



EXPANDED SECOND EDITION

Anti-Semitism, Zionism, and the Defense of Palestinian Rights

by Suzanne Weiss

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The Holocaust and Defense of the Palestinians

(Socialist Voice, February 3, 2007)

This article is based on a talk given to a meeting of Muslim Unity of Toronto on December 23, 2006.

Sixty years ago, a mass slaughter – a Holocaust – was carried out against European Jews. Today its memory is being misused to build support for Zionism and to oppress and murder the Palestinians.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper says that Canada must not talk with Hezbollah or Hamas, organizations that defend the Palestinians, because they “advocate wiping Israel off the face of the Earth” — an objective that he says is “ultimately genocidal,” that is, another Holocaust. (*Globe & Mail*, Dec. 21, 2006) He uses this excuse to justify punishing Palestinians for electing Hamas by cutting off aid to their government.

This is the Stephen Harper who on July 14, 2006, called Israel’s slaughter of the Lebanese, in which 1,123 Lebanese were killed, 30% of them children under the age of 13, a “measured response” to the abduction of two Israeli soldiers.

The Harper government and its allies are trying to make it a crime to oppose the Zionist state of Israel. For this supposed crime they punish Hamas and the Palestinians with bombs, shootings, and blockade. And even here in Canada, universities discipline students and professors that speak out against Zionist crimes.

And how can they call replacing the Israeli state with a democratic, united Palestine “genocide”?

The country of Czechoslovakia was dissolved in 1993 – wiped off the face of the map! The Apartheid state of South Africa was abolished in 1994. In both cases, this was not genocide but a peaceful settlement.

Why do Canadian officials speak so irresponsibly? They use the Holocaust as an excuse to smother dissent. Because the German Nazis killed six million Jews, the U.S., Canada, and Israel insist that Palestinians must pay the price today.

Misuse of the Holocaust

We are told that because Hitler killed the Jews, the Zionist state is needed today, supposedly to protect the Jewish people. Protect against them whom? Against the Nazis? No, against the Palestinians.

This is the motivation for Canada’s governments’ public campaign about the Nazis’ Holocaust.

Canadian school children today know more about the Holocaust than

they know about crimes in our own country: crimes such as stealing the lands of the indigenous peoples or throwing Canadians of Japanese descent into concentration camps during the Second World War.

In Washington, the U.S. government has sponsored an imposing Holocaust Museum. Why is there no museum to the Vietnamese, millions of whom were killed in the U.S. war against their country?

When the Nazi campaign against the Jews was in full swing, Canada's prime minister at that time, Mackenzie King, praised Hitler (see Irving Abella, *None is Too Many*). Few voices protested Hitler's mass murders. The Catholic Church kept silent. The U.S. and Canada excluded Jewish refugees.

For several decades after, governments said little about this horrendous crime.

But as the Israeli army proved it could defeat in battle the neighboring Arab states, the U.S. moved to build up the Israeli military as a weapon against the Mideast peoples. They needed an excuse for this provocative campaign, and they found it in the Holocaust. They insist that the Zionist state of Israel must be protected in order to prevent another Holocaust.

To answer this argument, we must know what the Holocaust was.

What was the Holocaust?

First of all, the basic facts are indisputable. The Holocaust is one of the best documented historical events of all time. The Nazis were methodical — they counted their victims and kept meticulous records. In my family's Polish home town, of Piotrkov there were 30,000 Jews, only 100 survived. On the train that took my mother from France to Auschwitz, of 1,000 Jews, only a dozen survived.

Yes, this was genocide. Six million Jews were killed simply because they were Jews, and the goal was to kill them all. Even the innocent children were hunted down and sent to the gas chambers.

Of course it was not the first genocide. European colonialists exterminated almost entire peoples. Study the Americas, Australia, and Africa.

But the genocide against the Jews was unique in two ways.

First, it took place not in the industrially undeveloped Third World but in Europe. It was the first case of genocide against a white, European people.

Second, it was industrially organized. Not random killing, but managerial, bureaucratic, assembly-line slaughter. Even pieces of the body were recycled: the skin, the hair; and the gold fillings of the teeth.

In a deeper sense, though, the crime against the Jews was only too familiar. The Nazis said that the Jews were not Europeans but members of an inferior, subhuman race, Asiatic race. The Nazis sought to reorganize

the globe along racial lines, with the Germans and North Europeans as the elite. Such racism is opposed to our most fundamental beliefs about the worth of human beings.

Where does this racism come from? Not from the House of Islam. Recall how the great U.S. Islamic leader and freedom fighter, Malcolm X, said when he visited Mecca that for the first time he saw peoples of all races worshipping together in equality.

No, this racism is the ideology of Euro-American imperialism.

The British imperialists used racism to rationalize building an empire around the world. Racism was used to justify enslaving the Africans and pillaging India.

And the U.S. empire today rests on racism, in its own country through the oppression of Blacks and immigrants but also internationally. And the racist oppression of the Palestinian people is part of this.

Governments who subjugate races and set races, religions, and nationalities against each other have an economic objective. Imperialist racism aims to enable the owners of capital to make the highest profits by exploiting oppressed peoples. In South Africa it was diamond mines. In the Middle East it is oil.

Given the proven hostility of European and North American governments during the Holocaust, many Jewish survivors in Europe saw Palestine as their only possible refuge. This was a historical tragedy, for which imperialism is ultimately responsible.

Four hundred and fifty years earlier, the Jewish victims of the Spanish inquisition were welcomed by the predominantly Muslim societies on the Mediterranean, where they lived and flourished into our times. But the Zionist project that steered twentieth-century Jewish refugees from Europe toward Palestine aimed not to enhance Muslim society but to displace it by taking the land.

