

U.S. Hands Off Syria!

Lebanon: Imperialist Intrigues and the Spectre of Civil War

Since the assassination of former prime minister Rafik al-Hariri in a massive explosion on the streets of Beirut on February 14, Lebanon has been in the grip of political turmoil. American imperialists and the anti-Syrian “opposition” in Lebanon immediately pointed fingers at Syria. Not to be left out of the spoils this time, French imperialism, Syria and Lebanon’s former colonial ruler, joined in to call for withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon. In September of last year, France and the U.S. jointly sponsored a UN resolution (1559) demanding the disarming of the Hezbollah militia and the withdrawal of Syrian forces from Lebanon. Seizing upon al-Hariri’s assassination, the so-called opposition, led by factions of the Christian Maronites, Druze and Sunni Muslims, organized demonstrations protesting the presence of Syrian forces. The Shi’ite Hezbollah countered with its own demonstrations that denounced U.S. meddling in Lebanon and expressed “gratitude” for Syrian troops in the country (though, notably, they did not call for the Syrian troops to stay).

In a false, made-for-television display of “national unity,” both pro- and anti-Syrian demonstrators wrapped themselves in the Lebanese flag, abandoned their distinctive sectarian military fatigues and sang the national anthem. However, behind the thin facade of unity lie deep communal fissures fueled by centuries-old mutual hatred. In Lebanon, which has never been an integrated, united country, allegiance is first and foremost to the communal or religious sect. On Martyrs’ Square, where the opposition pitched a tent city, each group kept to its own tent. As Moustafa Bayoumi wrote (*London Review of Books*, 5 May): “Unity is called for over and over again at the camp, but its geography demonstrates the confessional divisions that exist in the country itself.” It was no accident that the Christians kept to the east of the square and Muslims to the west. “The crowds were meeting on the front lines that had separated the Lebanese during the civil war,” wrote Robert Fisk, “indeed, on the very location of the Christian-Muslim trenches of that conflict” (*London Independent*, 9 March).

Syria’s troops have pulled out. And now, with legislative elections set to begin on May 29, the opposition is breaking apart and a new lineup is forming of various Muslim groupings on one side and Christians on the other. Behind everything happening in Lebanon today stands the ghost of the brutal civil war that haunted that country for 15 years beginning in 1975. More than 150,000 people were



Cedarland



AP

Left: March 14 Beirut protest by “opposition” mobilized over one million people demanding withdrawal of Syrian troops. Right: At March 8 protest organized by Hezbollah, demonstrators carry picture of Syrian president Bashar al-Assad, denounce U.S. meddling in Lebanon.

For a Socialist Federation of the Near East!

killed and at least another 100,000 were wounded. Beirut, one of the most beautiful cities in the Near East, was turned into a pile of rubble.

The opposition’s campaign against Syria has fomented chauvinist attacks against the estimated half million migrant Syrian workers in the country. According to Amnesty International, dozens of Syrian workers have been killed and scores of others beaten, shot, threatened or robbed in Lebanon since the assassination of al-Hariri. Thousands have left the country. Tents and temporary housings were set on fire. The aftermath of the assassination also saw a series of criminal bombings in predominantly Christian neighborhoods and shopping areas, evoking the memory of the civil war.

Bubbling with glee over the anti-Syrian demonstrations, Western bourgeois media hailed them with such grandiose names as “cedar revolution,” “people power,” “mini Ukraine,” etc. Some Beirut residents aptly called them the “Gucci revolution” because so “many of those waving the Lebanese flag on the street are really very unlikely protesters,” a BBC correspondent reported. He went on:

“There are girls in tight skirts and high heels, carrying expensive leather bags, as well as men in business suits or trendy tennis shoes. And in one unforgettable scene an elderly lady, her hair all done up, was demonstrating alongside her Sri

Lankan domestic helper, telling her to wave the flag and teaching her the Arabic words of the slogans.”

What is taking place in Lebanon is a falling-out among equally corrupt gangs of warlords and robber barons. Those who call themselves the opposition today, for years worked hand in glove with the brutal Syrian regime. The leaders of the myriad religious and communal groups have every one of them been in treacherous, murderous shifting alliances against every other one. The essence of Lebanon’s political scene was aptly captured by the Levant correspondent for the *London Economist* (5 November 1983). Reporting on the “national reconciliation” conference held in Geneva in the fall of 1983 in the midst of the civil war, he wrote:

“To compare this week’s conference of Lebanese faction bosses in Geneva with a gathering of Mafia godfathers might be unfair to the Mafia, because it has never eliminated several hundred victims in a single day. There can seldom have been so many delegates around a table who were directly and personally responsible for killing the followers of fellow delegates.”

The bourgeois press declares that al-Hariri had a “vision of prosperous Lebanon.” However, the wealth generated by his opulent downtown Beirut construction projects following the civil war did not trickle down to the desperately impoverished Shi’ites in the south, the slum dwellers of Beirut’s Belt of Misery,

the hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees and Syrian migrant workers whom he exploited. Nor did it reach the mass of Lebanese working people, down whose throats al-Hariri shoved IMF-imposed austerity measures. When workers went on strike and took to the streets protesting high prices and demanding wage increases, al-Hariri unleashed his gendarmes on them. In May of last year, his troops shot at striking workers in the Shi’ite suburb of Hay al-Sellom, killing five people. It was not the first time that al-Hariri’s security forces attacked demonstrators. In 1993, the army shot at demonstrators protesting the Oslo agreement between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, killing more than a dozen.

The real estate magnate al-Hariri built his fortune through shady connections with the parasitic Saudi royal family, which rules on the basis of Wahabism, an extreme version of Sunni Islam. The Saudis granted al-Hariri citizenship, a privilege denied millions of Arabs and Asians toiling in the kingdom for decades. He maintained longtime close friendships with the likes of Iyad Allawi, the American puppet in Baghdad, and French imperialist president Jacques Chirac.

Whoever was behind the assassination of al-Hariri (whether the CIA, the Israeli

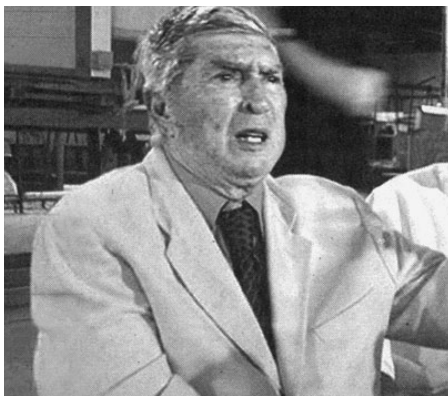
continued on page 9



Defend the Cuban Revolution!

Extradite *Gusano* Terrorist to Havana!

Last week the American government finally “captured” an actual terrorist in the U.S. On May 17, weeks after he waltzed across the U.S. border and announced he would seek asylum, counterrevolutionary Cuban *gusano* (worm) Luis Posada Carriles was arrested by officials of the Department of Homeland Security—not on terrorism charges, but for entering the country in violation of immigration laws. That same day, before his detention was announced, hundreds of thousands marched in Havana demanding Posada’s arrest. For the Bush administration, which routinely calls headline-grabbing press conferences to announce the latest triumph in the “war on terror”—such as the closing of charities which donated to hospitals and schools in the Near East or the New York City arrest of teenage girls alleged to be suicide bombers—Posada’s “arrest” was no cause for celebration. This bloodthirsty killer was one of their own, a former CIA employee with a four-decade résumé of terrorism which includes the downing of a civilian airliner and the bombing of a Havana hotel. We say: Send Posada back to Cuba to be tried by his victims!



Chapman/Miami Herald

Counterrevolutionary terrorist Luis Posada Carriles at Florida news conference before his arrest.

On New Year’s Day 1959, a peasant guerrilla army led by Fidel Castro and Che Guevara overthrew the U.S. puppet dictator Batista in Cuba. Over the next year and a half, largely in response to imperialist provocations, the Cuban government expropriated the capitalist and foreign imperialist holdings, consolidating a deformed workers state by the fall of 1960. Ever since then, U.S. imperialism has been waging a terrorist war

against the tiny island state of Cuba. Posada, a Cuban exile, enlisted with the CIA before the 1961 invasion of the Cuban Bay of Pigs during the Democratic Kennedy administration. He later joined the Venezuelan intelligence service in 1969 and, according to declassified U.S. government documents, left it in 1974. Posada spent nine years in a Venezuelan prison for the 1976 bombing of a Cuban airliner (during George Bush Sr.’s reign as CIA director) in which 73 people were killed. Among the victims were teenage members of the Cuban fencing team. Posada “escaped” from prison in 1985 after his *gusano* friends in Miami paid the warden \$28,000, and he then joined a CIA operation in El Salvador to assist Oliver North’s operation arming the Nicaraguan contra murderers who carried out their own war of terror against the Sandinistas in Nicaragua—blowing up bridges, power plants and schools, attacking hospitals and burning crops.

Though he denies taking part in the 1976 airplane bombing, FBI documents place Posada at two meetings at which the attack was planned, and an FBI report a day after the bombing records a source who “all but admitted that Posada and [Orlando] Bosch had engineered the bombing of the airline.” Posada has admitted masterminding bombings of tourist spots in Havana in 1997 that killed an Italian businessman. Posada and three others linked to the terrorist Omega 7 outfit were arrested and imprisoned for plotting the assassination of Castro at a regional summit meeting in Panama in 2000; they were pardoned by the outgoing Panamanian president last August.

