How To Make a Term Meaningless
Devaluing "Anti-Semite"

By William Blum

"The cleanliness of this people, moral and otherwise, I must say, is a point in itself. By their very exterior you could tell that these were no lovers of water, and, to your distress, you often knew it with your eyes closed. ... Added to this, there was their unclean dress and their generally unheroic appearance. ... Was there any form of filth or profligacy, particularly in cultural life, without at least one Jew involved in it? ... Nine-tenths of all literary filth, artistic trash, and theatrical idiocy can be set to the account of a people ... a people under whose parasitism the whole of honest humanity is suffering, today more than ever, the Jews."

Now, who can be the author of such abominable anti-Semitism? a) Hasan Nasrallah, leader of Hezbollah in Lebanon; b) John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, authors of *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy*; c) Osama bin Laden; d) Jimmy Carter; e) Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, president of Iran; f) Norman Finkelstein, author of *The Holocaust Industry*.

Each one has been condemned as anti-Semitic. Are you having a problem deciding? Oh, excuse me, I forgot one – g) Adolf Hitler. Does that make it easier? I'll bet some of you were thinking it must have been Ahmadinejad.

The Webster's Dictionary defines "anti-Semite" as "One who discriminates against or is hostile to or prejudiced against Jews." Notice that Israel is not mentioned.The next time a critic of Israeli policies is labeled "anti-Semitic," think of this definition, think of Adolf's charming way of putting it, then closely examine what the accused has actually said or written.

It may, however, be past the time for such a rational, intellectual pursuit; ultraheated polarization reigns supreme with anything concerning the Middle East, particularly Israel. In March 2007, at a conference of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) in Washington, one of the speakers, an American "Christian Zionist", asserted: "It is 1938, Iran is Germany and Ahmadinejad is the new Hitler." The audience responded with a standing ovation, one of seven noisy acclamations during his talk.

Then, in May, former Israeli prime minister and current Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu declared that "it's 1938, and Iran is Germany. And Iran is racing to arm itself with atomic bombs. ... [While Ahmadinejad] denies the Holocaust, he is preparing another Holocaust for the Jewish state."

So, why hasn't Iran at least started its Holocaust by killing or throwing into concentration camps its own Jews, an estimated 30,000 in number? These are Iranian Jews who have representation in Parliament and who have been free for many years to emigrate from Iran and head for Israel but have chosen not to do so.

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For your further apocalyptic enjoyment, here is Norman Podhoretz, apex neocon, editor of *Commentary* magazine, in an article entitled "The Case for Bombing Iran": "Like Hitler, [Ahmadinejad] is a revolutionary whose objective is to overturn the going international system and to replace it in the fullness of time with a new order dominated by Iran and ruled by the religio-political culture of Islamofascism. ... The plain and brutal truth is that if Iran is to be prevented from developing a nuclear arsenal, there is no alternative to the actual use of military force – any more than there was an alternative to force if Hitler was to be stopped in 1938."

Ahmadinejad arrived in New York on September 24 to address the United Nations. At Columbia University, he was introduced by the school's president, the ineffable Bollinger, as a man who appeared to lack "intellectual courage", had a "fanatical mindset", and may be "astonishingly undereducated". How many people in the audience, I wonder, looked around to see where George W. was sitting.

"If I were the president of a university, I would not have invited him. He's a Holocaust denier", said Hillary Clinton, once again fearlessly challenging the Bush administration's propaganda.

The above is but a small sample of the hatred and anger spewed forth against Ahmadinejad for several years now. A number of people on the American left, who should know better, have joined this chorus.

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is a man seemingly custom-made for the White House in its endless quest for enemies with whom to scare Congress, the American people, and the world, in order to justify the unseemly behavior of the empire. The Iranian president, we are told, has declared that he wants to "wipe Israel off the map". He has said that "the Holocaust is a myth". He held a conference in Iran for "Holocaust deniers". And his government passed a new law requiring Jews to wear yellow insignia, as the Nazis did. On top of all that, he's aiming to build nuclear bombs, one of which would surely be aimed at Israel. What right-thinking person would not be scared by such a man?