Israel would not have been born except for the U.S. and Great Britain. It lives today only because of the support of the U.S. and British who fund it through massive government subsidies in various forms to supply the Zionist government with the weapons of destruction.

These governments wage war on Iraq and Afghanistan for the same reasons they support Israel. They want power; they want oil. Israel is the weapon that they use to keep the peoples of the Middle East in check.

We must defend Iran

But the Holocaust is now being used not only against the Palestinians but also against Iran. Bush calls Iran part of the axis of evil and wants to overthrow its government. The U.S. is planning for a possible attack against Iran, perhaps even with nuclear weapons, and perhaps using their

proxy, the Israeli military.

They do this because Iran, in a great revolution in 1979, kicked out the U.S. puppet shah. Iran seized control of its oil and won its independence. Washington has never forgiven the Iranian people for that great act.

Of course Washington will never admit this. Among their excuses is the fact that Iran opposes Zionism. And more recently, the fact that Iran held a conference and set up a commission questioning the historical truth of the Jewish Holocaust.

From several points of view, this conference was a blow to the struggle against imperialism. It divided the anti-imperialist movement, while pointing toward an alliance with the openly anti-Jewish forces in the imperialist camp. This orientation was symbolized by the presence on the conference platform of the openly White supremacists such as U.S. politician David Duke and apologists for Nazism. And the conference provided a platform for the absurd charge that Holocaust survivors' testimony is a hoax. Such slanders target the Jewish people, not Zionism, as the enemy. The Holocaust deniers' verdict that imperialism is innocent of this historical crime feeds illusions regarding the nature of this murderous system.

It would have been better for Iran to sponsor an international conference on Zionism and Israel's crimes against the people of the Middle East.

By raising the Holocaust issue, Iranian president Ahmadinejad has diverted attention from his proposed solution of the Palestinian crisis, namely to abolish the Zionist regime and hold elections among "Jews, Christians and Muslims so the population of Palestine can select their government and destiny for themselves in a democratic manner." (Jerusalem Post, December 12, 2006) This is the historic goal of the Palestinian movement for a democratic state embracing the Palestinian and Israeli peoples, a goal widely supported by progressive people around the world.

Anti-Semitism and Zionism

The Zionist state of Israel carries out its crimes in the name of the Jewish people, and conscripts Israeli Jews to enforce this oppression.

This state uses many of the methods of Nazism to oppress the Palestinians, including confining them in walled ghettos. It is understandable that many victims of Zionism feel resentment against Jews, but we cannot blame all Jews for the crimes Israel commits in their name, any more than we blame all Americans for Bush's crimes in Iraq or all Canadians for Stephen Harper's crimes in Afghanistan. We must focus on our real enemy: Zionism and imperialism.

The Palestinian liberation movement itself has never been motivated by anti-Jewish feeling. It simply wants the right for the Palestinian people, including the exiles, to live in peace with equal rights on their native land.

The Arab communities of North Africa and the Middle East had no share in guilt for the Holocaust. There is no tradition of anti-Semitism in Islamic civilization. The prejudice against Jews grew up in Christian Europe, hand in hand with racism, as an aspect of the growth of capitalism. And imperialism, above all Euro-American imperialism, is still the source from which this poison spreads.

The Jewish Holocaust's true lessons

There are two important lessons in the story of the murder of Europe's Jews.

First, that there is no limit to the savagery of imperialism. If not opposed, it will exterminate entire peoples, like the Palestinians.

Second, to fight back against imperialism we need a broad unity of peoples of many faiths and nationalities.

In my own background lies an example of this concept. I was born to a Jewish family in France during the Second World War. The French government was then rounding up the Jews, solely because of their religious and ethnic background, and deporting them to Hitler's death camps.

My parents belonged to a Jewish resistance organization. It was united with other immigrant groups and with French working people – Jewish, Christian, and Muslim together – in the battle against the Nazis.

The resistance saved the lives of thousands of Jewish children in France, including me. And this resistance struck heavy blows against French racism and anti-Jewish hatred, which are felt to this day.

Today we must join in a similar broad alliance, this time to defend the Palestinians and to oppose Zionism.

The Zionists' aggressive policies in the Middle East are against the interests of Jewish people and Palestinians alike, all of whom have a stake in a peaceful and united Middle East.

Palestinian liberation offers the Jewish people in the Middle East the prospect of brotherhood and peace.

United against Zionism

Venezuela is today in the lead in building anti-Zionist unity. That country campaigned strongly against the Israeli war in Lebanon.

Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez did not hesitate to condemn the U.S. sponsors of Israeli aggression and to withdraw his country's ambassador from Israel. "The hand of the Americans is spurring [Israel] on," he

told the Arab TV network Al-Jazeera, (Aug. 4, 2006). The “real threat to the world is the imperialistic threat posed by the U.S,” he said.

“We must defeat imperialism in this century, so that this elite will not annihilate the world.” This is Chavez’s message to all of us.

The Venezuelan people have endorsed this policy with a 63% vote for Chávez in their elections. They are repaying the very great debt that their country owes — that we all owe — to all those in the Mideast who resist Zionism and imperialism.

(In a United Nations debate January 26, 2007, Venezuela stated that Israel’s excesses have “led to a new Holocaust against the Palestinian people” and that Iraqis also are “victims of a Holocaust.”)

In Canada, we have built a broad alliance for Palestinian liberation called the Coalition Against Israeli Apartheid (CAIA), uniting Muslim, Christian, and Jewish fighters against Zionism. CAIA has a Jewish sister organization called Not In Our Name (NION).

