

WSWS replies to charge of anti-Semitism in coverage of US-Israeli war on Lebanon

26 July 2006

To: Van Auken,

You are a despicable anti-Semite as is obvious by the use of your terminology in describing Israel as the Zionist entity. The truth of the matter for morons like you is that the Muslims are tripping over each other to assert their dominance by seeing who can kill and hate more Israelis and Jews. The Shiites under the radical Islamic state of Iran want hegemony in the Middle East and what better way to appear the savior of Islam than by killing Jews. Notice the radical Islamo-fascists never talk only about Israelis, they talk about the murder of all Jews. You are a complete moron who despite your title of Socialist has learned nothing from history. The socialists alligned [sic] themselves with the wrong side during the Nazi days of WWII and now again they align themselves with the moderate Muslims. Where are they when Israeli civilians are being killed for no reason and fronts are attacked when Israel pulled back from both Gaza and Lebanon?

I guess for idiots like you it will take a Katusha rocket in your backyard killing your kids and family before you realize that Israel is the only friend we have in the Middle East that even mildly resembles our values and upholds our fundamental beliefs. Use the proper word, asshole, Islamo-fascists, not terrorists. If Lebanon and its people are too timid to take them out (i.e., Hezbollah), they are responsible for any and all retaliation that takes place. You would obviously have more sympathy for the Germans during the bombing of Dresden in World War II than the six million plus Jews who died while 98 percent of the German population looked on and looked the other way. They too were responsible.

Name: MO

Address: none of your goddamn business, you anti-Semite
MO,

Before dealing with the substance of your email, it is necessary to consider its tone. The *World Socialist Web Site* is very familiar with the peculiar characteristics of hate mail from the right. It generally has two defining features: brazen ignorance and vulgar, even obscene language.

Gross insults, coarse language and personal vilification of political opponents are all hallmarks of the extreme right and fascism.

It is one of the tragic effects of Zionism that a section of the Jewish people, who have been historically associated with the struggle for human dignity and social progress against all forms of racism, backwardness and oppression, should now adopt methods and ideologies indistinguishable from those of fascists and anti-Semites in an attempt to intimidate those opposed to Israel's crimes against the Lebanese and Palestinian peoples.

Your despicable accusation that I am an anti-Semite is based solely on my opposition and that of the Socialist Equality Party to the US-Israeli war against Lebanon, an opposition that is shared, it should be pointed out, by many Jews in the United States and a growing section

of the Israeli population itself, not to mention the overwhelming majority of humanity.

The crude attempt to equate such opposition with anti-Semitism is the political stock-in-trade of Zionism in the US and all over the world. This tactic is used to defend and justify any and every act of violence against the people of Palestine and Lebanon and blackguard left-wing opponents of Israeli government policy. It is likewise employed to delegitimize the substantial opposition to these crimes within Israel and among Jewish people internationally as the disoriented opinion of "self-hating Jews."

This slander lacks both historical foundation and any genuine political logic, outside of the right-wing politics of racial and religious nationalism. Through this prism, any action by Israel against its enemies is irreproachable, while any opposition to these actions is the equivalent of Nazism.

Thus, the fact that we condemn the slaughter of Lebanese civilians, most of them women and children, is presented as evidence that we "would obviously have more sympathy for the Germans during the bombing of Dresden in World War II than the six million plus Jews who died ..."

What is the twisted logic at work here? Were the Lebanese accomplices of the Third Reich? Is the government of Lebanon responsible for a new Holocaust against the Jews? When and where has this taken place?

One of the characteristics of fascist ideology and reactionary thought in general is to heap disparate trends and political tendencies together as a common "enemy." Rather than seeking to clarify their real objective basis, they are dealt with through the method of amalgam. In this case, totally disparate and opposed forces are lumped together as manifestations of a supposedly universal hatred of Jews.

The fact is that the casualty rate among the Lebanese is ten times that which has been suffered by Israelis, with the former consisting almost entirely of civilians, while the majority of the latter is comprised of Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) soldiers killed in Israeli incursions across the Lebanese border.

The unequal ratio of Lebanese to Israeli casualties, moreover, repeats the bitter experience of the Lebanese people in the wars of aggression launched by Israel against the country in 1978 and 1982, in which tens of thousands lost their lives.

If one wants to draw historical parallels between the present situation and the Nazi era, the one that clearly suggests itself is between Hitler's Wehrmacht and the IDF, which is engaged in a massive campaign of "ethnic cleansing"—driving hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of impoverished Lebanese Shiites from their homes and villages with bombs and artillery shells.

It is clear that you revel in this military campaign, which by any objective reading of the Geneva Conventions constitutes a war crime.

You express the desire “to take them out” in relation to Hezbollah, one of the largest parties in Lebanon, which holds 14 out of the 128 seats in the Lebanese parliament and runs everything from schools and hospitals to garbage collection in the predominantly Shiite areas of Lebanon. This amounts to a call for the extermination of an entire people.