However, as with all such designer monsters made bigger than life during the Cold War and since by Washington, the truth about Ahmadinejad is a bit more complicated. According to people who know Farsi, the Iranian leader has never said anything about "wiping Israel off the map". In his October 29, 2005, speech, when he reportedly first made the remark, the word "map" does not even appear. According to the translation of Juan Cole, American professor of Modern Middle East and South Asian History, Ahmadinejad said that "the regime occupying Jerusalem must vanish from the page of time." His remark, said Cole, "does not imply military action or killing anyone at all", which of course is what would make the remark sound threatening.

At the December 2006 conference in Teheran ("Review of the Holocaust:

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Global Vision"), the Iranian president said: "The Zionist regime will be wiped out soon, the same way the Soviet Union was, and humanity will achieve freedom." Obviously, the man is not calling for any kind of violent attack upon Israel, for the dissolution of the Soviet Union took place relatively peacefully.

Moreover, in June 2006, subsequent to Ahmadinejad's speech, Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, stated: "We have no problem with the world. We are not a threat whatsoever to the world, and the world knows it. We will never start a war. We have no intention of going to war with any state".

As for the Holocaust myth, I have yet to read or hear words from Ahmadinejad saying simply, clearly, unambiguously, and unequivocally that he thinks that what we know as the Holocaust never happened. He has instead commented about the peculiarity and injustice of a Holocaust which took place in Europe resulting in a state for the Jews in the Middle East instead of in Europe. He asks, why are the Palestinians paying a price for a German crime? He argues that Israel and the United States have exploited the memory of the Holocaust for their own purposes. And he wonders about the accuracy of the number of Jews – six million – allegedly killed in the Holocaust, as have many other people of all political stripes, including Holocaust survivors like Italian author Primo Levi. (The much-publicized World War One atrocities which turned out to be false made the public very skeptical of the Holocaust claims for a long time after World War Two.) Which of this deserves to be labeled "Holocaust denial"?

The conference gave a platform to various points of view, including six members of Jews United Against Zionism, at least two of whom were rabbis. One was Ahron Cohen, from London, who declared: "There is no doubt whatsoever, that during World War II there developed a terrible and catastrophic policy and action of genocide perpetrated by Nazi Germany against the Jewish people." He also said that "the Zionists make a great issue of the Holocaust in order to further their illegitimate philosophy and aims", indicating as well that the figure of six million Jewish victims is debatable.

The other rabbi was Moshe David Weiss, who told the delegates: "We don't want to deny the killing of Jews in World War II, but Zionists have given much higher figures for how many people were killed. They have used the Holocaust as a device to justify their oppression." His group rejects the creation of Israel on the grounds that it violates Jewish religious law in that a Jewish state can't exist until the return of the Messiah.

Another speaker was Shiraz Dossa, professor of political science at St. Francis Xavier University in Canada. In an interview after the conference, he described himself as an anti-imperialist and an admirer of Noam Chomsky, and said that he "was invited because of my expertise as a scholar in the German-Jewish area, as well as my studies in the Holocaust. ... I have nothing to do with Holocaust denial, not at all." His talk, he said, was "about the war on terrorism, and how the Holocaust plays into it. ... There was no pressure at all to say anything, and people there had different views."

Clearly, the conference – which the White House called "an affront to the entire civilized world" – was not set up to be a forum to deny that the Holocaust literally never took place at all.

As to the yellow star story of May 2006 – that was a complete fabrication by a prominent Iranian-American neoconservative author Amir Taheri.

Ahmadinejad, however, is partly to blame for his predicament. When asked directly about the Holocaust and other controversial matters, he usually declines to give answers of "yes" or "no". I interpret this as his prideful refusal to accede to the wishes of what he regards as a hostile Western interviewer asking hostile questions. The Iranian president is in the habit of prefacing certain remarks with "Even if the Holocaust happened...", a rhetorical device we all use in argument and discussion, but one which can not help but reinforce the doubts people have about his views. However, when Ahmadinejad himself asks, as he often has, "Why should the Palestinians have to pay for something that happened in Europe?" he does not get a clear answer.

In any event, in the question and answer session following his talk at Columbia, the Iranian president said, "I'm not saying that it [the Holocaust] didn't happen at all. This is not the judgment that I'm passing here."