We have launched a nation-wide joint campaign for boycott and sanctions against the Zionist state of Israel. The first focus of action is a boycott of the Chapters/Indigo Bookstore chain whose majority owners use their profits to build Heseg, the foundation that recruits non-Israelis to fight in the Israeli military. As Israeli soldiers, they participate in operating checkpoints that restrict Palestinian freedom of movement, enforcing the occupation of Palestinian land, in an army that has a documented history of human rights violations.

The CAIA initiative is a promising beginning to educate and inform the public on the issues in the Palestinian struggle. It is an excellent way to expose Israel’s crimes in the Middle East, and to rally as we did against South Africa’s Apartheid system. Those who wish to be active in this process should get in touch with the CAIA at www.caiaweb.org or email endApartheid@riseup.net.

We should press forward these and other efforts to liberate the Palestinians and to put an end to Zionist and imperialist wars and oppression in the Middle East.

Coalition Against Israeli Apartheid

Support the growing global movement against Israeli Apartheid
and join the Boycott, Divestment, Sanction (BDS) campaign

www.caiaweb.org

Anti-Jewish Prejudice Yesterday and Today

(Socialist Voice, June 5, 2006)

Editors' note: "Anti-Semitism" is a much misused and much misunderstood concept. This epithet is often wrongly applied to opposition to the Israeli state's Apartheid-like policies—such as the statement in defense of Palestinians adopted by the Canadian Union of Public Employees' Ontario convention in May. Yet anti-Jewish prejudice remains deeply rooted in capitalist society and continues to pose a deadly threat to all working people.

This is the text of a talk given by Suzanne Weiss in Toronto, on April 29, 2006.

In 1919, V.I. Lenin, the great leader of the Russian Revolution, gave a brief talk on anti-Semitism that was recorded for use among the Russian peasantry.

"Anti-Semitism means spreading enmity towards the Jews," he said. It is a "remnant of ancient feudal times, when the priests burned heretics at the stake, when the peasants lived in slavery, and when the people were crushed and inarticulate." In our epoch, "we often see the capitalists fomenting hatred against the Jews in order to blind the workers, to divert their attention from the real enemy of the working people, capitalism." (*Collected Works*, vol. 29, page 252)

That sums up both how Jewish prejudice and hatred was born and the form it takes in modern capitalism. But as we shall see, the rise of Zionism has given this scourge a new twist.

The history of Anti-Semitism

Historically, the Jewish people survived as social group with an economic function—that of merchants and traders in pre-capitalist societies. Even before the Roman Empire, only one-quarter of the world's Jews lived in Palestine, while the rest formed commercial colonies across the ancient world from Iran to Egypt to Greece.

In pre-capitalist societies, this commercial role was viewed with disdain and prejudice. Typically, it was fulfilled by ethnic groups. Examples in recent times are the Lebanese and Indians in Africa, or the Chinese in much of south-east Asia. The Jews occupied this economic role for a long time in Europe and the Mediterranean.

When the Roman Empire fell, the Jewish merchant class continued to play an indispensable role in feudal, non-commercial economy. As Abram Leon explains in his classic study, *The Jewish Question*, Jewish people who were not in the merchant class were assimilated. This period

was free of systematic anti-Semitism; it lasted in Western Europe until about 1100.

First rise of Anti-Semitism

After about 1100, a native bourgeoisie grew up among western European peoples. These new bourgeois affirmed themselves as people of commerce and shoved the Jews aside.

Anti-Semitism was the ideological weapon used by the clerics and new bourgeois to expel the Jews. Persecution from rising bourgeois in Spain and western Europe forced Jews to escape to the more primitive, pre-capitalist territories of the Turkish empire and eastern Europe, especially Poland, where they continued their role as traders. This period lasted until about 1700.

Strictly speaking, “anti-Semitism” could be thought to refer to any peoples who speak Semitic languages, which would include Arabs as well as Jews. But I’m going to stick to the usual, dictionary definition: “hostility toward Jews.”

During the epoch of industrial capitalism and of the bourgeois revolution in western Europe, the now-confident capitalist class had less need for anti-Semitism. The French Revolution emancipated the Jews from legal discrimination. The remaining Jewish populations in western Europe were absorbed into the broad range of economic life and partially assimilated. Examples of this are the families of Felix Mendelssohn, the composer, and of Karl Marx. This phase lasted through most of the 19th century.

The second rise of Anti-Semitism

In 1900, eastern Europe was a region of decaying feudalism and rising anti-Semitism. A majority of the world’s Jews lived there, and received the brunt of anti-Semitic discrimination through enforcement of laws and also through pogroms — massive violent attacks on Jews and their environment.

As a result, four million Jews fled from eastern Europe by 1930, of which three million went to the U.S. and only 100,000 to Palestine. Jewish communities were rebuilt in western Europe due to this immigration. There, they encountered new rise of anti-Semitism. Capitalism in Europe was now challenged by powerful workers’ and socialist movements. Right-wing forces made the Jews the scapegoats for capitalist crisis, blaming the evils of the society on rich Jews.

By the 1930s, most European Jews were no longer in commerce but were part of the wage-earning working class, though still isolated in their own communities. But anti-Semitism, as Lenin pointed out, was based

on the memory of Jews as money-lenders and merchants in feudal times even though the reality of this role had passed away. Anti-Semitism now evolved into a form of racism. And, as we know, racism is a central element in capitalist ideology, and is used to divide working people against each other.

