire. Six people were killed, some hundred more suffered injuries. Some weeks later the Islamist's newspapers „turned to a frontal attack against the Egyptian Jews, slandering them as Zionists, Communists, capitalists and bloodsuckers, as pimps and as merchants of war, or in general, as subversive elements within all states and societies“ as Gudrun Krämer put it in her study about „The Jews in Egypt 1914-1952“.

One year later, the Brotherhood made sure that the friend of Heinrich Himmler, Amin el-Husseini, who was being searched for as a war criminal, was exiled and granted a new political domain in Egypt. In his capacity as Mufti of Jerusalem and the leader of the Palestine National Movement, this obnoxious person was not only one of the closest allies of the Muslim Brotherhood since the beginning of the

1930's but at the same time within the Arabic world the most ardent supporter and perpetrator of the annihilation of European Jews.

Granting amnesty for this prominent Islamic authority symbolized at the same time in great parts of the Arab world vindication of what he did.

From now on, Nazis criminals who were being sought after in Europe poured in droves into the Arab world. Masses of copies of the most infamous anti-Jewish libel, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, were published in the following decades by two well-known former members of the Muslim Brotherhood, Gamal Abdel Nasser and Anwar al-Sadat. The unlimited solidarity of the Muslim Brothers with the Mufti and their anti-Semitic riots against Jews only a few months after Auschwitz showed clearly that the Brotherhood either ignored or even justified Hitler's extermination of European Jews.

The consequences of this attitude are far-reaching and characterize the Arabic-Jewish conflict up to the present time. How do Islamists explain international support of Israel in 1947? As long as they ignore the fate of the Jews during World War II they have to revert to anti-Semitic conspiracy theories. Thus the creation of the Jewish state is seen by them as being an attack by the USA and the Soviet Union on the Arab world which had been maliciously incited by the Jews.

Accordingly, the Brotherhood interpreted the UN-decision of 1947

concerning the partition of Palestine as being an „international plot carried out by the Americans, the Russians and the British, under the influence of Zionism.“ It seems to be unbelievable but it is nevertheless true: Shortly after the liberation of Auschwitz, the Islamists tried to brand the Jews as the true world-ruling power. This mad notion of a world-wide Jewish conspiracy, which in Germany has been suppressed since May 8, 1945, not only survived but got a fresh impulse in 1947 in an Arabic world where the Muslim Brotherhood in the meanwhile were able to muster a million supporters.

This new impact of Nazi-like conspiracy theories becomes particularly obvious if we look at the *Charter* of the Muslim Brotherhood of Palestine which calls itself Hamas. This *Charter*, adopted in 1988, represents one of the most important Islamist programs in present times, by far exceeding the conflict over Palestine.

Here, Hamas defines itself as being a „universal movement“ whose jihad has to be supported by Muslims all over the world.

Correspondingly, their enemy is not only Israel but „world Zionism“ or, as the Nazis called it, „Weltjudentum“. Hamas, according to its *Charter*, is „the spearhead and the avant-garde“ in the struggle against „world Zionism“.

Their paper gives the impression that its authors wrote it while sitting in front of an open copy of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, for it



attributes really every „evil“ in the world to „world Zionism“.

According to the *Charta* „the Jews were behind the French Revolution as well as the Communist Revolutions.“ They were „behind World War I so as to wipe out the Islamic Caliphate ... and also were behind World War II, where they collected immense benefits from trading in war materials and prepared for the establishment of their state.“ They „inspired the establishment of the United Nations and the Security Council ... in order to rule the world by their intermediary. There was no war that broke out anywhere without their fingerprints on it.“ The original of this *Charta* finally appears in Article 32: The program of the Zionists „has been laid out in the Protocols of the Elders of Zion , and their present conduct is the best proof of what is said there.“

It is tempting to ridicule such lunacy, just like Hitler´s jabbering was ridiculed in times past. It is, however, just this inane picture of Jews as the evil ones and the villains of the world which instigates the mass-murdering of civilians within Israel or the USA. and which motivates the Islamists´ enthusiasm about it.

In such a murderous realisation of what their Islamist programs call for, Hamas and al-Qaida are resuming the Nazi-compatible policies of Amin el-Husseini, the Mufti of Jerusalem while receiving storms of applause by Islamists all over the world.

Against this very background, is it still amazing that those persons who got to know Mohammed Atta when participating in his Koran group attributed to him a „Nazi weltanschauung“? Can it be a surprise that Osama bin Laden accuses „the Jews“ of „taking hostage America and the West“ given the fact that a founder of Hamas, the Palestinian Abdullah Azzam, was at the same time the most important teacher and patron of al Qaida's leader? But why isn't there any serious debate about this anti-Semitic dimension of 9/11?

In Germany, even the thoughtless revelation by *Der Spiegel* of Atta's weltanschauung met with no response. Up to the present there is even no German translation of this most important document of Islamic anti-Semitism, the *Charta* of Hamas, or of the essay „Our struggle with the Jews“ by the most famous writer of the Brotherhood, Sayyid Qutb, which was published in 1950.

This and the fact that the *Charta* of Hamas has been completely ignored by journalists and politicians who vainly tried to figure out the motives behind the suicidal mass-murder of innocent people in Israel or the USA. makes clear that the following words of one of the most distinguished researchers of anti-Semitism, Leon Poliakov, cannot be emphasised too strongly: „Those who don't denounce anti-Semitism in its primitive and elementary form just because it is so primitive and elemental will have to put up with being questioned about whether or

not they are giving secret approval to anti-Semites all over the world just because of that.“

*The second edition of Matthias Küntzel's new book on this topic, "Djihad und Judenhass. Über den neuen antijüdischen Krieg", has just been published. ("Ca ira"-publishing house, Freiburg, Germany, 180 pages, € 13.50)*

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