

Here's What Children of Nazi Germany and Palestinian Kids Have in Common

A new study has found that many of the children who were educated in Nazi Germany retained, for the rest of their lives, the anti-Semitic attitudes they learned in school. What does that portend for Palestinian children, who are likewise inculcated with hatred of Jews?

After surveying some 5,300 German citizens, American and Swiss researchers found that those who were educated in Germany in the 1930s, under the Hitler regime, are much more likely than other Germans to still cling to anti-Semitic beliefs.

"It's not just that Nazi schooling worked, that if you subject people to a totalitarian regime during their formative years it will influence the way their mind works—the striking thing is that it doesn't go away afterward," said Hans-Joachim Voth of the University of Zurich, one of the authors of the study.

Prof. Voth also noted that anti-Semitism was particularly long-lasting if there was already some anti-Semitism in the neighborhoods where the children lived, which they measured by studying the number of votes received by anti-Semitic political parties in specific German towns going back to the 1890s.

"The extent to which Nazi schooling worked depended crucially on whether the overall environment where children grew up was already a bit anti-Semitic," Voth noted. "It tells you that indoctrination can work, it can last to a surprising extent, but the way it works has to be compatible to something people already believe."

This does not bode well for Israel. It suggests that

Palestinian children are especially likely to retain the anti-Jewish hatred they learn in school, since it conforms with attitudes that often are commonplace in their home towns—that is, attitudes based on those aspects of Arab nationalist ideology or fundamentalist Islam that encourage hostility toward Jews and Israel.

Earlier this month, U.S. Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-Florida) introduced a resolution targeting the problem of “anti-Israel and anti-Semitic incitement within the Palestinian Authority (PA).” The 16 examples of incitement that the resolution cites—based on the exemplary research of Palestinian Media Watch—include many instances of Palestinian children being taught to hate.

The resolution notes that the Oslo accords require Israel and the PA to “ensure that their respective educational systems contribute to the peace between the Israeli and Palestinian peoples and to peace in the entire region.”

Israel has honored that obligation. The PA, however, has done the opposite. The Ros-Lehtinen resolution cites examples such as a PA magazine for children presenting Adolf Hitler as a role model; a teacher leading Palestinian children in chants of “Palestine is an Arab land from the river to the sea. We want Haifa, we want Acre”; and schoolgirls shown on PA television receiving a poem that calls Jews “barbaric monkeys,” “wretched pigs,” “filth,” and “impure.”

The resolution concludes not only by condemning the incitement and urging the PA to change its ways, but also “directs the United States Department of State to regularly monitor and publish information on all official incitement by the Palestinian Authority against Jews and the State of Israel.” That’s crucial. It will help keep the PA’s feet to the fire.

The Ros-Lehtinen bill is called House Resolution 293, and it is now in the hands of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs.

I hope every Jewish and Zionist organization will contact the House Committee to strongly urge passage of the resolution. The only hope of ever having real peace between Israelis and Palestinians is to start teaching the current generation of young Palestinians to choose peace, not war.

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