An ideological disguise

In the 1930s, capitalism fell into total economic and social crisis the world over. Germany's rulers handed power to Hitler, whose mission was to save the capitalist system through an anti-Jewish crusade.

Racism also provided a rationale for imperialism's need and desire to expand and conquer new markets and sources of raw materials. Anti-Semitism now became as an ideological disguise of modern imperialism. The Nazis pursued the German ruling class's longstanding program to conquer and colonize eastern Europe and destroy the Soviet Union, exterminating the Jewish communities as part of a massive slaughter.

If anyone here has ever looked at a \$50 bill, you will see the mug of one of Canada's prime ministers — Mackenzie King. He warmly praised Hitler, at a time when anti-Semitism was endemic in Canada. His views were openly expressed in Canada's racist immigration policy.

The Zionist project

Zionism arose as a response to this second wave of anti-Semitism. Zionism is a secular political strategy, not a religious belief system. It was a call to the Jews who suffered unrelenting persecution to find a new homeland outside Europe.

At first, Zionism was a minority current among Jewish people in Europe, less influential among the workers than socialist organizations like the Bund and the Russian Bolsheviks and Mensheviks who looked to the world working-class movement for liberation. Zionism gained strength through the experience of Nazism, an experience that encompassed not only the Nazi annihilation of the Jewish communities in most of Europe but the collusion of Canada, the U.S., and other Allied governments in denying refuge to the persecuted Jews. Zionists pointed to the World War II exterminations and discrimination as proof that Jews who lived in the Diaspora needed their own country to live in peace without persecution.

But, where did the Zionists get the idea that they could settle in a land already occupied by Palestinians? They got it from their sponsors and tutors, the colonizing powers — Britain, the United States, France, Portugal, Spain, the Netherlands — that had been colonizing the world for centuries.

Zionism became an integral part of the imperialist drive in the late 19th

and early 20th centuries to subjugate and colonize the Middle East. In 1916, British imperialism gave official support to the Zionist project in order to further Britain's plans for conquest. As Theodore Herzl, founder of modern Zionism said, "We should be there (in Palestine) to form a portion of the rampart of Europe against Asia, an outpost of civilization as opposed to barbarism."

Following the Second World War, the imperialists sponsored the formation of the state of Israel in order to obtain a stronghold against the rise of Arab nationalism and to strengthen their grip on Mideast oil.

Anti-Semitism today

Today, official anti-Semitism in Canada and other imperialist countries has been dismantled. There is no longer a quota for Jewish admission to Canadian universities. Immigration policy no longer discriminates against Jews. Jews are now admitted to all Toronto's golf clubs. It is no longer against the law in Toronto to make a speech in Yiddish.

These are gains of by the working class in its struggle against discrimination. But anti-Semitism persists as a component of racist ideology. It remains part of the baggage of radical rightist groups, and is expressed, although cautiously, by influential right-wing politicians like Patrick Buchanan in the U.S. or Jean-Marie Le Pen in France.

When capitalism once again feels the need to breath life into such currents, anti-Semitism will be a strong part of their appeal.

Zionism breeds Anti-Semitism

Meanwhile, there is another kind of anti-Jewish feeling at work today, arising from the Zionist state's war against the Palestinians. The Zionist state carries out its crimes in the name of the Jewish people and conscripts Israeli Jews to enforce this oppression.

It is understandable that many victims of Zionism feel resentment against Jews. The crimes of Zionism have made it possible for reactionary forces to use the anti-Zionist feelings as the bases for anti-Semitic demagoguery, which tends to divert and weaken the Palestinian struggle. But this is not the same thing as the anti-Semitism that is part of imperialist ideology.

Who is the enemy?

The enemy is Zionism and imperialism, not the Jewish people. The Palestinian liberation movement itself has never been motivated by anti-Semitism. It simply wants the right for the Palestinian people to live in peace on their native land. And the Arab communities of North Africa and the Middle East had no share in guilt for the Holocaust, which is to-

day misused and abused to justify Zionist oppression. Yet Zionist aggression has sparked widespread anti-Jewish feelings in the Mideast today.

This problem finds expression in the imperialist countries as well. For example, the Jewish community of France is now subject to harassment and acts of violence not only from France's own anti-Semitic movements, but on occasion from individuals of Arab origin who wrongly identify Jews with the oppression and discrimination they suffer in France.

Imperialism jumps on such incidents to build hatred of Islamic peoples. Sometimes, it resorts to sheer invention. For example, the *National Post* (May 19, 2006) fans the flames of working class divisions and antagonisms with a sensationally featured report headlined, "Iran Eyes Badges for Jews." The next day, the Post shamefacedly admitted — under much smaller headline — that the report was entirely without foundation. It offered no apology.

The best response to this problem is to redouble solidarity, especially within the Jewish community, with the Palestinians and with Muslim victims of oppression in the imperialist countries such as in France, the U.S., and Canada. We must also oppose every manifestation of Islamophobia — another attempt by imperialism to use racism to divide working people. Imperialism has used 9/11 to launch a witch hunt against the peoples of the Middle East. We should defend the five Muslims who have been detained and jailed for years in Canada on secret evidence of conspiracy in 9/11.* We should stand for equal rights for the Islamic people who wish to practice their religion. We should oppose Canada's dirty war in Afghanistan and the new threats against Iran.

Do Zionists run the U.S. government?

We often say, "Anti-Zionism is not anti-Semitic." But there's a form of anti-Zionism today supported by some on the Left that opens the door to anti-Semitism. This is the argument that Zionists control U.S. foreign policy.