In a 1998 interview, Posada bragged about his years of work with the Company: “The CIA taught us everything—everything. They taught us explosives, how to kill, bomb, trained us in acts of sabotage. When the Cubans were working for the CIA, they were called patriots. ‘Acciones de sabotaje’ was the term they used to classify this type of operation. Now they call it terrorism. The times have changed.”

Well, let’s not jump to conclusions. Posada’s presence in the U.S. has been a public secret for weeks, evoking fears among sectors of the ruling class that harboring this known killer would expose the hypocrisy of the U.S. rulers’ “war on terror,” which in reality is a war on immigrants, blacks and labor and any country that Washington wants to run roughshod over. In a letter to Homeland Security secretary Michael Chertoff, Democratic Congressman William Delahunt wrote, “Our sudden timidity with regard to a particular terrorist threatens to undermine the fundamental credibility of our global effort.” Delahunt’s chief of staff Steven Schwadron added, “Mr. Posada does not belong in the United States.”

It is conceivable that the U.S. may deport Posada to a friendly government that will allow him to live out his life in ease and comfort. But, if the U.S. rulers have their way, it is unlikely that Posada will ever be called to account for his crimes. Posada’s partner in terror, Orlando Bosch, today soaks up the sun in Miami. Imprisoned in Venezuela with Posada, Bosch was released in 1987 after the intervention by U.S. ambassador Otto Reich and flown to the U.S. where he was arrested. Over FBI objections, the first president Bush pardoned Bosch in 1990. Two years later, he was granted permanent residency. The Venezuelan government of Hugo Chávez has sought Posada’s extradition to face outstanding charges of homicide, treason and possession and manufacture of weapons of war. A statement issued by the Department of Homeland Security said it “does not gen-

erally remove people to Cuba” or “to countries believed to be acting on Cuba’s behalf,” a clear reference to the close relationship between Venezuela and Cuba.

While counterrevolutionary *gusano* scum like Bosch plot further acts of terror against Cuba, five courageous Cuban citizens are imprisoned in the U.S. for terms of 15 years to life on bogus charges of espionage and murder. Arrested by Democratic president Bill Clinton’s FBI in 1998, the “crime” of the Miami Five was to monitor and infiltrate *gusano* exile groups in Florida in order to report on their plans, as well as those of the U.S. military, for attacks and other provocations against Cuba. In a message to the American people issued shortly after their conviction in 2001, the Miami Five proudly asserted that Cuba, which “has heroically survived four decades of aggressions and threats to its national security, of subversive plans, sabotages and destabilization, has every right to defend itself from its enemies who keep using the U.S. territory to plan, organize and finance terrorist actions.” We demand: **Free the Miami Five!**

Cuba has provided refuge to American black activists who have found themselves in the gun sights of the racist kill-crazy cops. In early May, the FBI increased the bounty on the head of Assata Shakur, former member of the Black Panther Party and Black Liberation Army, to \$1 million. Shakur has been in Cuba since she escaped prison in 1979, sentenced to life on frame-up charges of killing a New Jersey state trooper. On 22 May 1973, Shakur, Zayd Malik Shakur and Sundiata Acoli were flagged down by state troopers, who immediately began blazing away with their guns, killing Zayd Shakur. One of the troopers was killed in the crossfire—with a bullet from a police revolver. Assata Shakur, shot by the cops while sitting in the back of the car with her hands over her head, nearly died from the wounds. In a classic example of racist capitalist “justice,” the two black militants who survived were convicted on charges of killing the cop and their own comrade! Acoli remains in a prison hell over 30 years later. **Hands off Assata Shakur! Free Sundiata Acoli!**

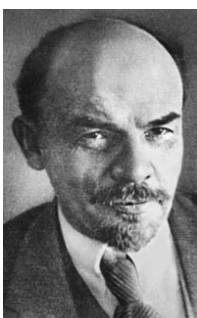
For 45 years, American administrations, Democratic as well as Republican, have tried to crush the gains of the Cuban Revolution by a combination of military encirclement, a starvation embargo and an unbroken series of terrorist attacks. The smashing of capitalist class rule and creation of a workers state, albeit deformed under the rule of the Stalinist Castro bureaucracy, brought tremendous gains to the Cuban population, from free medical care to jobs, housing and education. We fight for the unconditional military defense of the Cuban deformed workers state against imperialist attack and capitalist counterrevolution, and call for a workers political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucracy. Key to the defense of the Cuban Revolution is our fight to forge a revolutionary workers party in the U.S. that can lead the American proletariat to victory in the struggle to sweep away capitalist rule in the U.S. **Extradite Posada to Cuba to face justice! ■**



TROTSKY

For Revolutionary Struggle Against Imperialism and War

Groups claiming to be socialist have built the movement against the Iraq war and occupation around a pacifist program designed to appeal to “antiwar” bourgeois politicians. Writing in 1935, revolutionary leader Leon Trotsky explained how such pacifist, classless appeals to “unity” perpetuate the capitalist system by reinforcing illusions that it can be reformed to serve the interests of working people and the oppressed. In fighting to forge the Fourth International in the



LENIN

years leading up to World War II, Trotsky stressed that only workers revolution can put an end to imperialist war.

The war danger, which is a life and death question for the people, is the supreme test for all the groupings and tendencies within the working class. “The struggle for peace,” “the struggle against war,” “war on war,” and similar slogans are hollow and fraudulent phrases if unaccompanied by the propaganda and the application of revolutionary methods of struggle. The only way to put an end to war is to overthrow the bourgeoisie. The only way to overthrow the bourgeoisie is by a revolutionary assault....

Marxists irreconcilably reject the pacifist slogans of “disarmament,” “arbitration,” and “amity between peoples” (i.e., between capitalist governments), etc., as opium for the popular masses. The combinations between working class organizations and petty-bourgeois pacifists...render the best service to imperialism by distracting the attention of the working class from reality with its grave struggles and beguiling them instead with impotent parades.

The struggle against war and imperialism cannot be the task of any sort of special “committees.” The struggle against war is the preparation for revolution, that is to say, the task of working class parties and of the International. Marxists pose this great task before the proletarian vanguard, without any frills....

The initiative of a conscious minority, a scientific program, bold and ceaseless agitation in the name of clearly formulated aims, merciless criticism of all ambiguity—those are some of the most important factors for the victory of the proletariat. Without a fused and steered revolutionary party a socialist revolution is inconceivable.

—Leon Trotsky, “Open Letter for the Fourth International,” Spring 1935

WORKERS VANGUARD

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WORKERS VANGUARD

Spartacists Intervene at Chicago Social Forum

Ford Foundation, CIA and the Social Forums

What do the International Socialist Organization (ISO), the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP), French premier Jacques Chirac and the Ford Foundation, front men for the CIA, have in common? They are all snuggled up together in the Social Forum movement...and it's not a pretty sight. On May 1, the ISO, RCP and a smorgasbord of liberals, community groups and leftists hosted the second annual Chicago Social Forum (CSF) under the theme "Another Chicago is Possible." Our comrades from the Chicago Spartacist League and the Spartacus Youth Club attended and aggressively intervened to oppose and expose the social forums as nothing more than an expression of class collaboration, putting forward our program of revolutionary struggle against capitalism. We sold 50 copies of *Workers Vanguard* to the 300 CSF participants, particularly to youth interested in revolutionary Marxism.

The social forums have a pretense of fighting against poverty and oppression.

Workers Party, whose leftist image and 'participatory' techniques of government have not prevented it from scrupulously implementing the stipulations of the International Monetary Fund (IMF)."

This insightful article details a calculated strategy to prevent struggle that might challenge the framework of capitalism by creating a modern day popular front: a class-collaborationist political bloc of working-class parties with capitalist parties in which the politics of the working-class component of the bloc are subordinated to the politics of the bourgeoisie, to the defense of the bourgeois state and capitalism. As then-Trotskyist leader James Burnham pointed out in his 1937 pamphlet, "The People's Front, the New Betrayal":

"For the proletariat, through its parties, to give up its own independent program means to give up its independent functioning as a class. And this is precisely the meaning of the People's Front. In the People's Front the proletariat renounces its *class* independence, gives up its *class* aims—the *only* aims, as Marxism

young people into dead-end attempts to reform capitalism rather than fighting to destroy it.

For the Political Independence of the Working Class!

Popular fronts have historically issued out of mass working-class and social upheavals and have been called on specifically to crush with muscle and deception any potential for workers revolution. A classic, tragic example is that of Chile in 1973, where Salvador Allende and his fellow reformists led the revolutionary-minded working class into a coalition government with their class enemies, the capitalists. Allende vowed not to challenge the capitalist order or the state; he put an end to peasants seizing land, workers seizing factories. Aided by U.S. imperialism, the Chilean bourgeoisie then turned to General Augusto Pinochet to attack the working class and its leaders (including Allende) at the cost of at least 30,000 lives,

order and its state, seize the means of production and establish a planned, collectivized economy, which, on a world scale, lays the basis for the elimination of scarcity, social classes and all forms of oppression.

