Undeclared Wars with Israel

Undeclared Wars with Israel examines a spectrum of antagonism by the East German government and West German radical leftist organizations, ranging from hostile propaganda and diplomacy to military support for Israel's Arab armed adversaries from 1967 to the end of the Cold War in 1989. This period encompasses the Six Day War (1967), the Yom Kippur War (1973), Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982, and an ongoing campaign of terrorism waged by the Palestine Liberation Organization against Israeli civilians. This book provides new insights into the West German radicals who collaborated in “actions” with Palestinian terrorist groups and confirms that East Germany, along with others in the Soviet bloc, had a much greater impact on the conflict in the Middle East than has been generally known. A historian who has written extensively on Nazi Germany and the Holocaust, Jeffrey Herf now offers a new chapter in this long, sad history.

Jeffrey Herf is a Distinguished University Professor in the Department of History at the University of Maryland, College Park. His publications on modern German history include Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich (Cambridge University Press, 1984); Divided Memory: The Nazi Past in the Two Germanys (1997), winner of the American Historical Association's George Lewis Beer Prize; The Jewish Enemy: Nazi Propaganda during World War II and the Holocaust (2006), winner of the National Jewish Book Award; and Nazi Propaganda for the Arab World (2009), winner of the biannual Sybil Halpern Milton Prize of the German Studies Association in 2011 for work on Nazi Germany and the Holocaust. He has also published essays and reviews on history and politics in Partisan Review, the New Republic, the Times of Israel, and the American Interest.
Undeclared Wars with Israel

East Germany and the West German Far Left, 1967–1989

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In memory of
and Robert Wistrich (1945–2015)
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I began work on this book in spring 2011 in Maryland. Yet it had its actual beginnings in the academic year of 1978–1979 when I lived in Frankfurt/Main, West Germany while doing research for my doctoral dissertation. I heard stories about two members of the Frankfurt leftist scene who had wound up in Entebbe pointing machine guns at unarmed Jews – before Israeli paratroopers arrived to free the hostages and kill the terrorists in a firefight. Why were West German radicals doing that? Why were the East German Communists, who had fought the Nazis and celebrated their anti-fascist traditions, giving aid to Israel’s enemies and embracing Yasser Arafat on the front pages of their government controlled press? As I delved more deeply into the project, my interest in why these Germans acted as they did continued but gradually gave way to a historian’s desire to establish that these, to my mind, unexpected events actually took place. So this became a book about both political passions as well as a multitude of details about weapons of war and terror and political warfare. It became a book about the anti-Israeli passion in Germany as well as about the resistance to it waged by the government of Israel, Jewish leaders in West Germany, by some political and public figures in West Germany and by the United States government. Historians know that facts do not speak for themselves. They must first be found, selected and interpreted. I hope the reader will agree that the following pages shed light on a subject as heated as any of modern history.
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Abbreviations

CEIRPP Committee for the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People
DPFLP Democratic Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine
FRG Federal Republic of Germany or (West Germany)
GDR German Democratic Republic (East Germany)
GUPA General Union of Palestinian Workers
GUPS General Union of Palestinian Students
MFAA Ministerium für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten (East German Ministry of Foreign Affairs)
MiNV Ministerium für Nationale Verteidigung (Ministry of National Defense)
MfS Ministerium für Staatssicherheit (East Germany’s Ministry of State Security)
ND Neues Deutschland
PFLP Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine
PLO Palestine Liberation Organization
RAF Red Army Faction (Rote Armee Fraktion)
RC RZ Revolutionäre Zelle (Revolutionary Cells)
SED Sozialistische Einheitspartei (Socialist Unity Party), East Germany’s governing Communist Party
SSG Sozialistischen Staaten (Socialist Community of States) (The term generally referred to the Soviet Union and its Warsaw Pact allies in Europe but could also apply to Communist regimes around the world.)
Stasi Ministerium für Staatssicherheit (East Germany’s Ministry of State Security)
ZK Zentralkomitee (Central Committee of SED)