A paper by Harvard academic dean Stephen Walt and University of Chicago professor John Mearsheimer, entitled "The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy," promotes the theory that U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East is manipulated by a Jewish lobby with support from a network of "neoconservative gentiles." The paper has aroused wide controversy. Walt and Mearsheimer, longtime spokespersons for U.S. foreign policy, seek to absolve themselves from responsibility for its failures. Israel and its supporters are being used as convenient scapegoats for

* The five Muslims detained in secret trials under national security certificates are Mohammad Mahjoub, Mahmoud Jaballah, Hassan Almrei, Adil Charkaoui, and Mohamed Harkat.

America's disastrous policies in the Middle East.

This is what we should expect from pro-imperialist theorists. More surprising, however, is the fact that some of the left echo these views. James Petras, a professor and a well-known writer identified with Marxist views, asserts that Jews are disproportionately represented among finance capitalists resulting in an equally disproportionate Jewish influence over U.S. foreign policy. His recent article, "The Tyranny of Israel Over America," quotes anonymous FBI "sources" to claim "large-scale deep penetration of American society and the government by Israeli spies and their collaborators." He goes on to say that a "a significant affluent minority of prominent Jewish banking and real estate millionaires are active in financing and promoting Israeli policy either directly or through pro-Israel lobbies."

These agents, Petras says, fed "disinformation" to persuade Washington to launch the war against Iraq. Petras describes the invasion of Iraq as a war "in the service of Israel" that went against "U.S. good sense and national interest." He calls for the "re-founding of an American Republic 'free from foreign entanglements.'"

Petras's views have been given credence by publication in one of Canada's prominent left publications, *Canadian Dimension*. These views are echoed also on the U.S. left-wing website *Counterpunch*.

Can the tail wag the dog?

How is it possible for the tiny Israeli state to force the world's mightiest empire to act against its own interests? How can the tail wag the dog? Petras admits this is a "paradox." The explanation, he says, "is found in the powerful and influential role of pro-Israeli Jews in strategic sectors of the U.S. economy, political parties, Congress and executive branch."

What is this but a cleaned-up version of the notorious anti-Semitic theory of a world Jewish conspiracy? This conspiracy theory leaves the U.S. capitalist class and the profit system off the hook as the root cause of the ruinous conditions imposed on working people worldwide. And it encourages reactionary U.S. nationalism and hatred of Jews.

Surely, there is a rational, obvious explanation for the close U.S. alliance with Israel: Hasn't Israel proven to be a reliable and an effective defender of U.S. interests in the Mideast? Surely the Iraq war has a more obvious explanation than that it is a Zionist plot: Isn't it a result of Washington's drive to conquer the oil-rich Middle East?

U.S. imperialism's foreign policy, far from being hijacked by some small country, is controlled by and represents the interests of a class: the wealthy billionaire families and industrialists who rule the U.S., including both their parties, the Democrats and Republicans.

Zionism threatens Jewish survival

Zionism represents a dangerous trap for the Jewish people. It maintains that Israel is a secure and necessary haven for Jews in this world. But Israel's existence is based on the conquest and subjugation, and it must protect its conquest by reliance on imperialism. It cannot exist without the assistance of U.S. imperialism — and imperialism is a dying system.

Zionism is a trap for the Jews. Today, Israel is the most dangerous place in the world for Jews to live.

Many Israelis recoil at the suggestion of a parallel with South Africa's Apartheid system of institutionalized racism because it stabs at the heart of how they see themselves and their country, founded after centuries of hatred, pogroms and ultimately genocide. But hope for the Jews lies in making common cause with other victims of oppression. This is shown by my personal experience.

I was born to a Jewish family in France during the Second World War. The French Vichy government was then rounding up Jews, solely because of their religious and ethnic background, and deporting them to Hitler's concentration camps. That's how my mother landed in Auschwitz and died in the gas chamber.

I am alive today, like thousands of other Jewish children of the time, thanks to the anti-Nazi resistance in France. My mother had providently put me in the care of the Jewish resistance organization, itself part of a broader working-class resistance alliance. They placed me in the hands of a courageous peasant family, who hid me until the Liberation. The resistance united people of many political persuasions and religious beliefs: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim — for there were many Muslims in the French resistance. It united Jews with socialists and other anti-Nazi fighters. It saved the lives of thousands of Jewish children in France. And this resistance struck heavy blows against French anti-Semitism, which are felt to this day.

Today we must join in a similar broad alliance, this time to defend the Palestinians and to oppose Zionism and imperialism. In doing this, we also strike blows against anti-Semitism. The Zionists' aggressive policies in the Middle East are against the interests of Jewish people and Palestinians alike, all of whom have a stake in a peaceful and united Middle East. Palestinian liberation offers the Jewish people in the Middle East the prospect of brotherhood and peace.

As Lenin said in the message I quoted earlier, "Shame on those who foment hatred toward the Jews, who foment hatred toward other nations. Long live the fraternal trust and fighting alliance of the workers of all nations in the struggle to overthrow capitalism."

The Siege of Gaza: Israel Uses Hitler's Methods Against Palestinians

(Socialist Voice, August 11, 2008)

Text of a talk to a joint meeting of Muslim and Jewish supporters of Palestinian rights at the Taric Islamic Centre in Toronto, on June 14, 2008.

There is small amount of repeated content between this and the previous talk in this pamphlet.

This inspiring meeting seeks to reach out to Jewish and Muslim communities, to build understanding of the conflict in the Middle East. Thank you for the honour of inviting me to participate.