That should put the matter to rest. But of course it won't. Two days later, on September 26, a bill (H.R. 3675) was introduced in Congress "To prohibit Federal grants to or contracts with Columbia University", to punish the school for inviting Ahmadinejad to speak. The bill's first "finding" states that "Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has called for the destruction of the State of Israel, a critical ally of the United States".

How long before we get the first linking of Iran with 9/11? Or has that already happened? How long before democracy and freedom bombs begin to fall upon the heads of the Iranian people? All the charges of anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial, along with other disinformation, are of course designed to culminate in this new crime against humanity.

One final thought, on the Democratic Party's failure to stand up to the Bush fascist tide. Here, from the first-person account of a German living under Hitler in the 1930s, is his observation about the leading German political party, the Social Democrats, the Democratic Party of its time: The Social Democrats, Sebastian Haffner wrote in his book *Defying Hitler,* "had fought the election campaign of 1933 in a dreadfully humiliating way, chasing after the Nazi slogans and emphasizing that they were 'also nationalist'. ... In May, a month before they were finally dissolved, the Social Democratic faction in the Reichstag had unanimously expressed their confidence in Hitler and joined in the singing of the 'Horst Wessel Song,' the Nazi anthem. (The official parliamentary report noted: 'Unending applause and cheers, in the house and the galleries. The Reichschancellor [Hitler] turns to the Social Democratic faction and applauds.')" CP

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Energy Group. This revolving door pathway from NRC to industry is well worn. One NRC commissioner who voted in April to change the definition of construction is Jeffrey Merrifield. Before he left the NRC in July, Mr. Merrifield's last assignment as an NRC commissioner was to chair an agency task force on ways to accelerate licensing. In April, while he was urging his colleagues at NRC to redefine construction, Mr. Merrifield was actively seeking a top management position within the nuclear industry. In July, he became senior vice president for Shaw Group, a nuclear builder that has worked on 95 per cent of all existing U.S. nuclear plants. Mr. Merrifield's salary at NRC was $154,600. Bloomberg reports, "In Shaw Group's industry peer group, $705,409 is the median compensation for a senior vice president."

No one in government or the industry seems the least bit embarrassed by any of this. It's just the way it is. Indeed, Mr. Merrifield points out that, while he was an NRC commissioner providing very substantial benefits to the nuclear industry by his decisions, his concurrent search for a job within the regulated industry was approved by the NRC's Office of General Counsel and its inspector general. From this, one might conclude that Mr. Merrifield played by all the rules and did nothing wrong. Or, one might conclude that venality and corruption reach into the highest levels of the NRC. Or, one might conclude that after NRC commissioners have completed their assignments inside government, everyone in the agency just naturally feels they are entitled to a lifetime of lavish reward from the industry on whose behalf they have labored so diligently.

As recently as this summer, Uncle Sam was still devising new ways to revive nuclear power. In July, the U.S. Senate allowed the nuclear industry to add a one-sentence provision to the energy bill, which the Senate then passed. The one sentence greatly expanded the loan guarantee provisions of the Energy Policy Act of 2005. The 2005 Act had specified that Uncle Sam could guarantee loans for new nuclear power plants up to a limit set each year by Congress. In 2007, the limit was set at a paltry $4 billion. The one-sentence revision adopted by the Senate removed all limits on loan guarantees. The nuclear industry says it needs at least $50 billion in the next two years. Michael J. Wallace, the co-chief executive of UniStar Nuclear, a partnership seeking to build nuclear reactors, and executive vice president of Constellation Energy, said, "Without loan guarantees, we will not build nuclear power plants".

The Senate and the House of Representatives are presently arm-wrestling over the proposed expansion of loan guarantees. In June, the White House budget office said that the Senate's proposed changes to the loan-guarantee program could "significantly increase potential taxpayer liability" and "eliminate any incentive for due diligence by private lenders". On Wall Street, this is known as a "moral hazard" – conditions under which waste, fraud and abuse can flourish.

Meanwhile, investors should think twice before buying into the "nuclear renaissance" because there's another "renaissance" under way as well: an anti-nuclear movement is growing again, and they will toss your billions into the toilet without hesitation. Indeed, with glee. CP

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