

US cable television host slanders socialism

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Glenn Beck is a reactionary know-nothing who hosts a commentary program on Rupert Murdoch's Fox News Channel in the US. An unstable individual, with a history of odd jobs in radio, Beck landed on his feet only during the Bush years as one of the new wave of talk-show demagogues.

This proponent of "common sense," whom the media chooses to portray as a "populist," is fantastically compensated, taking in a reported \$32 million from March 2009 to March 2010. This multimillionaire, unsurprisingly, is an enthusiastic spokesman for the American financial-corporate aristocracy and a venomous foe of anyone who dares to criticize it.

On June 3, as part of a defense of Israel's massacre of humanitarian activists off the coast of Gaza, Beck cited comments made to reporters from the *World Socialist Web Site* at protests against the killings. This is only one of the most recent occasions on which Beck has referred to or cited the WWS.

Beck made the comments the jumping-off point for an incoherent tirade alleging "a rich history... of socialism and anti-Semitism." In the course of his comments, Beck accused Karl Marx of anti-Semitism, claimed that German nationalist ideologue Wilhelm Marr was "a radical socialist," pointed to the full name of the Nazi Party (although he got it wrong) as proof that it was a socialist movement, etc., etc.

There is nothing new here. These are slanders that rely on the gullibility and lack of historical knowledge of Beck's audience. One is not dealing here with an informed, even if deeply misguided intellectual opponent. Every sentence contains confusion, stupidity or lies—or all three.

Beck and his handlers know nothing at all. For example, Beck referred to "the left wing German terrorist, Ulrike Meinhof," and began, "he sounds friendly—he said—oh, it's a she?" He proceeded to misinterpret Meinhof's bitter comment (a paraphrase perhaps of August Bebel's famous remark that anti-Semitism was "the socialism of fools") about how the German imperialists had diverted

"the people's hatred of money and exploitation away from themselves and onto the Jews. The hatred of the Jews is actually the hatred of capitalism"... as an expression of anti-Semitism!

Anyone with the slightest knowledge of history recognizes that modern anti-Semitism was a phenomenon of the *right*, the response of the ruling classes of Europe in particular to the threat posed by the socialist working class movement in the last third of the 19th century. It was an effort to create a mass political base for the defense of the profit system and "the nation" by appealing to and stirring up layers within the middle class whose position was being undermined by the growth of large-scale industry, finance and trade.

The only consistent opponent of anti-Semitism was the Socialist movement in Germany, France, Russia and elsewhere. In 1887, for example, the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) ran Paul Singer, a Jewish socialist businessman, as their candidate in an important Berlin district, and he won more votes than any other candidate in the city. Six years later, the SPD openly repudiated the views of the 16 open anti-Semites who formed a faction in the Reichstag.

The French Socialist Party played a leading role in the defense of Alfred Dreyfus, the military officer who was framed up by the high command on false charges of treason and made the focus of a furious anti-Semitic campaign.

Hitler and the Nazis were the most remorseless enemies of the working class and the socialist cause, which they identified with the Jews ("Judeo-Bolshevism"). As historian Konrad Heiden explains, "The labor movement did not repel him [Hitler] because it was led by Jews; the Jews repelled him because they led the labor movement." In power from 1933, the Nazi leader set about murdering left-wing opponents by the tens of thousands.

Beck's claim that "Socialism and anti-Semitism have complemented each other throughout history" is an infamous lie. In reality, with his raving against "wealth redistribution," "illegal aliens," and "communist

revolutionaries,” Beck draws around him the neo-fascistic, anti-Semitic and xenophobic fringe in American politics.

Among Beck’s disreputable political influences was the fanatical anti-communist and racist W. Cleon Skousen, a Mormon ideologue. In his book, *The 5,000 Year Leap*, Skousen claimed the US Constitution was based on the Bible and rejected the influence of the Enlightenment. He also contended that President Dwight Eisenhower was a communist agent and penned *The Communist Attack on the John Birch Society*.

On his radio program recently, Beck praised *The Red Network: A “Who’s Who” and Handbook of Radicalism for Patriots*, authored in 1934 by Elizabeth Dilling, a rabid anti-Semite and pro-Nazi. In her book, Dilling slandered Albert Einstein, among others, and defended the Nazi regime’s seizure of his property in Germany on the grounds that he was a communist.

This is Beck’s pedigree: genuine ideological filth.

If he defends Israel, it is not out of love of the Jewish people. Hardly. What Beck and other extreme right-wingers in the US admire about the Israeli state is that it oppresses people and kills its political opponents. This gets their blood going.

Nearly everything Glenn Beck says and does smells of ignorance and paranoia. Perhaps the most authentic element of his daily performance is the desperation he projects.

The important question is: what has led to such an individual having access to the airwaves in the US? Rupert Murdoch and other media moguls are making enormous resources available as part of the deliberate cultivation of ultra-right elements.

Here too, in the end, is one of capitalism’s self-defense mechanisms: the attempt to churn up the most backward layers of the population into a froth about “socialism,” even as the bankers and the corporate aristocracy rob the people blind.



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