My life has been shaped by the Jewish Holocaust under Hitler. My mother died in Auschwitz, and I barely escaped the same fate. Like many others, I have sought to resist the forces of war and oppression that we saw in Nazism and that still live on. We have won victories, such as the destruction of Apartheid in South Africa.

But today we see the methods of Nazism being employed against the Palestinians, with the ultimate aim of wiping them out as a people. And this horror is justified with reference to the victims of the Holocaust. What a lie!

It is Israel that uses many of the methods of Nazism to oppress the Palestinians. Meanwhile the Palestinian resistance struggle stands in continuity with the resistance of my people and others in Europe to Nazism.

The primary aim of the Nazi Holocaust was ethnic cleansing — to rid Germany and the territories it occupied of all Jewish people. The Nazis considered shipping the Jewish people outside of Europe, but found no way to do this and decided to kill them all. The Jews were driven from their homes, robbed of their belongings, herded into ghettos, and sent by millions to the gas chambers.

The Holocaust is one of the best documented historical events of all time. The Nazis were methodical — they counted their victims and kept meticulous records. In my family's Polish home town of Piotrkow there were 30,000 Jews. Only 100 survived. On the train that took my mother to Auschwitz there were 1,000 Jews, of whom only ten survived. There is no denying the truth of this deplorable chapter of human history.

Another historical fact that cannot be denied is al-Nakba, the catastrophe inflicted on the Palestinians by the Zionists in 1948. The basic idea was the same: ethnic cleansing. Dispossess the Palestinians and drive them from their homes and lands. The Zionists did not aim to kill all the Palestinians — only to kill enough to expel them and seize their homeland.

Zionist historians invented a story of a massive “voluntary” exodus of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, who, the Zionists said, had decided temporarily to leave their homes and villages to make way for the invading Arab armies. This is a big lie. It is as dishonest and absurd as Hitler’s stories of how the Jews supposedly started the Second World War. In fact, the Palestinian expulsions began in 1948 in conditions of peace.

The Zionists and their allies displaced hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, stole their traditionally agricultural land, and made them homeless. They did this with the aid of mass killings.

The Zionists’ aim is to remove Palestine from the world’s family of nations. They hope that the world will forget that a Palestinian people ever existed. That is the Zionist “final solution” for the Palestinians.

That, too, is a form of genocide and it continues today.

Let me tell you a few things that the Nazis did in Piotrkow, my family’s home town in Poland. You will find it very similar to what is going on today in Gaza and the West Bank.

The German Gestapo and its allies expelled the Jewish people of Piotrkow from society and confined them in a ghetto, surrounded by an immense wall. The idea was to keep everyone on both sides of the wall ignorant, to segregate the lepers, the Jewish people, so that the Nazis could do their dirty murderous deeds in secret.

Inside the ghetto, the Jews were deprived of essentials of life and prevented from entering or leaving. They were harassed and humiliated at checkpoints. Thousands were killed arbitrarily, including the innocent children.

The Piotrkow ghetto swelled and became increasingly crowded as Jewish people from other cities of Poland were herded into it. Ghetto conditions deteriorated. Housing was shockingly overcrowded, and sanitary conditions extremely bad. Epidemics began to spread.

There was a Jewish government and Jewish police in the ghetto, but they were controlled by the Nazi authorities. Some Jewish leaders, including a member of my family, Yakov Berliner, organized resistance, but they were hunted down and executed.

To anyone who knows conditions in Palestine today, all this sounds very familiar.

Today the vast majority of Palestinians have been dispossessed and driven from their lands. In occupied Palestine, the people are confined to small enclaves, surrounded by high walls and intimidating checkpoints. They are humiliated, even forced to crawl naked. Gaza resembles Hitler’s ghettos. The Palestinians are sealed off and deprived of the necessities of life.

There is a Palestinian Authority, but its power is limited by the Zionists. The Palestinian police, trained by the enemies of their people including the Canadian government, are used to repress the population. Palestinians suffer continual persecution and humiliation. They cannot earn a livelihood and must endure life-threatening poverty.

The Palestinians suffer unprovoked and arbitrary attacks, demolition and bombings of their homes and villages. Leaders of the Palestinian resistance are hunted down and slaughtered.

In Gaza, the Palestinians have been able to maintain a government established in free elections. For this crime, they are placed under siege and bombarded.

Israel's deputy defense minister, Matan Vilnai, has made a horrifying threat against the people of Gaza. Young Palestinians use the only means of defense at their disposal. It doesn't compare to the bombs and tanks destroying their society. The Palestinian people have inalienable rights to defend themselves, their land, and property through whatever means they can, including through their democratically elected government, Hamas. Yet Vilnai has said, if rocket fire intensifies, "they will bring upon themselves (the Palestinians) a bigger Holocaust because we will use all our might to defend ourselves."

A bigger Holocaust — the reference to Hitler's actions is clear. This means that Israel will attempt to physically wipe the Gaza population off the map.

Powerful forces have tried to erase the crime against the Palestinians from the world's public memory. But the Palestinian people have survived, and their resistance continues, with the sympathy of peoples around the world. The truth about the crime against the Palestinians cannot be silenced.

The Zionists misuse the memory of the Holocaust to breed and justify new wars in the Middle East. This is a crime against the memory of my family and other Jewish victims under Hitler.