In "The People's Front, the New Betrayal," Burnham explained:

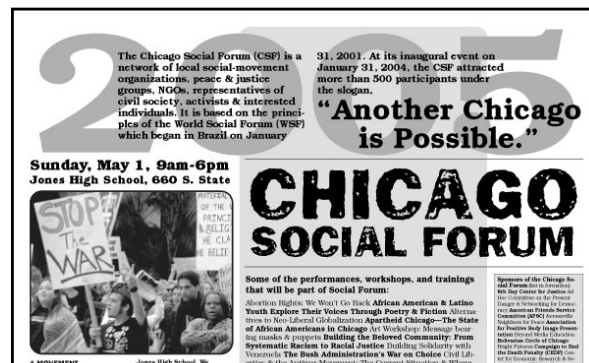
"Marxism always approaches every social, political, and historical question from the point of view of the class struggle. The basic conflict in modern society—capitalist society—is, according to Marxism, the conflict and struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. This conflict must continue, and progressively deepen, until capitalism, on a world scale, is overthrown, and the bourgeoisie defeated, and liquidated as a class. Only the two basic classes of modern society—the bourgeoisie and the proletariat—are capable of independent historical action, and thus of formulating independent social and political programs. Reduced to simplest terms, the program of the bourgeoisie is the defense of the capitalist order; the program of the proletariat, its overthrow. The intermediary classes, however they may try to escape it, always in actuality support one side or another in the basic conflict."

Sellout Pays Tribute to Spartacists

The backdrop to the WSF is the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union and the subsequent proclamation by world capitalist rulers that "communism is dead." While never really standing for the program of socialist revolution, our opponents on the left used to give occasional lip service to the goal of the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism. Today, however, imbued with "death of communism" ideology, they've largely dropped talk of socialism as a "pipe dream" and are latching onto forces increasingly distant from the working class. An RCP'er at the Chicago Social Forum told us that they changed their paper's name from *Revolutionary Worker* to *Revolution* because there are "many other revolutionary forces." Another prominent RCP member proclaimed outright, "The proletariat can't save us."

As the *Aspects* article points out, while ensuring representation and attendance from capitalist governments, the WSF charter has a clause intended to "block certain 'undesirable' radical parties and

continued on page 8



Leaflet for class-collaborationist Chicago Social Forum, based on "principles" of World Social Forum.



Left: Brazilian cops attack landless workers movement (MST) protesters in Brasilia, May 17. Right: Lula, head of Brazilian popular-front government, speaking at World Social Forum in Porto Alegre earlier this year.



Simone Bruno

But far from offering any solution to the enormous miseries of world capitalism, the World Social Forum (WSF) was set up in the aftermath of the 1999 World Trade Organization (WTO) protests in Seattle, and subsequent mass protests against the WTO and IMF internationally, in order to ensure that those who oppose the depredations of capitalism do not challenge the capitalist system itself. An article titled "Economics and Politics of the World Social Forum" in *Aspects of India's Economy* (September 2003) described this process:

"Attempts by the ruling circles of those countries to suppress this movement met with no success; indeed, the movement grew. It was in this context that the WSF was initiated by ATTAC, a French NGO (non-governmental organisation) platform devoted to lobbying international financial institutions to reform and humanise themselves, and by the Brazilian

teaches, which can serve its interests. By accepting the program of the People's Front, it thereby accepts the aims of another section of society; it accepts the aim of the defense of capitalism when all history demonstrates that the interests of the proletariat can be served only by the overthrow of capitalism."

The *Aspects* article further details:

"While several political forces fighting for a change of the system have been excluded from the WSF meets, droves of political leaders of the imperialist countries have been attending. Not only does the WSF as a body receive funds from agencies which are tied to imperialist interests and operations, but innumerable bodies participating in the WSF too are dependent on such agencies. The implications of this can be seen from the history of one such agency, Ford Foundation, which has closely collaborated with the US Central Intelligence Agency internationally, and in India has helped to shape the government's policies in favour of American interests."

As the article notes: "One indeed does not have to be a Marxist to understand that 'he who pays the piper calls the tune'." Thus, ATTAC leader Susan George opposes calls to replace or abolish the IMF, while ATTAC affirms that "the right to capitalist property includes the right to hire and fire. The question is knowing up to what point." And these are the forces with which avowed socialists like the ISO have joined in an attempt to rope

imposing a savage military dictatorship.

Today, popular fronts are called upon by the rulers to sell austerity to the workers more effectively than the discredited bourgeois parties can. The Brazilian government is the quintessential example of this today, where, as head of the Brazilian Workers Party (PT), Luis Inácio Lula da Silva now sits as President. His "fiscal orthodoxy" imposed upon the impoverished Brazilian working class has earned Lula the praise of the IMF and the World Bank. At the last WSF earlier this year, Lula was roundly booed by many of the attendees. Many may oppose Lula's open pandering to and collaboration with the IMF and World Bank. But the truth is that Lula represents the politics and program of the WSF on the level of state power.

The fundamental dividing line in capitalist society is between the capitalist class and the working class. The capitalists own the means of production—the factories, mines, means of transport, etc.—and derive their profit through the exploitation of the workers. The potential social power of the working class is derived from the fact that it has its hands directly on these means of production. The interests of the workers and the capitalists are irreconcilable. Only the working class has the social power and objective interest to sweep away the capitalist

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(continued from page 12)

WORKERS VANGUARD

Free the MOVE Prisoners! Free Mumia!

MOVE Massacre: We Will Not Forget!

Chanting “Never forget 1985! Now is the time to free the MOVE 9!”, 200 anti-racists marched and rallied in West Philadelphia on May 14, commemorating the twentieth anniversary of the racist mass murder of eleven members of the MOVE commune carried out by the Philly cops in coordination with the federal Justice Department. On 13 May 1985 the cops unloaded 10,000 rounds of ammunition into MOVE’s house on Osage Avenue and dropped a powerful bomb on the house, causing a fire. Firefighters on site were held back while cops shot at anyone who tried to escape the burning building. Sixty-one houses were destroyed in the ensuing inferno, leaving hundreds homeless in the black neighborhood.

Ronald Reagan, the FBI, the Philly cops and black Democratic mayor Wilson Goode were all responsible for this hideous crime. But none of the perpetrators have ever faced charges, while Ramona Africa spent seven years in prison for the “crime” of surviving the massacre. There is no justice in racist capitalist America.

The Spartacist League and Partisan Defense Committee, a class-struggle, non-sectarian legal and social defense organization associated with the Spartacist League, participated with a banner in the march, which began at Osage Avenue near the site of the atrocity. The PDC also spoke at the rally at Malcolm X Park. From the beginning, the PDC has defended MOVE and publicized this racist atrocity (see “Racist Government Bombed Black Philadelphia,” *Workers Vanguard* No. 848, 13 May). MOVE is a largely black back-to-nature group that, in their own way, cries out against “the system,” including by defending the right of armed self-defense. We demand freedom for the MOVE members imprisoned for almost 30 years since the 1978 police siege and assault on MOVE’s Powelton Village commune. Amid a barrage of police gunfire, a cop was killed in the police crossfire. Nine MOVE members were given 30-100 year sentences. One of them, Merle Africa, died in prison. The remaining eight continue to languish in Pennsylvania’s racist, overcrowded dungeons.

Speakers from MOVE, which organized the rally, demonstrated that they remain defiant opponents of this racist system. Pam Africa introduced a black college student from North Carolina who traveled to



WV Photo

Philadelphia, May 14: SL and PDC supporters join MOVE members and others in rally at Osage Avenue, near site of cops’ massacre 20 years ago.

the rally to recite his powerful anti-racist and anti-imperialist poetry. A radio essay, “Why May 13th Is So Important,” recorded from death row by Mumia Abu-Jamal, America’s foremost political prisoner, was played. Mumia, a former Black Panther and Philadelphia journalist, was targeted by the racist Philadelphia cops in no small part because of his eloquent reports exposing the racist government vendetta against MOVE. Mumia’s son, Jamal Hart, has been imprisoned since 1998, framed up on bogus firearm charges.

Obscenely, 6221 Osage Avenue, the site of the bombing, is occupied today by the Philly police Civil Affairs Unit—they want to ensure that no one can look for evidence of the crime. The other houses rebuilt by the city on Osage Avenue and Pine Street were condemned as “unlivable” due to shoddy construction. Twenty-four families recently won a lawsuit against the city over this continuing victimization. Grotesquely, the city is appealing the judgment.

The speaker for the PDC presented a working-class perspective for the struggle against racist repression:

“We have a non-sectarian, class-struggle defense program based on the understanding that it is the multiracial working class that has the social power to ensure that the MOVE martyrs will be avenged, that the MOVE 9 will be freed, that Mumia Abu-Jamal will be freed, and that the racist death penalty will be abolished, and that capitalism will be smashed.

“The working class is so vital because of its power to stop production and the profits the capitalist rulers try so desperately to protect through its cops, courts and judges—what Marxists call the state. We look to the trade unions—such as the Philly transit workers who are under attack currently—to lead in the struggle against capitalist oppression....

“We will not forget the MOVE martyrs, the men, women and children gunned down and burned alive, and the seven years stolen from Ramona Africa for bearing witness to this atrocity! We will not forget Merle Africa! Free the MOVE 9! Free Jamal Hart! Free Mumia Abu-Jamal and all class-war prisoners!”

From Death Row, This Is Mumia Abu-Jamal

Assata: Terrorist or Survivor of Terrorism?



With the news of the posting of an additional \$850,000 for the return of former Black Panther and Black Liberation Army member Assata Shakur from Cuba, the U.S. government has taken another step in its ridiculous so-called War on Terrorism. They did this by New Jersey officials branding Assata with the latest libelous label, “terrorist,” in an attempt to justify this modern-day slave bounty.

