

From: "Dick Bernard"

To: "'Dick Bernard'"

Subject: P&J#1205 ... my review of "Obsession: Radical Islam's War Against the West"

Date: September 27, 2006 at 5:51:24 AM CDT

I'm glad I went to see Obsession . It is a new but classical propaganda film apparently produced locally and probably intended for a national market, consisting primarily of cut and paste interviews with 17 people on radical Muslims and a similar number of grainy film clips of radical Muslim clerics or crowds in Iraq, Iran, Lebanon and Palestine, calling for death to America and death to Jews and Israel, or biased Arab media – primarily interviews – talking anti-Israel or Jews or America. The only spokesman I recognized was Alan Dershowitz. The others were from assorted think-tanks or media or apparently Muslims or Christian Arabs who'd seen the light, but the names didn't ring a bell.

The tone of the film was such that you'd walk out of the theatre and almost be inclined to cross the street if you see a Muslim coming your way...that kind of 'balance'.

They devoted considerable film time to comparing radical Muslims and Nazis, and Muslims and ordinary Germans in the days of the Reich, both anti-Jew of course. One high Muslim official, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, embraced Hitler's philosophy in WWII, which seemed deliberately emphasized to generalize about the general anti-semitism allegedly almost inbred into all Muslim's. I kept thinking that I may be witnessing a typical Karl Rove-like technique: if you're accused of being like the Nazis, you turn the argument on its head, and put the hair shirt on the other side.

One of the experts estimated – the only estimate – that 10-15% of one billion Muslims worldwide identified with the radical faction. On the high end, that means that radical Muslims equal about half the population of the United States. I kept looking for any comment about how we would contend with this problem, since these folks are spread worldwide, but no such opinion was forthcoming. The implication, though, is that constant fear and never-ending and essentially religious warfare are the only solutions. Pretty depressing.

(There were several comments interspersed about how all Muslims are not terrorists, but they get pretty well buried.) I wondered how the 10-15% would match up against the percentage of Christians, or Jews, who are supporters of radical notions (like Jesus Camp) or the most extreme Zionism. But this would require fairness and balance. I still have an article from the Sep 20, 2000, US News and World Report about the Neo-Nazi movement, and while I don't have it in front of me as I write, it talked about huge numbers of neo-Nazis and similar in the U.S., preaching their own brand of anti-hatred, often from religious or quasi-religious pulpits.)

I've seen many similar kinds of films...left and right. This one was fairly mediocre, I felt. It reminded me of the mockumentary "I hate Michael Moore" which I saw in 2004, which had to have been funded by the gun industry, since it mostly blasted Bowling for Columbine, even though it was released after Fahrenheit 9/11. (Moore makes a cameo appearance in Obsession, dismissing the world-wide threat of radical Muslim terrorism.)

I normally leave the theatre when the credits are running, but I stayed till the film was cut, apparently before all credits were run, so that there could be discussion. There was no indication. at least in the credits I saw. as to who funded or supported the making of the film. I

don't know if this was intentional.

I'd guess that there were about 100 in the theatre with me, which was a fairly good 'house' given the night of the week, weather, etc. Except for one "amen" exclamation from one male somewhere in the house during one scene, the place was really quiet. No applause at the end. Most stayed for the 'discussion', but by the time I left only one man had asked a question, and he'd asked several, none incendiary. Maybe the others were like me: wanting to make observations pro or con, but not sure how safe it really was.

Oh, by the way, Carol mentions that Obsession was funded by the Dept of Homeland Security and produced by Muslims, Christians and Jews.... The organization supporting the film is called Minnesotans Against Terrorism www.MATmn.org. Other resources they recommended in a handout: www.danielpipes.org; www.centerforsecuritypolicy.org; www.jihadwatch.org; www.memri.org; www.memritv.org; www.pmw.org.il.

This film was a call to action.

If 10-15% of organized religion, any 'brand', are out on the fringe, how can the middle 85-90% be brought into the conversation.

You may want to see the film.