The Zionists act with strong support from the United States, which has its own criminal reasons to see the Palestinians defeated. The Zionists want their exclusively Jewish state, and they want it to expand and dominate the region. The United States, with Ottawa's support, wants the oil and other resources; it wants to control all of the Middle East. That's why they conduct war in Iraq and Afghanistan and are menacing Iran.*

To be against the government of Israel is not anti-Jewish or anti-Se-

* Democratic Senator Joe Biden, Barack Obama's running mate in the 2008 US elections, long ago declared himself to be a Zionist. In a recent speech, he asked, "Imagine our circumstance in the world were there no Israel. How many battleships would there be? How many troops would be stationed?"

mitic. We must stand up for justice and for humanity. We oppose the system of Zionism that oppresses one people — the Palestinians — and endangers another — the Israeli Jews — while condemning the Jewish people everywhere to the hatred of the world.

If the crime against the Palestinians prevails, it would mean that Hitler's spirit had triumphed. To be true to the memory of the victims of the Jewish Holocaust and of all Hitler's victims, we must defend the Palestinians.

We must join their resistance struggle to win back their homeland. We can do this here in Canada.

We need a united campaign for peace and justice for Palestine, for a society in which all inhabitants, Jewish and Palestinians, have an equal voice and equal rights. All the Palestinians expelled from the country should have the right to return.

During Hitler's time, world governments silently supported these crimes against the Jewish people — including the Canadian government, which refused to accept Jewish immigrants escaping the Holocaust. Today, we cannot allow silence about the crimes perpetrated on the Palestinian people. We must demand justice from our own governments.

I belong to "Not in Our Name (NION): Jewish Voices Opposing Zionism," and I am also with the Coalition Against Israeli Apartheid (CAIA). These organizations support the Palestinian right to return and to regain their homeland. They call for boycotts, divestment, and sanctions against Israeli Apartheid policies.

The day will come that the Apartheid Wall will fall and we will see the liberation of the Palestinians. It will be a new day for freedom for all of us around the world.

Let us work together for that day of liberation.

Freedom for the Palestinians!

Not In Our Name

Jewish Voices Opposing Zionism

www.nion.ca

Venezuela Rallies International Resistance to U.S./Israeli Attack on Lebanon

(Socialist Voice, September 18, 2006)

While Israel invaded and brutally bombarded Lebanon in July, most of the world's governments nodded in approval or folded their arms. Venezuela's President Hugo Chavez, by contrast, roundly denounced Israel's aggression against the Lebanese people.

"It really causes indignation to see how the state of Israel continues bombing, killing ... with all the power they have, with the support of the United States," Chavez said August 21 after a military parade in Venezuela's northwestern state of Falcon. "It's hard to explain to oneself how nobody does anything to stop this horror."

Chavez backed up these words with action: Venezuela withdrew its ambassador from Israel. On August 4, he declared he is "not interested in sharing any business, offices, or anything" with the Israeli state. Israel responded by recalling its ambassador to Venezuela on August 7, criticizing what it called Chavez's "one-sided policy" and "wild slurs."

The Bolivarian government's actions, strikingly bold and courageous in the context of imperialist-dominated world diplomacy, were consistent with its foreign policy of defending and aiding countries under imperialist attack. Nor did Chavez hesitate to condemn the U.S. sponsors of Israeli aggression. "I am telling you with all honesty that the hand of the Americans is spurring (Israel) on," he told the Arab TV network Al-Jazeera on August 4. The "real threat to the world is the imperialistic threat posed by the U.S., and Israel is one of its imperialistic instruments in this part of the world."

Venezuela's mideast roots

Venezuela's stand in the Mideast conflict also reflects the direct experience of many of its citizens. About 1.5 million Venezuelans are immigrants or descendents of immigrants from Arab countries, many of them recent arrivals from Lebanon and Palestine. There are at least five deputies of Arab origin in Venezuela's National Assembly and one state governor of Lebanese descent. Across Latin America, 17 million are of Arab descent, of whom six million are Muslim.

During July, there were many marches in the streets of Caracas and other cities in Venezuela – as well as in Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Colombia – to show solidarity with the Lebanese and Palestinians.

In 2005, the first Arab-South American Summit, held in Brazil, brought together heads of state and representatives of 33 countries. (A U.S. request for observer status was denied.) The summit adopted the

“Declaration of Brasilia” calling for close ties between South America and the Arab world, and criticizing Israeli and U.S. aggression against Palestinians.

The solidarity expressed in Brasilia was tested in July this year, when member governments of the South American trade pact Mercosur held a summit in Cordoba, Argentina. The meeting was also the occasion for Venezuela’s formal entry into Mercosur. Plans had been laid for the signing at the Cordoba conference of a trade agreement between Mercosur and Israel. But the Mercosur nations refused to sign the accord and instead adopted an official document calling for a ceasefire and an end to the attack on Lebanon.

The Venezuelan president’s participation in the Mercosur summit doubtless played a role in this decision. And surely the presence of Fidel Castro, who came to sign a Cuba-Mercosur trade pact, also weighed in the balance. Cuba’s solidarity with the victims of Israeli government aggression is of long standing, and the island has no diplomatic relations with Israel. On June 29, Cuba’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs condemned Israel’s military actions and called for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Israeli troops from all occupied territories, the ceasing of state-terror actions by Israel, and respect for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

Venezuela walks the talk

In an August 3 address to the Venezuelan people, Chavez asked “everyone in the country to give what we can for this fundraising campaign for the reconstruction of Lebanon ... destroyed by the genocidal and fascist hand of Israel and its masters, the U.S. empire.”

In addition, his government pledged to send Lebanon 20,000 tonnes of aid to “help alleviate the humanitarian crisis caused by the Israeli bombing,” dispatching a Boeing 707 full of supplies as a starter.