If anybody knows about terrorism it’s Americans, for this nation was founded in terrorism. So deep is this truth that it lies in the subconscious of almost every American and can be unleashed with unnerving ease. Come on. Complete this phrase: “The only good Indian is a _____.” Black, white, rich or poor that phrase echoes in American consciousness, an inheritance from a time when those dark thoughts were dark realities of, yes, genocide against the native peoples that fed and healed the starving settlers from Europe who survived the Atlantic crossings. Terrorism, white terrible violence against red life and black life and brown life and yellow life. That is America’s truest hidden history, hidden beneath lies about “all men are created equal.”

In 1973, when Assata Shakur and Zayd Malik Shakur and Sundiata Acoli were stopped on the New Jersey turnpike, they weren’t stopped because the

cops wanted to “render assistance.” This was a car stop for the unwritten crime of Driving While Black, before we developed the term. And the cops tried to kill every Black Panther in that car for this unwritten crime. Zayd was shot to death and Assata was shot twice. And in an act of arrogance that only American judicial terrorists can devise, *she* was charged with murdering both Zayd and the cop that tried to kill her.

Assata went through a devil’s brew of show trials in several states, best summed up in a book by her lawyer/aunt Evelyn Williams titled *Inadmissible Evidence*. These were trials that seemed more fitting for Mississippi than Middlesex County, New Jersey, or Manhattan Borough, New York. But no matter where that happened, they featured all-white juries, and ambitious judges who didn’t even pretend to be fair and unbiased arbiters. Even despite these obvious obstructions, she was acquitted, and when she was convicted in Middlesex it was clear this was a verdict not of her guilt, but of her political ideas.

To label this woman a terrorist, is to bleed all meaning from the word. For, during her life as an activist, during her wounding and her arrest, and during her travails as an accused in courtrooms that were more lynching posts than halls of justice, she was ter-

rorized by a system that wanted to punish her for daring to rebel.

These words are written on May 13, 2005, twenty years to the day from the police mass murder and bombing of the MOVE home in Philadelphia. Today, twenty years later, only one person, Ramona Africa, ever spent a day in jail. What of those cops who shot and bombed unarmed children? What of the politicians who unleashed these dogs of urban war? Like Ramona, Assata was jailed for daring to survive.

Cuba’s valiant Fidel Castro responded almost immediately to announce his refusal to recognize this modern-day slave bounty. He pronounced her a political prisoner during her time in American gulags, perhaps remembering that she was held in an all-male jail during her incarceration.

For centuries, nothing has so stirred up American fury like the escape of a slave. That ain’t just distant history. For daring to slip her bonds and escape from brutal and unjust bondage, the Empire now labels *her* a terrorist. That’s because to them, nothing is more terrifying than resistance to their imperial will. As for terrorists, if they really wanna find some, it shouldn’t be too hard to find them. Just check the White House.

From death row, this is Mumia Abu-Jamal.

13 May 2005

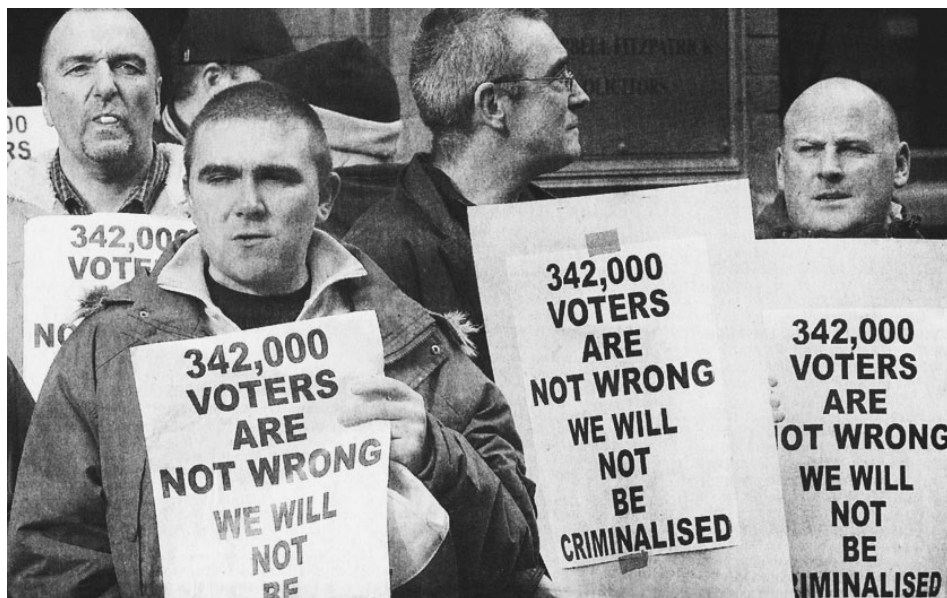
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Send urgently needed contributions for Jamal’s legal defense, made payable to “National Lawyers Guild Foundation” and earmarked for “Mumia” to: Committee to Save Mumia Abu-Jamal, 130 Morningside Drive, Suite 6C, New York, NY 10027.

If you wish to correspond with Jamal, you can write to: Mumia Abu-Jamal, AM8335, SCI Greene, 175 Progress Drive, Waynesburg, PA 15370.

Blair and Paisley Turn the Screw on Sinn Féin

Northern Ireland: British Troops Out Now!



Sinn Féin supporters protest vilification of party by Blair, Ahern and Paisley on March 1 anniversary of Bobby Sands' hunger strike (left), and in February outside Belfast offices of "Independent" Monitoring Commission that declared IRA guilty of bank robbery (right).

The following is reprinted from *Workers Hammer No. 190 (Spring 2005)*, publication of the *Spartacist League/Britain*, section of the *International Communist League*.

WORKERS HAMMER

The brutal murder of Robert McCartney, a young Catholic father from Belfast's Short Strand, by IRA [Irish Republican Army] members has been seized on by an unholy alliance extending from [Loyalist diehard] Ian Paisley to the rulers of the Irish state to the British and U.S. imperialists. The killing of McCartney *was* a vicious crime, one worthy of the Loyalist gangs who regularly terrorise the oppressed Catholic minority in Northern Ireland. But the "worth" of McCartney's life to the butchers of Iraq in Westminster and the White House, Paisley's Unionists and the clericalist regime in southern Ireland, is to reinforce the forces of Orange supremacy in Northern Ireland—from Loyalist terror to the "official" state forces for anti-Catholic repression, the British Army and the renamed Royal Ulster Constabulary, the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI). Politicians in Washington, from Democrat Ted Kennedy to Republican president George Bush, embraced McCartney's sisters when they went to Washington. This certainly wasn't out of any new-found concern for the lives of working-class Catholics in Northern Ireland. Rather, as a *Guardian* reporter put it, the motivation was that "these six women with 19 children between them could force the IRA to do what the British have failed to do for decades: put away their guns and disband" (*Guardian*, 11 March).

This has always been the real purpose of the imperialist "peace" fraud, whose very nature is underlined by the fact that Paisley, one of the most virulently anti-Catholic bigots on the face of the planet, is now calling the shots. Last December, amid declarations of yet another supposed "historic breakthrough," Paisley's Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) declared that it would accept a power-sharing deal with Sinn Féin in Stormont—the historic seat of Orange rule. This was about as likely as Paisley swear-

ing allegiance to Rome. For its part, the IRA had declared that it would "completely and verifiably put all our arms beyond use." But Paisley demanded photographic evidence, pontificating that Republicans had to don "sack cloth and ashes." The IRA refused to submit to what they aptly described as an "act of humiliation." Although taking its "decommissioning" offer off the table for now, the IRA still accepts the framework of the "peace process." A 9 December 2004 IRA statement opined that "the search for a just and lasting peace is a challenging one. The IRA leadership has risen to that challenge. The British government and the leaders of unionism must do likewise."

Sinn Féin has steadfastly clung to the illusion that the British imperialists—with the assistance of the Irish government and U.S. imperialism—would weigh in against the Unionists to ensure that a deal was implemented. Yet the 1998 "Good Friday Agreement" was premised on maintaining the British Army occupation of Northern Ireland, the guarantor for the repressive apparatus of the Orange statelet. The only force that was to disarm in Northern Ireland was the IRA, not the Loyalist death squads. As we warned from the beginning: "Any imperialist 'deal' will be bloody and brutal and will *necessarily be at the expense of the oppressed Catholic minority*. And it would not do any good for working-class Protestants either" (*Workers Hammer* No. 138, November-December 1993).

Following the latest breakdown in "negotiations," all fire was turned against Sinn Féin as the responsible party, which was then subjected to a relentless barrage of hostility from the very forces it has promoted as its "allies" for peace in Northern Ireland. In January, Northern Ireland police chief Hugh Orde made the totally unsubstantiated accusation that the IRA was responsible for a spectacular bank robbery in Belfast. This was immediately seized on by the British and Irish governments to demand that Sinn Féin ensure that IRA "paramilitary and criminal activity" be "definitely removed from the equation." Blair cut off parliamentary allowances to Sinn Féin's four Westminster MPs amid calls to ban them from Westminster—despite the fact that they were actually

elected to the "Mother of Parliaments" and don't even take their seats there, refusing to swear allegiance to the Queen.