You write that I have “learned nothing from history,” and that, “The socialists aligned themselves with the wrong side during the Nazi days of WWII and now again they align themselves with the moderate Muslims.”

What “sides” are you talking about? In the period following the rise of Nazism in Germany, it was socialists in America, and specifically the Trotskyist movement, who stood alone in waging a political campaign demanding an end to the anti-Semitic exclusion of Jewish refugees fleeing fascism. The Zionists were hostile to this effort, on the grounds that European Jewry should be allowed to go nowhere but Palestine.

In the struggle to defeat fascism, socialists fought for the unity of the working class, including Jews, who, as is well known, have always made up a disproportionate share of both the leadership and rank-and-file of the Marxist movement. On what “side” was the Zionist movement? During this same period it was working with the Nazi regime, and specifically Adolph Eichmann, based on a common belief that the expulsion of German Jews to Palestine could simultaneously facilitate Hitler’s “final solution” for European Jewry and bring about the Jewish state.

As for the ultimate defeat of the Third Reich, it is a historical fact that, despite the crimes of Stalinism and its betrayal of the principles of the Russian Revolution, the Soviet Union bore the overwhelming burden of smashing the German military and the Nazi killing machine.

While socialists were the most intransigent opponents of Nazism—as well as its first victims—a substantial section of the American ruling elite, including the forbears of the current US president, who is a great “friend of Israel,” were openly sympathetic to Hitler and saw his policies as both a political inspiration and a source of profit.

What political forces are today on what you would view as the “right side” of history—that is, politically supporting Zionism? In the US, the most prominent and vociferous of these supporters are to be found within the Christian right constituency of the Republican Party, the so-called Christian-Zionist movement. These elements—the Christian Coalition, Moral Majority, etc.—are steeped in anti-Semitism. They see Israel’s wars as the fulfillment of Biblical prophecy and support the gathering of all Jews in Israel as the precondition for Armageddon, in which, according to their twisted theology, Jews will either convert or be annihilated.

In Europe, the Israeli government has sought allies among such right-wing and notoriously anti-Semitic elements as the heirs of Mussolini. This is presumably the “right side” which socialists have failed to join.

In Lebanon itself, Israel was allied with the Lebanese fascist movement for years. It solidified the closest relations with the Lebanese Phalange, a movement that drew its inspiration from European fascism of the 1930s. Ariel Sharon, the former defense minister and prime minister, was implicated by an Israeli court in the Phalangists’ massacre of thousands of Palestinians in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in 1982.

Such is the logic of Zionism. Unless you align yourself with the right-wing anti-Semites who support Israel, you are a “despicable anti-Semite.”

Your blanket accusation that all Muslims and Shiites are determined to “kill and hate more Israelis and Jews” smacks of the kind of libel against an entire people that is the hallmark of anti-Semitism.

In point of fact, the opposition of masses of people in the Arab and Muslim world to Israel has its historic roots in the nationalist movement that arose in the region against British and French colonialism. The Zionist project was justifiably seen by the Arab masses as an instrument of imperialism to oppress them and take away their land. Nearly six decades of continuous war and ever harsher levels of oppression against the Palestinian people have only strengthened this conviction.

The frustration of this anti-imperialist sentiment—both by Israeli military force and by the prostration, perfidy and corruption of bourgeois regimes throughout the Arab world—has doubtless paved the way for right-wing Islamic fundamentalists, who promote anti-Semitism as a form of populist agitation aimed at diverting the social struggles of the Arab and Muslim workers and oppressed. The Israeli government, it should be noted, has historically promoted the development of such forces, particularly in the case of Hamas, as a counterweight to secular nationalist movements like the Palestine Liberation Organization.

The present two-front war against these Islamist movements, in which the overwhelming majority of victims are civilians who have done nothing to harm a single Israeli, is a measure of the dead-end of the Zionist project, which has its origins in the violent dispossession of another people and which has been maintained only through a continuous campaign of war and repression against the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories, as well as discrimination and social inequality within Israel itself.

The failure of Zionism, notwithstanding its peculiar features, is part of the broader breakdown of all those movements that based themselves on nationalism. In Israel’s case, outright collapse has been staved off largely through massive subsidies provided by Washington, which sees Israel as an instrument of its own imperialist designs on the oil-rich Middle East.

Our perspective, which we advance against both Zionism and the Arab bourgeois regimes, is one of fighting to unite Arab and Jewish working people in a common struggle against imperialism and for the building of a socialist society capable of utilizing the vast resources of the region and the world for the benefit of all. We are firmly convinced that this is the only means of resolving the struggle of the Palestinian people against their historic oppression and avoiding yet another historic calamity for the Jewish people. To brand this perspective as anti-Semitic is an example of political dishonesty and gangsterism.

Sincerely yours,
Bill Van Auken



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

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