Hezbollah representative Mahmoud Komati, told the Latin America-wide TV channel TeleSur that Venezuela took measures that were “an example for revolutionaries when defending “the oppressed, enslaved and humble peoples of the world.” (*Associated Press*, August 8)

On world television channels one could see Venezuelan flags in demonstrations in Beirut, next to Lebanese and Palestinian flags. It was also reported that in Gaza and the West Bank city of Ramallah, people placed posters of Chavez next to those of Arafat and Che. (*Al-jazeera*, August 18)

Addressing the masses

Israel’s war on Lebanon coincided with an eight-nation tour by Chavez to discuss south-south cooperation and emphasize the need for a “multi-

polar world,” in which he advocated alliances to tie the third-world countries more to each other and break U.S. hegemony.

Chavez denounced Israel at each stop. He called the Lebanese and Palestinians “heroic people” and repeatedly voiced his criticisms of Israel over its military offensive in Lebanon.

During Chavez’s visit to Iran, he called for a global coalition to combat “the U.S. imperialist monster” and reaffirmed that Venezuela would “stand by Iran at any time and under any condition.” Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad responded that Hugo Chavez “one of the rare world leaders whose word and deed are the same.”

In Damascus, Chavez received a hero’s welcome: thousands of Syrians waved banners and Venezuelan flags along the route Chavez took to his meeting with Syrian President Hafaz el-Assad. The Syrian government daily, *Tishrin*, described Chavez as “America’s enemy number one, international leader and the biggest supporter of Arab cause.” After a meeting with Assad, Chavez said, “We want to cooperate to build a new world where states and peoples self-determination are respected.”

While Chavez’s official meetings were on a governmental level, his words were directed to the masses and had deep resonance throughout the Middle East.

In many prominent Arab newspapers, columnists ask why Arab government leaders could not do for Lebanon what a Latin American non-Arab non-Muslim leader dared to do. A protest held in Kuwait after Venezuela withdrew its ambassador from Israel featured a large placard of Chavez that declared him a “true Arab leader.”

The Venezuelan news service *Vheadline.com* reported on August 6 that it had been inundated with email from Arab readers supporting Chavez’s stand on Israel’s war.

UN candidacy

The second Arab-South American Summit took place in Caracas in July, with delegations from 15 Arab and 12 South American nations. Among other issues, the Summit approved Venezuela’s application to join the Arab League, which was accepted in September. It also backed bids by Venezuela and Egypt for seats on the UN Security Council.

The U.S. has “stabbed the Middle East peace process in the heart,” Chavez said as he left for the Summit. “We see a Security Council blocked by the power of the veto, that of the government of the United States especially.... If Venezuela could occupy a seat on the council,” he continued, it might be able to “contribute modestly towards the battle to free the world from the imperialist threat.”

Venezuela’s foreign ministry is optimistic it will get the 128 votes it

needs to gain a UN Security Council seat, despite strong opposition by the U.S. government.

Strategy of solidarity

The outspokenly militant spirit of Chavez's comments were frequently out of step with the politics of his often conservative governmental hosts. In fact, he used a diplomatic platform to address the Third World masses, irrespective of the nature of their own governments. It is to the masses that he entrusts the cause of 21st century socialism. And the popularity of Hugo Chavez in the Mideast reflects new thinking among the working masses of these countries.

Venezuela has taken initial steps toward socialism. Venezuela stands as a powerful example that the wealth generated by the oil industry can be used to improve the lives of Venezuelans and to aid working people in other countries, even as far away as the indigenous and poor people of Alaska. This is a contagious example that may not sit well with wealthy aristocratic and capitalist rulers in such countries as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and nearby states.

Behind Hugo Chavez's response to the Lebanon war lies a powerful strategic concept. On January 31, 2005, at the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil, he declared, "It is impossible, within the framework of the capitalist system to solve the grave problems of poverty of the majority of the world's population." U.S. imperialism is not invincible, he said, repeating the words of Jose de san Martin, an Argentine independence hero, "Let's be free without caring about what anyone else says."

Chavez's tour of the Middle East and Africa echoed this theme. "If we don't make that better world possible," he said, "if we fail through the rifles of the U.S. Marines, and through Mr. Bush's murderous bombs; if there is no coincidence and organization necessary in the South to resist the offensive of neo-imperialism, and the Bush doctrine is imposed upon the world, the world will be destroyed." (Granma, September 5)

As he told *Al-Jazeera* August 4, "We must defeat imperialism in this century, so that this elite will not annihilate the world."

Reading from the Left

Anti-Semitism, Zionism, and the Defense of Palestinian Rights

by Suzanne Weiss

Canada's Assault on Afghanistan: Behind the Lies and Cover-ups

by Roger Annis and Ian Beeching

COMINTERN: Revolutionary Internationalism in Lenin's Time

by John Riddell

Cuba in a Time of Transition

by John Riddell, Phil Cournoyer, Fidel Castro, and Duroyan Ferti

Confronting the Climate Change Crisis: An Ecosocialist Perspective

by Ian Angus

The Fight for Indigenous Rights in the Andes Today

by Hugo Blanco

From Resistance to Power! Manifestos of the fight for Indigenous Rights in Central and South America

For the Land! The Roots and Revolutionary Dynamics of Indigenous Struggles in Canada Today

by Mike Krebs

Global Warming, Biofuels and World Hunger

by Fidel Castro

Haiti and the Myth of Canadian Peacekeeping

by Roger Annis

Venezuela Eyewitness

by Suzanne Weiss and John Riddell

Venezuela and the International Struggle for Socialism

by John Riddell, Roger Annis, Ian Angus and Federico Fuentes

Why Washington Hates Iran: A Political Memoir of the Revolution that Shook the Middle East

by Barry Sheppard.

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