There is still not one shred of evidence of the involvement of the IRA or Sinn Féin in the bank robbery (which in any case is no crime from the perspective of the working class and the poor, or as Bertolt Brecht put it, "It is easier to rob by setting up a bank than by holding up a bank clerk"). But while Blair was railing against IRA "criminality," he was busy trying to further cover up the very real crimes of British imperialism in collusion with the Loyalist death squads in Northern Ireland. In 1989, Pat Finucane, a Belfast Catholic lawyer who defended, among others, Bobby Sands and other Irish hunger strikers, was gunned down in front of his family by the Loyalist UDA [Ulster Defence Association]. He was targeted by Brian Nelson, an agent of the British Army and intelligence chief of the UDA. The whole truth about this case could be a devastating exposure of British imperialist "democracy," so Blair is now introducing a new public inquiries bill to curtail what can be made public in any "public" inquiry. As Michael Finucane wrote in a bitter indictment of Blair:

"In three days, on February 12 2005, exactly 16 years will have passed since my father was murdered by proxy agents of the British government. For those 16 years, my family and I have been campaigning for a public tribunal of inquiry into the murder because of our belief that his killing was ordered at the highest level. What is more, we are convinced the evidence to prove it is contained in files locked deep within the establishment.... Tony Blair signed an agreement with the Irish government in 2001 to deal with my father's case. He did so under pressure and in an attempt to delay an inquiry into the case, something his government has been doing for several years.... The murder of my father is a crucial event because of what it could potentially reveal. It is for this reason the [public inquiries] bill was created."

—*Guardian*, 9 February

Officials from the Irish government were as vehement against the IRA as Blair, if not more so. Taoiseach [Irish prime minister] Bertie Ahern declared that Sinn Féin leaders Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness knew of the IRA's supposed plans for the bank robbery while they were sitting at the table nego-

tiating for "power sharing." Justice Minister Michael McDowell weighed in to declare that Adams and McGuinness were members of the IRA's Army Council. Irish Gardaí [police] raided homes of Sinn Féin supporters in search of evidence of "money laundering." None was found, but McDowell later admitted that the raids had been prepared weeks earlier, and there is much media speculation in Ireland that it was planned long before the bank robbery. Feeding grist to the mill of Paisley's anti-Catholic reaction in the North, the Irish government was also aiming to protect its own interests against the increasing inroads that Sinn Féin has been making, particularly among poor and working-class voters in the South.

Viciously anti-working-class, enforcers of clerical reaction against women and racist attacks on Travellers and immigrants, the representatives of the "Irish Free State" are also notoriously corrupt. Indeed, former Fianna Fáil [Republican party] taoiseach Charles Haughey probably made away with more from shady business deals while he was in power than the £27 million robbed from the Belfast bank. Such corruption has in no small measure undermined Fianna Fáil's electoral support. But the bank robbery accusations against the IRA and Sinn Féin did them little damage among their traditional supporters in Catholic communities. Graffiti saying, "Gerry, Gerry give us a loan" indicated that many thought the idea of the IRA walking off with a cool £27 million was too good to be true. By contrast, the murder of Robert McCartney initially provoked real and justified revulsion among Catholics in Northern Ireland. This reflects concern that, particularly since the ceasefire, the IRA has operated less as a force for defence of the Catholic communities against Loyalist terror, the British Army and the cops, and act more as gangsters enforcing their own brand of "law and order" over these communities.

The Bankruptcy of Nationalism

On 6 April, Gerry Adams appealed to the IRA to maintain its previous commitment to "decommissioning," asking them to achieve their "aims by purely political

and democratic activity.” An article by Niall Stanage in the *Guardian* (11 April) observed that “disbandment of the IRA is also the logical conclusion to the course Adams and his like-minded comrades began to chart almost a quarter of a century ago”—when Republican hunger striker Bobby Sands won a seat in Westminster. Today Sinn Féin represents the vast majority of the Catholic population of the North, and its support in the South is growing. But it will never be acceptable as a parliamentary political party while it retains even the vestige of an armed wing. Behind the clamour coming from Blair, Ahern and Co. for the IRA to disband, the message is that the capitalist state is not going to abide any challenge to its monopoly of armed force by the IRA. Parliamentary democracy is simply the velvet glove over the mailed fist of the state—the army, police, courts and prisons whose purpose is to maintain the rule of capital. It is not enough for the IRA to give up its arms; Republicans are being told that they must be subservient to all the state forces on these islands.

The murder of Robert McCartney is being wielded to force the Republicans to accept the authority of the Orange state in the North, including the PSNI. This is a bitter pill, but one which Sinn Féin leaders have indicated they might be willing to swallow. Mitchel McLaughlin has said: “If the circumstances had worked out before Christmas, we would have convened a special ard-fheis [national conference] to debate the issues about policing. We want a PSNI that meets the criteria under Patten and the Good Friday Agreement once and for all” (*Daily Ireland*, 7 March). But with or without the window dressing of the Good Friday Agreement, the police force in Northern Ireland remains a fundamentally anti-Catholic force that works hand in glove with the Loyalist paramilitaries.

Assurances have also been offered of Sinn Féin’s respect for the police forces of the Irish state. One of the party’s Dáil [parliament] deputies, Aengus Ó Snodaigh declared that Sinn Féin “are now working constructively with the Gardaí to increase local accountability,” adding that “we recognise that the Gardaí are a legitimate police force—albeit one in need of fundamental reform” (*Daily Ireland*, 7 March). Such appeals for police “reform” are simply designed to give a more “democratic” facade to the armed fist of the state.

Despite the fact that the IRA has not taken up arms against the Irish state for decades, the government can still whip up fear that the IRA is supposedly running “a state within a state.” This is a historically rooted pretext for repression, harking back to the civil war in 1922-23, when the newly independent Irish state brutally repressed Republican insurgents who objected to the terms of the Treaty signed with the British. Today’s justice minister McDowell is the grandson of Eoin MacNeill, who supported the execution of Republicans in December 1922; his great-uncle was in charge of



AP
Pat Finucane, murdered in 1989 by Loyalist UDA in collusion with British state.

the firing squad. But although they fought the state militarily over the terms of the Treaty, the anti-Treaty forces did not challenge the capitalist order. On the contrary, they supported it and were soon to be in charge of it politically. The Fianna Fáil party was founded by these forces and, led by Eamonn DeValera, ran the clericalist state for decades.

Sinn Féin is a petty-bourgeois nationalist party whose politics are fundamentally no different from those of Fianna Fáil. Its aim is the creation of a united, capitalist Ireland. But this would be far from a “democratic” solution to the national question. The Catholics in Northern Ireland are an oppressed minority, but they live within the same territory as the Protestants, who fear becoming an oppressed minority under the clericalist Irish state. The current hardening of Protestant opinion, seen in the huge vote for Paisley’s DUP, is in part a reaction to Sinn Féin’s claim that the Good Friday Agreement is a step towards Irish unity. This is compounded by the increasing impoverishment of both the Catholic and Protestant working class in Northern Ireland, with the Protestants falsely believing that the Catholics have been given preferential treatment under the Good Friday Agreement. Writing on the 2003 elections which were swept by Paisley on one side and Sinn Féin on the other, *Observer* columnist Henry McDonald explained that the DUP was able to “paint the peace process as a one-way pro-nationalist concession process.” Noting that “the only growth industry north of the river Lagan in Belfast has been the construction of almost 20 so-called peace walls separating Protestants and Catholics on a permanent basis,” McDonald added: “The landscape from Good Friday 1998 has been radically changed. The two communities are further apart than they were five years ago, politically and physically” (*Observer*, 30 November 2003).

We stand for the defence of the oppressed Catholic community in Northern Ireland and fight against all forms of discrimination in jobs, housing and education. At the same time, we oppose the forcible reunification of Ireland, even the

suggestion of which serves to compact the Protestants behind the Loyalist bigots. This precludes a polarization along class lines and instead lays the basis for communalist terror. In a situation of interpenetrated peoples and fratricidal nationalism, there can be no equitable solution short of the destruction of capitalism and the institution of workers rule. We fight for an Irish workers republic within a voluntary federation of workers republics in the British Isles. An elementary precondition for any just solution is the withdrawal of British troops.

“Socialist” Servants of the Bourgeoisie

Socialist Party (SP) [sister group of Socialist Alternative in the U.S.] Dáil deputy Joe Higgins leapt into the anti-Republican fray in support of the Irish state. A Socialist Party press release (23 February) details an exchange in the Dáil in which Higgins asks: “Does the Taoiseach acknowledge that the great majority of residents of the Short Strand area in Belfast are horrified to have criminal butchers in their midst, hiding under the political banner of provisional republicanism?” “Criminal butchers” is not a

they would willingly sacrifice, for a brief period, their aspirations towards political power, if thereby the fortunes of the nation can be enhanced” (quoted in *Revolution in Ireland*, Conor Kostick, 1996).

At the height of the furore over the murder of Robert McCartney, Irish SWP leader Eamonn McCann outrageously compared the IRA to the British troops that gunned down 14 Catholics on “Bloody Sunday” in Derry [in 1972]. At a Belfast rally for McCartney, McCann declared to the capitalist media that “the McCartney murder had lowered Republicans to the level of the British paratroopers, and cast a ‘dark shadow backwards’ on the whole IRA struggle” (*Guardian*, 28 February). Talking out of the other side of his mouth in an article in Irish *Socialist Worker* (22 February-8 March), McCann appealed to disgruntled Republicans to join the ranks of the SWP:

“Every ruling class voice is currently raised high urging Republicans to ditch paramilitarism, become totally respectable and join the conservative consensus. Forgiveness and glittering prizes are on offer to those who accept. This would represent abandonment of struggle. The SWP urges Republicans who think of themselves also as socialists to turn not



Peress/Magnum

Bloody Sunday Massacre in Derry, 17 October 1972. British troops gunned down 14 Catholics, wounded many more.

term the respectable Mr. Higgins would readily use to describe the Loyalist UVF [Ulster Volunteer Force]. Its representative Billy Hutchinson, who was convicted of the murder of two Catholics in Northern Ireland, was hosted by the SP at its meetings in 1995.

