

## Reassessing Anthropology's Past under Hitler

### Gingrich to Give Mintz Lecture

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To what extent are anthropologists responsible for the uses and abuses of their work by others? Does the prevailing ignorance about our academic histories interfere with our envisioning alternative futures? Do strong "national traditions" within the humanities and social sciences represent an obstacle to international awareness and global responsibility?

These are some of the questions that anthropologist Andre Gingrich, professor of social and cultural anthropology at the University of Vienna and director of the anthropology center at the Austrian Academy of Sciences, will discuss in the 11th annual Sidney W Mintz lecture in anthropology on November 10. His talk "Anthropology under Hitler" will reassess anthropology's past under Nazism, and its implications for present ethical and epistemological concerns in the field.

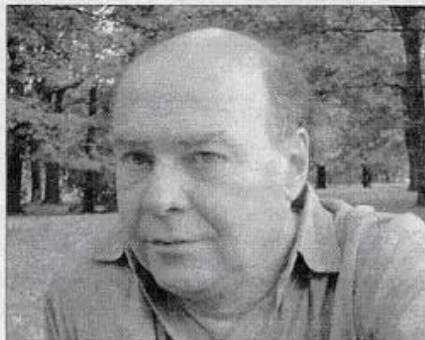
Gingrich has done fieldwork in the Yemen Arab Republic, the kingdom of Saudi Arabia (Abha and al-Baha provinces), in Damascus, Syria, and has directed anthropological research projects in Tibet throughout the 1990s. He was a Weatherhead scholar at the School for American Research from 1994-95, and a Lichtstem Visiting Scholar in 2002 at Chicago's anthropology department.

Gingrich is renowned for his work on race, identity and power, and has emerged as an important interlocutor of the social sciences and humanities, both within Europe, and between European and American schools of thought.

His earlier work, on the folk astronomy of southwest Arabian mountain farmers, has resurfaced in an interesting scholarly dialogue about the ways that indigenous peoples keep track of time (*Current Anthropology* 2002). In that same year, he co-edited with Richard Fox a provocative collection of essays on anthropological method, entitled *Anthropology, by Comparison*.

In what are probably his most widely-relevant fields of research, Gingrich has looked at race concepts, as in his contributions to the journal *Ethnos* in 2004, and at cultural politics worldwide, such as in his co-edited volume (with Gerd Baumann) *Grammars of Identity: A Structural Approach*. But since his earliest work, he has been interested in the history of anthropology, and he returns to this subject in his Mintz Lecture.

Finding Mintz's perspective on historical continuities and discontinuities in global contexts use-



Andre Gingrich

ful for research into anthropology's own history, Gingrich will use it in his lecture "to look at one of its darkest chapters: how Hitler's dictatorship coerced and seduced academics into collaboration."

Gingrich will examine this through the story of C Fuierer-Haimendorf, a Vienna-based expert on India and post-war studies, a leading figure in the London School of Oriental and African Studies and the Royal Anthropological Institute. Though Fuierer-Haimendorf moved to British India in 1939, his *White Headhunter* text was used by the Germans in mass pamphlet form until the end of the war as motivational literature for the Wehrmacht, the Nazi German armed forces from 1935 to 1945.

This chronicle and other recent research build toward a new overview on the place of anthropology in the Third Reich. While previous work dealt with the more visible role of physical anthropology under Nazism and its program of mass murder, the present emphasis on "Voelkerkunde" (sociocultural anthropology) helps to lay bare the banality, to use Hannah Arendt's words, of the collaboration with Nazism among the humanities.

Thus, Gingrich will contrast German functionalism, the school with which Fuierer-Haimendorf associated himself, with its rivals from the diffusionist schools. "While both schools saw themselves as superior German counterparts to British functionalism and to the historical Boas school in the US, an analysis of actual practice," says Gingrich, "reveals how competition for status and respect was mixed with treason, crime and persecution."

"Behind a surface of seemingly routine research activities, actual academic practices therefore mattered at least as much as textual presentations of intellectual selves. The Fuierer-Haimendorf story also shows that between those working for the regime, and those who were persecuted or who resisted, there were almost no middle grounds."

The Mintz lecture series honors anthropologist Sidney W Mintz for his contributions to the field and to the Johns Hopkins department of anthropology, which he helped to found in 1975, and which now hosts the lectures. Mintz is widely known for his work on the Caribbean region, on the relationship between ethnography and history and on the cultural expression of economic behavior. Mintz's work has linked scholarly to social issues, and Mintz lecturers often deal with these issues in their presentations. ■