

Joschka Fischer and German Greens defend Israeli bombing terror in Lebanon

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At the start of this week, German Green Party deputy Jerzy Montag travelled to Israel at the head of a German-Israeli parliamentary delegation. In a press statement, his office in Berlin declared that a delegation from the German-Israeli society is also participating in the trip to Haifa.

The statement declared that the aim of the trip was to win support for the “military action and the current policy of Israel” which has been “criticised by many” in Germany and has met with a “widespread lack of understanding.”

On Tuesday, Montag, who until now has made a name for himself by strongly advocating closer cooperation between the Greens and Germany’s conservative parties, repeated Israel’s war propaganda word for word. Montag told *Spiegel online*: “Israel gave no cause for hostile fighters from Lebanese national territory to kidnap and kill members of its army. Israel gave no inducement for the bombardment of Israeli cities. Israel has a right to protect its citizens. And it does.”

The Israeli terror, involving days of continuous bombardment of southern Lebanon, the systematic destruction of roads and bridges, power stations, ports, airfields and entire neighbourhoods in the city of Beirut—all this is, according to Montag, “actions in self-defence.”

On Wednesday morning, as millions awoke to hear the news that Israeli combat aircraft had attacked a United Nations outpost in Lebanon and killed four UN workers, Germany’s former minister of foreign affairs in the previous Social Democratic Party-Green Party government, Joschka Fischer, published a comment in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. His article had appeared in the Guardian newspaper one day earlier under the title “Now is the Time to Think Big.”

Fischer began by denying any responsibility on the part of Israel for the fighting, writing: “By firing missiles on Haifa, Israel’s third largest city, a boundary has been crossed. From now on, the issue is no longer primarily one of territory, restitution or occupation: instead the main issue is the strategic threat to Israel’s existence.”

What is taking place, according to Fischer, is a “proxy war” engineered by Hezbollah’s backers in Damascus and Teheran “from where [Hezbollah] receives most of its weapons.” Israel has been attacked, Fischer fulminates, by a radical “rejectionist front” which refuses any reconciliation with Israel and “consists of Hamas and Islamic Jihad on the Palestinian side, and Hezbollah in Lebanon, Syria and Iran.”

Fischer’s article says nothing new. Every one of his Orwellian twists of the truth has already been repeated many times by Israeli and American propaganda outlets over the past week. Fischer’s suggestion for a solution to the problem is also neither new nor original. He demands that the “Middle East quartet” (the US, Russia,

the United Nations and the European Union), “led by the US” finally undertake a decisive engagement and secure “political, economic and military guarantees” for Israel.

The thrust of Fischer’s appeal boils down to more American military intervention in the Middle East—although the current war with its systematic and massive bombardment of southern Lebanon and parts of Beirut is precisely a result of the existing “political, economic and military” cooperation between Washington and Jerusalem.

To any impartial and objective observer of the political situation, it is evident that the kidnapping of Israeli soldiers by Hezbollah and Hamas was seen by the Israeli government as a welcome pretext to begin a military offensive which had been planned long in advance and in close cooperation with the Pentagon.

The extent to which the Israeli army functions as a direct instrument of American war plans was made patently clear this week by US efforts to block any criticism of Israel for the bombing of the UN outpost and the killing of four UN workers. The US government could not have more clearly expressed its utter contempt for the UN and international peace efforts.

In fact, the “proxy” character of the present Middle East war is embodied in the onslaught undertaken by the Israeli army, which, on behalf of and in consultation with the Bush government, and armed by the US, has attacked Hezbollah and Hamas in order to prepare the way for a future US offensive directed against Syria and, in particular, Iran.

A glimpse at a world map shows that Iran borders Afghanistan to the east and Iraq to the west. With resistance to American forces intensifying in both countries, military strategists in the Pentagon are intent on pressing ahead with a military intervention against Iran.

The strategic significance of this area is well known to the US political caste. While the national security advisor to US President Jimmy Carter, Zbigniew Brzezinski, has differences with the present Bush government on many questions, it was Brzezinski who explained the significance of the region most clearly. In his book published ten years ago, *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives*, Brzezinski stressed that following the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, the American government had to undertake systematic steps to assert its role as the solitary world power. In that connection, he explained the strategic significance of Iran.

In the first chapters of his book, he states that such supremacy requires above all control of the “Eurasian land mass,” in which Iran, with its large oil and gas reserves, its pipeline system and, above all, its strategic location near the Caspian Basin in the north and the Arabian sea and Indian ocean in the south, plays a key role.