Deputy Higgins continued: “Mr. Adams said this morning he has a problem going to the police. Does he have a problem in going to the Short Strand unit of the provisional IRA—call it the local SS unit for short—and demanding that it present itself to justice?” Comparing the IRA to Hitler’s SS rolls off Higgins’ tongue as do declarations of faith in the “justice” of the notorious anti-Catholic forces of the Northern Ireland police and the shoot-to-kill British troops. The SP has long refused to call for the withdrawal of the troops from Northern Ireland. Last year, when Sinn Féin youth marched in a Belfast antiwar demonstration under a banner that said, “Brits out of Ireland and Iraq,” the SP denounced them, grotesquely declaring “the above slogan could only appeal to one side of the sectarian divide” (*Socialist Voice*, April 2004).

Higgins’ role here is no different than that of British Labour leaders who sided with their “own” bourgeoisie in World War I. He is also keeping alive the legacy of the Irish Labour Party, which refused to oppose the Irish bourgeoisie when it accepted the Treaty and partition in 1921 and gave backhanded support to the state against the Republicans during the civil war. Addressing a special conference of the Irish Labour Party and TUC [Trades Union Congress] in 1918, Irish Labour leader Thomas Johnson said: “Your executive believes, that the workers of Ireland join earnestly in this desire, that

to the Right but to the socialist ideas of self-liberation which alone offer a road forward.”

And this too would be a ticket to “respectability,” of the social-democratic variety.

Lessons of the Civil Rights Struggles

McCann’s reputation stems from his role as one of the prominent left-wing leaders of the civil rights movement of the 1960s which opposed the blatant discrimination against Catholics and shook the Orange state. The experience is rich in lessons for future struggles in Northern Ireland where the sectarian divide runs so deep that the possibility for advancing socialist consciousness, or even class consciousness, often seems remote. The Northern Ireland civil rights struggles took place in the context of an international political radicalization, particularly inspired by the struggles for black civil rights in America. A famous march from Belfast to Derry in 1969 was modelled on Martin Luther King’s 1966 march on Selma, Montgomery.

In Belfast, the civil rights movement had a base at Queen’s University, where leftists in Peoples Democracy were active. In the early stages there was some support for the civil rights struggle among Protestant students. Following the brutal police repression of a 1968 march in Derry, the civil rights movement acquired mass support almost overnight and leftists, including McCann and Bernadette Devlin (now McAliskey) were catapulted to prominence. However, both of them had fatal illusions in British imperialism. Such illusions were reinforced by the British SWP,

continued on page 8

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Northern Ireland...

(continued from page 7)

which supported the intervention of British troops in 1969 and spoke of “the breathing space provided by the presence of British troops” (*Socialist Worker*, 11 September 1969). What was needed was a perspective based on fighting to mobilize the working class, north and south of the border—where there was huge support for the embattled Catholics—as well as in Britain, against the deployment of the troops. In the absence of a class perspective, the Provisional IRA became the dominant force defending the Catholics in the face of brutal repression by the British. The IRA’s forces grew dramatically after Bloody Sunday.

A former leader of Peoples Democracy, Michael Farrell, in a study of the Orange state, illustrates how previous attempts at mild reform by Westmin-

ster foundered on the rock of Unionist opposition. He notes that, for the first 40 years of its existence, the Orange state “remained a rigidly repressive police regime, confronting a hostile minority within and maintaining a permanent state of cold war with the South.” Northern Ireland was once a center of shipbuilding and engineering, but with the decline of British heavy industry, by the 1960s, this economic link became less important for British imperialism. At the same time, Britain began to develop diplomatic and trade links with the South. The blatant oppression of Northern Catholics became an embarrassment and Westminster began nudging Stormont towards reforms. Farrell explains that:

“The effort met with little success. Once the Ulster industrialists had used the Orange ideology and Protestant supremacy to establish the Northern state; now the Ulster-based industries had all but disappeared, and with them most of the economic reasons for the six-county state. But Orangeism and Protestant supremacy had remained—and now they

were themselves virtually the reason for the existence of the state: to dismantle Protestant supremacy would be to dismantle the state itself. The Unionists resisted stubbornly. The British had intervened to defend the state and reform it; but failing to reform it they were forced to concentrate more and more on defending it.”

—*The Orange State* (1976)

The prevalence of sectarianism in Northern Ireland is not proof of some unbridgeable religious divide, but is fostered by the hellish conditions of capitalist exploitation. The attacks on workers in Britain accompanying massive deindustrialisation and the introduction of the so-called “flexible economy” of low-paid service jobs, have impacted even more heavily on both Catholic and Protestant workers in Northern Ireland. Loyalist demagoguery that Catholics have benefited from the “peace” fraud often falls on fertile ground among working-class Protestants because their own situation has worsened. The employment gap between Protestants and Catholics has narrowed

mainly because unemployment among Protestants has grown. The inability of the capitalist system to provide a decent living and decent housing for the working people is a key reason for the increasing sectarianism in Northern Ireland; a sectarianism which is inflamed by the capitalists and their state in order to prevent workers from recognizing capitalism as the root of the problem.

As communists we seek to intervene, attempting to alter the course of the conflict towards a class determination. We fight for workers revolution on both sides of the Irish border and both sides of the Irish Sea. Our proletarian perspective requires an internationalist struggle for the revolutionary overthrow of British imperialism, smashing the sectarian Orange statelet in Northern Ireland and the vicious clericalist state in the South. The Spartacist League/Britain and our comrades of the Spartacist Group Ireland fight to build the revolutionary internationalist parties necessary to this task. ■

Social Forum...

(continued from page 3)

their fighting forces.” The Mexican Zapatistas, for example, were excluded from several WSF meetings presumably because they are an “armed force.” After her group was excluded, Hebe Bonafini of the Madres de Plaza de Mayo, an organization of the mothers of those “disappeared” by the Argentine military dictatorship of 1976-83, captured it well: “The organizers have staged the event so that all we were supposed to be talking about was ‘putting a human face’ on globalization.”

The politics of the CSF were expressly based on “the principles of the World Social Forum.” Thus, like the WSF, groups claiming to be revolutionary were not allowed on the speaker’s platform. At one session, for example, the speaker, a member of the RCP, said he could not speak in the name of the RCP because parties are not allowed.

At one of the largest CSF workshops, “Alternatives to Neoliberal Globalization,” ex-Maoist Carl Davidson and labor reformist Dan Swinney stressed the need for a broad alliance with “progressive” capitalists; otherwise, Davidson said, you’re just a “small group with red flags.” The workshop pushed a “coalition of all forces that move together,” which would include, “with criticisms,” the capitalist governments of Venezuela, Brazil, and South Africa. Our comrades intervened at this workshop, pointing out how the core political program of the social forums—shamelessly yet clearly articulated by Davidson, the ISO, the RCP and a host of others at the CSF—is that of class collaboration and the popular front. Davidson

aptly responded that “the difference between us and the Spartacist League is that they still believe in the old class versus class conception,” to which our comrade proudly shouted back, “You’re right!”

In another workshop on the religious right, Davidson dusted off the writings of Bulgarian Stalinist Georgi Dimitrov—Stalin’s pre-eminent spokesman as General Secretary of the Comintern from 1935 onward, best remembered as the spokesman for the Stalinists’ treacherous policy of the “People’s Front.” Davidson quoted Dimitrov’s assertions that fascism is the dictatorship of the most reactionary section of the capitalist class—the argument being that one should ally with the “progressive” wing of the bourgeoisie. The truth is that fascism is a form of capitalist rule, one to which the bourgeoisie turns in times of social crisis in order to safeguard the capitalist system against the workers. And the only way to effectively fight the fascist threat is to fight to overthrow the capitalist system itself. Davidson pushed the claim, heavily promoted by the RCP, that Bush represents the rise of “Christian Fascism” in the U.S. Bush is plenty reactionary; he is not, however, leading a fascist regime, but a right-wing regime within the framework of bourgeois democracy. All this stuff about “Christian Fascism” is merely a pretext to promote support to the Democrats as a “lesser evil” to the Republicans.

The utter political bankruptcy of the counterfeit leftists leading the CSF was evidenced by Davidson’s call to appropriate the “moral values” rhetoric of the religious right. Davidson argued that religion isn’t all bad; after all, he said, Marx called it “the sigh of the oppressed.” These supposed leftists’ revolting capitulation to the rightward drift was articulated by an RCP member who spoke of the many common values supposedly shared by religious people and radicals. An SYC comrade intervened against this attempt to reconcile Marxism with religion, including by disappearing Marx’s unequivocal opposition to religion. Another Spartacist comrade noted that the presenters were arguing on the terrain of the right wing, that the social basis for religious reaction in this country is black oppression, and that one good strike would go a long way toward dispelling all this talk about “moral values”—showing working people that they can fight to better their condition in this world rather than waiting for justice in a mythical afterlife.

