

# Letters on Glenn Beck, socialism and anti-Semitism

15 June 2010

*The following letters were sent to the World Socialist Web Site in response to the article “US cable television host slanders socialism”*

This was an article that was long overdue. I have heard many of Beck’s comments about the Nazi party as being “socialist” parroted on public radio. It is baffling how the right-wing reactionaries get away with conflating Nazism with socialism. I hear it said, repeatedly, that the two are cousins. In reality, Nazism is a last gasp effort by the ruling class to retain some semblance of power. It relies on scapegoats, has a strong leader to head its movement, and is maintained by appeals to nationalism. Genuine socialism contains none of these three criteria.

Keith K

11 June 2010

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I believe that our energy is wasted on individuals like Glenn Beck. People with his level of intelligence are best left ignored. What we should focus on instead is a massive education campaign about socialism. Most Americans are totally ignorant of the fact that socialism is the ideological opposite of Nazism and of the fact that it does not remotely resemble anything the Obama administration is doing. I think that most Americans would prefer socialism in everything but name.

Denis K

10 June 2010

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Interesting article on Glenn Beck. I was wondering when he would get mentioned here.

An interesting conversation could actually be had on certain topics that he brings up:

- Why there were certain political movements and figures, especially in the 19th century, that used the word “socialist” to describe themselves, or their ideas,

but had very non-Marxian, or non-working-class conceptions of what that meant, and some of them used nationalist conceptions, and some of them in Europe flirted with anti-Semitism;

- What the origins of Fascism, and specifically Nazism were, and why they used words like “socialist” and “workers” in some of their names, and what their corporatist conceptions of the state were;

- Stalinism in the Soviet Union (and Poland) going on anti-Semitic campaigns of their own, what its attitude to Israel was and why;

- The attitude of certain protest-left anti-Zionist types to Israel, and why some elements occasionally make statements about Israel, or even worse “the Jews,” that are clumsy at best, and why certain elements sometimes cozy up uncritically to sections of Palestinian nationalism, or Islamism that *do* sometimes bait anti-Semitism, and have their own agenda.

A complex, interesting discussion could be had about all of those points and more. And classical Marxists would be just the people to do it.

However, to do it properly you’d need a historical understanding of events to place everything in the right context, and you’d need the ability to class-analyze and understand all of the different social layers involved, and the different agendas and motivations.

Glenn Beck, of course, has none of this. And that doesn’t even matter because that’s not really his intention anyway.

He is ultimately, as you say, in the payroll of powerful figures looking to whip far-right elements, and backwards and confused layers to direct them in a safe way, how they want.

He, specifically, is semi-coherent at best, trying to weave together and make connection between things based on tangential points. He (or his handlers) probably looked up Wilhelm Marr on the Internet or

something, and scanned along until he saw that he was a pre-1848 German left-democrat who flirted with stripes of 19th century middle-class anarchism (his post-1848 trajectory was much different), and that was good enough for him. He saw the words “left” or “anarchist,” so he could be added to the list, and thrown into the incoherent stew, of dangerous socialist radicals, who apparently in this case also hate Jews.

He is one part sentimentalist, patriotic boosterism pep-talk, the other part paranoid doomsayer. I can’t quite tell what percentage of this is act, and what is real, but I lean toward thinking he’s being sincere.

Clark T

11 June 2010



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