Brzezinski stresses that Russian supremacy in Central Asia and the

Caspian region can be broken only if “a pipeline runs from the Caspian sea to Azerbaijan and from there via Turkey to the Mediterranean, with a further pipeline crossing Iran to the Arabian sea.”

In the meantime, Brzezinski himself has been forced to acknowledge that the implementation of his strategic plans for the US could end in disaster. Just this week he rebuffed US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice’s talk of the birth of a new Middle East.

He told the German press: “That was not a very happy formulation. Labour pains sometimes end in the death of the infant. One must seek to determine what these labour pains are actually producing. Otherwise one is merely speculating and playing a form of Russian roulette with history. This could all end for the United States in a disaster in the Middle East.”

Joschka Fischer is also well aware of the strategic significance of the region, although, at the beginning of the 1990s and in his capacity as leader of the Green Party, he was then active in opposing US hegemony in the region. When the US under the senior George Bush initiated the first Gulf War in 1991, Fischer spoke as a pacifist on protest demonstrations in Germany, demanding, “No blood for oil!” That was long ago, however. The Greens have long since ditched their pacifist image and are now lining up unconditionally behind the US-Israeli aggression in the Middle East.

There are a number of causes for the despicable spectacle of Fischer regurgitating Israeli-American war propaganda. He does not stand alone, but speaks instead on behalf of a whole layer of former radicals who have advanced their careers, enjoyed a certain improvement in their social status, and made their peace with a society whose social and political problems assume a far more grievous form today than in their youthful days of rebellion. Characteristic of such layers is a growing antipathy for democratic rights and affinity for authoritarian forms of the rule.

Fischer and Montag’s glorification of the bombing terror against the population of Lebanon and the Palestinian territories is also bound up with a closing of ranks between the Greens and the German government led by Angela Merkel (Christian Democratic Union—CDU), not only with regard to foreign policy but also on the domestic front.

The former foreign minister Fischer exemplifies the fact that none of the European powers dares to challenge the current US-Israeli aggression. The limitations and half-heartedness of the German government’s former opposition to the US-led Iraq war have become increasingly evident. Still, Fischer was among those who three years ago expressed doubts about US war policy.

It was Fischer who, at the annual Munich Security Conference, told US Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld that he was not convinced by US arguments for war. “You do not convince me, Mr. Minister,” he said at the time.

He is now convinced, and not only because he recently received the offer of a professorship at the renowned Princeton University (although he failed to complete his formal education in Germany). The sheer force and ruthlessness with which the American government has defied international laws and agreements, and brushed off all international criticism, has left a deep impression on European political circles in general, and has especially impressed the particular breed of German petty-bourgeois philistinism which Fischer represents.

Fischer’s support for Israeli war policy and his claim that only an intensified intervention by the US government can bring “stability” to

the Middle East amounts to conceding the bankruptcy of his own political conceptions of a strengthened role for Europe in international politics.

In May of 2000, Fischer gave what was described as a “groundbreaking” speech on the future of Europe at Humboldt University in Berlin. “Thoughts on the Finality of European Integration” was the pompous title of his lecture. At the time, a common currency for Europe had been agreed and prepared but not completely implemented. In his speech, Fischer stressed again and again that European integration had “proven phenomenally successful.”

But as is so often the case in history, Fischer’s euphoria for Europe reflected an outmoded outlook and a political period that was coming to an end. The same fate afflicted the European powers which sought to unite Europe and extend the European domestic market, in line with the so-called “Lisbon strategy,” in order to create a power capable of challenging the economic and political supremacy of America. They too had to acknowledge that in the intervening period fundamental changes had occurred in the situation within Europe.

It is one thing to develop Europe as a common market with the support of the US and in cooperation with Washington. It is a very different task to erect a Europe that acts as a bulwark against the US. As the American government began to exert increasing political and economic pressure on Europe, so too did conflicts within the European community intensify.

The return of imperialist great power politics, accompanied by military oppression and colonial exploitation, is not restricted to the US. The current inability of European governments to counter such politics will inevitably lead to a further growth of national egoism and national conflicts within Europe.

The sordid capitulation of the European powers and its leading politicians to US and Israeli aggression in the Middle East makes absolutely clear the bankruptcy of the project to unite Europe on a bourgeois basis. The only progressive answer to the threat of Europe being dragged into new wars and military conflagrations is the unification of the continent by the working class in the struggle to establish a United Socialist States of Europe.



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