At an abortion rights workshop led by the ISO, the discussion again emphasized the need to reclaim “moral values” terminology. ISO members decried the attacks on abortion rights and talked about the need to rebuild the movement, while bemoaning the much lower level of political consciousness today compared to the 1970s. A comrade from the

SL sharply pointed out that the backdrop for this qualitative regression of political consciousness was set over a decade ago with the destruction of the Soviet degenerated workers state in 1991-92, which the ISO hailed. The ISO *supported* the forces of counterrevolution arrayed against the Soviet Union, including the woman-hating *mujahedin* cutthroats who fought against the Red Army in Afghanistan and Solidarność in Poland, a company “union” promoted by the CIA and the recently deceased Pope. He also exposed them for claiming to stand for women’s rights, yet putting those rights on the back burner when they get the opportunity to support a capitalist politician, citing their stumping for bourgeois presidential candidate Ralph Nader who dismissed the fight for abortion rights as “gonadal politics.” An SYC member spoke to the necessity to fight for free abortion on demand and for women’s liberation through socialist revolution. In response to our comrades, the speaker from the ISO scoffed that reforms cannot be won through “some magical socialist transformation of the whole system.”

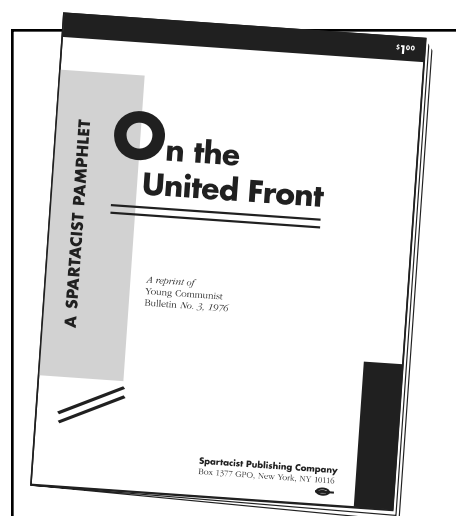
Fight for Socialist Revolution!

The strategy of class collaboration was fully displayed in the recent Iraq antiwar protests, in which the very same organizers of the CSF built a “movement” around slogans expressly designed not to “alienate” the liberal Democrats. Our comrades addressed this question in various workshops, explaining that slogans such as “No to War” were consciously designed *not* to take a clear stand against

U.S. imperialism, precisely because it is the U.S. ruling class to whom they appeal in hopes of pressuring imperialism to behave more “humanely.”

We raised the call “Defend Iraq”—and today call for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all U.S. troops—taking a clear side with the victims of U.S. imperialism. Imperialism is a system, not a policy that can be shifted and molded depending on which capitalist party inhabits the White House. It is the highest stage of capitalism. As Spartacist comrades said in several individual discussions: the only way to end imperialist war is to end the capitalist system that breeds it, and only the working class has the social power to bring down the bourgeois state. We repeated a point we made throughout the antiwar demonstrations, that the only successful antiwar movement was in 1917—the Bolshevik Revolution that overthrew capitalism and took Russia out of the carnage of World War I.

Militant youth and workers fighting against the depredations of capitalism and imperialism must break with the social forums and all forms of class collaboration. The only way to fight increasing repression, brutal exploitation and war is to eliminate the capitalist system that breeds such horrors. The working class needs to break with the Democrats and build its own party, a multiracial workers party that will fight for power. We stand on the tradition of the Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Trotsky and the October Revolution of 1917—and we fight for new October Revolutions throughout the world. Join us! ■



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Lebanon...

(continued from page 1)

Mossad, Syrian intelligence or disgruntled business rivals), American imperialists wasted no time exploiting his death to push “regime change” in Damascus. In an attempt to sell his sham “elections” in Iraq, which enshrined sectarianism in every government seat, Bush declared: “In the Middle East and throughout the world, freedom is on the march.” It is not freedom that is on the march in the Near East, but rather the imperialists with their blueprint for the remaking of the region. In addition to occupied Iraq, the U.S. now maintains a military presence in six other countries: Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar and Oman. In addition, Jordan has been used as a staging ground for U.S. military activities in the region, including in the lead-up to the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

The current belligerence against Syria has long been a policy of the neocons’ Project for the New American Century (PNAC) which, in a 20 September 2001 letter to Bush, demanded that the “administration should consider appropriate measures of retaliation against” Iran and Syria, which were deemed to be “known state sponsors of terrorism.” In November 2003, Congress, with the support of both Democrats and Republicans, passed the “Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act” and in May 2004 Bush imposed sanctions against



Reuters

Syrian army troops withdrawing from Lebanon in April. Syria maintained a military presence in Lebanon for some 29 years.

sectarian confessional lines. Contrary to the myth of “Switzerland of the Near East” touted by the bourgeois press, Lebanon is not so much a bourgeois democracy as a pluralistic theocracy with Christian Maronite domination. To ensure this domination, the Maronites deny citizenship to most of the hundreds of thousands of Muslim Kurds and Palestinian refugees who have been living in the country for over 50 years. Each of the officially recognized 18 religious communities may have its own political party, its own members of parliament, its own health and social services, its own schools with an

Maronite population served as a base for colonial penetration. The British in turn became the benefactors of the Druze. The massacre of 12,000 Maronites by the Druze in the civil war of 1860 provided a pretext for French military intervention. On the eve of the French invasion, Karl Marx wrote:

“The conspirators of Petersburg and Paris had, however, in case their temptation of Prussia should fail, kept in reserve the thrilling incident of the Syrian massacres to be followed by a French intervention which...would open the back door of a general European conflict. In respect to England I will only add that in 1841 Lord Palmerstone furnished the Druses with the arms they kept ever since and that in 1848, by a convention with the Czar Nicholas, he abolished, in point of fact, the Turkish sway that curbed the wild tribes of Lebanon, and stipulated for them a quasi-independence which, in the run of time, and under the proper management of foreign plotters, could only beget a harvest of blood.”
—*New York Daily Tribune*,
11 August 1860

“The conspirators of Petersburg and Paris” joined with the British to carve up the crumbling Ottoman Empire, and in the 1916 Sykes-Picot agreement France was given mandate for both Lebanon and Syria. The carving up of the Near East following World War I represented the balkanization of the region by the imperialist powers. Populations that wanted to be united were separated; those that wanted to be separated were forcibly united (as in the case of Iraq, for example). The point was to carve up the region in such a way that ethnic and religious strife would perpetually plague it. Lebanon provides a vivid example of this.

In 1920, seeking to fashion a pro-Western enclave in the Levant, France created the entity that it called “Grand Liban” or “Greater Lebanon” by annexing Muslim regions of Syria to Mount Lebanon. To divide and better rule, the French combined the Muslims, among whom nascent Arab nationalism was growing, with the Christian majority, among whom they nourished a myth of Phoenician origin and a non-Arab heritage, and who would look to France for protection. Thus, the French knowingly created a state constructed to ensure plenty of intercommunal strife to justify their imperial “peace keeping” presence.

The French colonial system of Maronite privileges was preserved after the country became independent in 1943. Under the unwritten deal between the French colonialists and the various Christian and Muslim clan chiefs, known as the National Covenant, the president would always be a Maronite Christian, the prime minister a Sunni Muslim and the head of the Chamber of Deputies a Shi’ite Muslim. The Christians were allocated a six-to-five majority in parliament and the army officer corps was drawn predominantly from the Maronite elite.

The National Covenant was based on a dubious 1932 census. No census has been taken since, as such would reveal that the Muslim population has grown much faster than the Christian and now outnumbers the latter three to two. Maronite Christian domination increasingly came into conflict with these demographic developments. The first challenge to the National Covenant took place in 1958 when a Muslim uprising was sparked by an attempt of Maronite president Camille Chamoun to extend his term in office. However, Chamoun was able to suppress the uprising, as some 15,000 American Marines waded ashore Beirut’s beaches in July 1958.

Lebanon was not the real target of the Marine landing. The imperialist powers were alarmed by the social upheavals that swept the region in the 1950s. They viewed the rise of Nasser to power in Egypt and his nationalization of the Suez Canal, the intensification of the Algerian War of independence, the declaration of union between Egypt and Syria with the proclamation of the United Arab Republic as threats to their imperialist domination. U.S. president Dwight Eisenhower warned that leftist uprisings could “result in the complete elimination of Western influence in the Middle East.” But the immediate reason behind the Marines’ landing in Lebanon was the eruption of revolution in Iraq and the overthrow of the British-installed Hashemite monarchy in July 1958. The Iraqi Communist Party stood at the threshold of power in the mass upsurge that followed. The Stalinist leadership, however, under direct orders from the Kremlin, betrayed the revolution for the sake of “peaceful coexistence” with world imperialism. In Lebanon, under U.S. Marine guns, a deal was worked out to preserve the sectarian political structure along with Maronite predominance.

1975-76: Revolutionary Upheaval Channeled into Communal Bloodletting

The steady growth of the Muslim population, concentrated in the lower classes, increasingly challenged the National Covenant. By the early 1970s, the mass of impoverished Shi’ites had become the largest religious communal grouping. Led by Imam Musa Sadr’s Movement of the Disinherited, they demanded constitutional changes to redress the balance of political and economic power in their favor. Further, the OPEC oil boom of the early 1970s, which Lebanon shared as the main financial center

continued on page 10



Indymedia

Lebanese troops were deployed by then-prime minister Rafik al-Hariri against protesters in working-class suburb of Hay al-Sellom during one-day general strike, May 2004. Troops opened fire, killing five and injuring dozens.

