

# Iran's Holocaust conference and the dead end of bourgeois nationalism

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In his year-end press conference, President George W. Bush once again condemned the Iranian government of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad for the officially sponsored conference of Holocaust deniers convened in Teheran earlier this month, declaring that it “heralded a really backward view of the history of the world.”

This is from a US president whose administration frankly discusses the options of supporting a sectarian civil war that would result in the “the uprooting or extermination” of Iraq’s more than 5 million Sunni Arabs and of provoking a region-wide Sunni-Shia war that could claim millions more victims (*New York Times*, Dec. 17, “The Capital Awaits a Masterstroke on Iraq”).

The denunciations of the Iran conference have been nearly universal. Leaders of governments in Europe and America as well as the Vatican—all of whose predecessors actively collaborated in the Holocaust, ignored and covered it up or worked strenuously to prevent its survivors from entering their territories—were among the loudest critics.

The hypocrisy underlying such condemnation is plain. The aim of Washington and its allies is to use the issue to provide one more justification for another war of aggression in the Middle East aimed at securing domination over the region’s vast energy supplies.

Having said that, the conference convened by the Iranian regime was as shameful as it was reactionary.

It managed to turn Teheran into a temporary Mecca for the jetsam and flotsam of Holocaust denial and outright neo-fascism. Such unlikely friends of the “Iranian revolution” as David Duke, a former “Imperial Wizard” of the Ku Klux Klan and self-described “white nationalist,” were provided a platform courtesy of the Iranian government to spew their anti-Semitic and racist filth.

Held under the banner “Review of the Holocaust: Global Vision,” the conference was billed by Iran’s

Foreign Ministry as a venue “for suitable scientific research so that the hidden and unhidden angles of this most important political issue of the 20th century becomes more transparent.”

Iran’s Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki declared, “The aim of this conference is not to deny or confirm the Holocaust.”

Other Iranian officials presented the questioning of the Holocaust as a means of countering the policies of Israel and the US in the region. President Ahmadinejad declared at a press conference held after the conference had begun, “The creation of the Zionist regime and turning the Holocaust into propaganda has become an instrument for the United States and Britain to dominate the Middle East,”

There are many areas of this most horrific chapter of the twentieth century as well as its political and historical causes that bear serious historical study. Included among them is the way in which this historic crime has been utilized to justify the illegal acts of dispossession and repression carried out by the Israeli government against the Palestinian people.

The fact that the Nazi regime pursued its “final solution” by organizing and executing the slaughter of six million Jews, however, is documented by a vast amount of empirical data—both Nazi and Allied alike—as well as the living memory of its survivors. Its reality is not open to question.

The collection of intellectual charlatans and outright fascists who make up the so-called “Holocaust revisionist” movement utilize fabrications, lies and obstinate denial of voluminous evidence to spin their fantasies about the non-existence of the Holocaust or the supposed inflation of the numbers exterminated in the Nazi death camps.

All of this historical falsification has one central purpose: the political rehabilitation of fascism.

That Ahmadinejad's administration would ostensibly attempt to counter the very real threats to Iran posed by Israeli aggression and US militarism by facilitating the work of those who vindicate the record of the most criminal imperialist regime in history is a measure not only of the bankruptcy of the Iranian regime, but the historic dead end confronting bourgeois nationalism the world over.

The conference was convened under conditions in which plans for Israeli strikes against Iran are already well-advanced and as the US was reportedly preparing to deploy another aircraft carrier in the Persian Gulf for its own possible attacks.

The effect of the repugnant spectacle in Teheran was to hand Iran's enemies a propaganda weapon to help prepare such military action, while alienating the broad layers of workers, students and intellectuals worldwide who oppose the US war in Iraq, the Israeli assault on the Palestinians and the threat of a further spread of aggression to Iran itself.

Whatever the populist and even "anti-imperialist" demagoguery of Ahmadinejad and his co-thinkers, the Holocaust denial conference was organized not to challenge either US imperialism or the Israeli regime, but rather to divert and disorient the growing anger and militancy of the Iranian working class and of the working masses throughout the Middle East.

The effect of their politics is to isolate the Iranian working class from the international working class, including the workers of Israel, while helping to drive the latter into the arms of Zionism.

The Iranian regime does not oppose imperialism as a world system, but merely seeks to forge a more advantageous relationship between this system and the privileged bourgeois social layers that it represents. It has collaborated with US interventions in both Afghanistan and Iraq, while at the same time attempting to exploit the divisions between the European powers and Washington over the Middle East, all in an attempt to further the aspirations of the Iranian ruling circles to assert their interests as a regional power.

Ahmadinejad's resort to right-wing populist demagoguery and appeals to outright anti-Semitism are a manifestation of the incapacity of Iran's bourgeois regime or any of its factions to provide a progressive solution to the deep social and economic crisis confronting Iranian working people, who face mass unemployment and a steadily rising cost of living, while benefiting little from the country's oil wealth.

The growing popular dissatisfaction with the present regime has found significant expression in the immediate aftermath of Teheran conference. This was seen in angry student protestors confronting Ahmadinejad with chants of "down with the dictator" and "Forget the Holocaust, do something for us."

And, while the conference was apparently aimed at least in part at whipping up the regime's right-wing religious base in advance of December 15 elections for local councils and the Assembly of Experts, a powerful clerical body, candidates aligned with Ahmadinejad suffered defeat, indicating growing popular discontent.

The retrograde and repugnant politics of the Iranian regime expressed in the Holocaust denial conference is only one of the sharpest manifestations of the universal inability of regimes based on the national bourgeoisie—from Iran to Venezuela to Cuba—to wage a consistent struggle against imperialism.

None of the pressing problems confronting the masses in these countries, and indeed in any of the countries that historically have been oppressed by imperialism, can be resolved under the leadership of any section of the national bourgeoisie or on the basis of national policies.

More than ever before, in the context of the unprecedented global economic integration created by capitalism in the present epoch, the struggle against imperialism together with the wars and social inequality that it produces can be successfully waged only through the independent and unified political mobilization of the international working class against capitalism and the outmoded nation state system.

For the working class of Iran, this means the building of a new internationalist party in direct opposition to the anti-Semitism, xenophobia and anti-communism promoted by the present regime, fighting to forge links with workers throughout the region, including in Israel itself, in the common struggle for a socialist federation of the Middle East.



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