Syria, lobbying at its rulers the usual litany of accusations, which included “support for terrorist groups,” “pursuit of weapons of mass destruction” and providing a “transit point for foreign fighters into Iraq.”

President Bush trotted out the same threats in his State of the Union address this February. It didn’t matter that the U.S. regularly sends suspected “terrorists” to Syria, knowing they will be tortured. It didn’t matter that Syria joined the imperialist coalition in their first Iraq war or organized polling stations for expatriates to vote in the recent Iraq “elections.” The Syrian leadership’s real crime in the eyes of both the neocons and their Democratic allies is its hostility to Israel, which the U.S. seeks to surround with a cordon sanitaire.

The international working class has no side in the current squalid power play taking place in Lebanon, but, as proletarian internationalists who called for the military defense of Iraq without giving any political support to the regime of Saddam Hussein, we say: *U.S. keep your bloody hands off Syria! Down with the colonial occupation of Iraq! All U.S./British troops out of Iraq and the Near East now! Israel out of the Occupied Territories!*

From the Crusades to Grand Liban: A Harvest of Blood

The violence and intercommunal bloodletting that marked much of Lebanon’s history is a legacy of Ottoman and French imperial domination and the interpenetration of myriad religious and ethnic communities, combining to retard capitalist development and prevent the consolidation of a modern state. Lebanon is divided into various sectarian fiefdoms, lorded over by tribal chieftains with private militias. Its political structures are built along

educational orientation often hostile to other communities, and its own laws governing marriage and inheritance and other matters of personal status.

To maintain the clannishness of the sects, civil marriage is illegal and the personal status laws of various communities prohibit interfaith marriages. While women were granted the right to vote in the 1950s, medieval practices like arranged and forced marriages are still in place. Honor killing is rampant, especially in the southern rural areas. It is estimated that an average of one woman is killed each month.

The rugged terrain of Mount Lebanon has historically provided a physically protected refuge for diverse religious and ethnic minorities fleeing persecution at the hands of both Christian and Muslim rulers: the Maronites originated in Syria in the seventh century when they split from the Eastern church of Byzantium. The Greek Orthodox and Greek Catholics of Lebanon also came from the same region. The Druze, a 10th-century offshoot of Shi’ism, fled persecution by the Fatimid caliphate in Egypt. The Shi’ites found refuge from the wrath of the Ottoman rulers in the hill villages of southern Lebanon. Christian Armenians were driven to Lebanon by the genocidal terror of the Young Turks during World War I.

Ever since the Crusades, when Raymond of Toulouse captured the flourishing port cities of the Tripoli emirate, French rulers have had interests in the Levant. The persecuted Christian Maronites saw the crusaders, with whom they allied against the Muslims, as liberators, thus providing the French with an avenue through which they would extend their influence. During the declining period of the Ottoman Empire and afterward, the



Der Spiegel

Beirut was turned into rubble during brutal 15-year Lebanese civil war.

Lebanon...

(continued from page 9)

and entrepôt for the Arab East, widened the social disparities between rich and poor. Shi’ite peasants from the countryside and migrant workers from Syria streamed into Beirut and other port cities looking for work, producing a class of desperate slum dwellers. The Beirut slums, known as the Belt of Misery, exist but a few miles from exclusive neighborhoods resembling the French Riviera.

The early 1970s also witnessed social ferment in the form of peasant revolts, labor and student strikes that shook the foundations of the sectarian system. The General Council of Labor (GCL), formed in 1970 by the union of nine trade-union federations, led a series of strikes demanding wage increases and price controls. Students waged strikes, sit-ins and demonstrations demanding a national educational system open to all, as opposed to the private and sectarian schools.

The forces potentially arrayed against the Maronite elite found an ally in the Palestinian commandos. Forced out of Jordan after the Black September massacres in 1970, Palestinians were concentrated in Lebanon where they could operate with some degree of freedom. The armed commandos, especially in the south, provided protection against the militias of the landlords and *za’ims* (Mafia-like urban bosses).

In early 1975, Lebanon stood on the brink of a revolutionary upheaval that could have radically altered the political situation in the entire region, most

lize the entire Christian community by appealing to its ancient fear of Muslim domination. The PCL, which until then maintained a significant base of supporters across the sectarian divide, was completely eliminated from Christian areas. As the Lebanese journalists Selim Accaoui and Magida Salman wrote:

“The PCL, which counted hundreds of Christian members and had a dominant influence in some Christian villages, saw its membership and its influence in the Mount Lebanon area crumble in a few months. Communist militants were chased out or massacred, and their houses burned.

“By going in on the Muslim confessionalists’ game, the PCL was able to implant itself in the Muslim areas of Beirut; but at the same time it lost most of its ranks in the Christian regions.”

—*Comprendre le Liban* (1976)

By the beginning of 1976, the war had become a succession of communalist massacres and countermassacres with Maronites sacking Muslim enclaves and Palestinian refugee camps, while PLO commandos and Druze militias responded by putting to the torch Christian villages, such as the village of Damur, home base of Chamoun. The conflict widened and a full-scale civil war raged for the next fifteen years.

The Third Worldist cheerleaders on the left naturally hailed the Palestinian/Muslim side, denying its communalist character and condemning the Maronite population to death as a pro-imperialist reactionary mass. Celebrating the destruction of Damur, Workers World Party wrote:

“The burning of Chamoun’s mansion and the seizure of the stronghold of his



Survivors of 1970 “Black September” massacre in which some 10,000 Palestinians were killed by Jordan’s rulers.

immediately by extending to neighboring Syria. A proletarian insurrection would have shaken the colonels of Damascus, the Hashemite monarchy and, not least, the Zionist rulers.

Underlying the conflict between the Maronite Christians on one side, and the Lebanese Muslims and Palestinians on the other, was a deep social conflict. As a *New York Times* (19 July 1975) article noted:

“The fighting was something of a class war between the haves, who are for the most part Christians, and the have-nots, who are for the most part Moslems and who are allied with the heavily armed Palestinian guerrilla movement.”

A Marxist party standing at the head of the Lebanese Muslim toilers and the Palestinians would have put forward a socialist program capable of attracting the “have-nots” in the Christian community, splitting the Maronite leadership’s base. Instead, the struggles of the Lebanese Muslims and the Palestinian commandos were channeled into the efforts of the Muslim elite to increase its influence in the traditional confessional system.

A key figure in derailing the incipient social revolution and transforming it into communalist bloodletting was Kamal Jumblatt, hereditary head of the Druze sect and leader of the so-called Lebanese National Movement (LNM), which included the pro-Moscow Lebanese Communist Party (PCL), the small Lebanese section of the late Ernest Mandel’s United Secretariat and a host of Arab nationalist and Nasserite groups. The PLO leadership subordinated its forces to this sectarian demagogue, as did the entire Lebanese left. Because the PLO commandos and the “progressive” Lebanese fought on behalf of the traditional Muslim and clan chiefs like Jumblatt, the Maronite clan chiefs, like Chamoun, were able to mobi-



French troops enter Damascus, 1920.

A woman weeps over the dead bodies of her relatives in Palestinian refugee camp of Sabra in West Beirut, 1982. Nearly 2,000 Palestinians in Sabra and Shatila were slaughtered by Maronite militias organized by Israeli forces.



tarian groups. Hezbollah, a reactionary mass movement financed and armed by Iran, is seeking to establish an Iran-style theocracy in Lebanon. In the 1980s, its leaders imposed strict codes of Islamic behavior on towns and villages in the south. Hezbollah in power is a deadly danger, especially for women and Christians.

Syrian Ba’athists Massacre Palestinians

By the spring of 1976 the once-privileged Maronites, squeezed into besieged enclaves, were on the brink of defeat, as Lebanon gradually moved toward de facto partition. In an attempt to reverse the tide of battle, Israel opened a supply line of weapons to the Christian forces, including Soviet-made tanks and armored personnel carriers captured during the 1967 and 1973 Arab-Israeli wars.

But it was the Syrian Ba’athists, the self-proclaimed “vanguards of the Arab revolution,” who saved the pro-Western Christian rightists from defeat when they invaded Lebanon in June 1976 with a mandate from the Arab League and the approval of both Washington and Tel Aviv. Like Lebanon, Syria itself is a medieval patchwork of potentially hostile ethnic, national and sectarian groupings where the ruling minority Alawites hold sway over the Sunnis, Kurds, Druze and others. Behind the Syrian invasion was the fear that the breakup of Lebanon along sectarian lines would spill over into Syria. Besides, the Ba’athist rulers, who were negotiating via U.S. imperialism for the return of the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights, needed to demonstrate their ability to police the Palestinians in Lebanon.

The Syrian military intervention shifted the balance of forces in favor of the Maronite militia, culminating in the siege and fall of the huge Palestinian camp of Tel Zaatar in Beirut. The Syrian army provided logistical support for the Maronite militia that was surrounding the camp and prevented PLO commandos from lifting the siege. Hundreds died of hunger and disease. When the Palestinians surrendered, they were slaughtered en masse. At Tel Zaatar, the Syrian Ba’athists provided the Israeli rulers with a model for the Sabra and Shatila massacre of 2,000 defenseless Palestinians in 1982, which was masterminded by Israel and carried out by the same Maronite criminals.

When Syrian forces entered Lebanon in 1976, we declared: “Syrian Troops Out of Lebanon!” (WV No. 114, 18 June

1976). Our opposition to the Syrian forces was based on the fact that they intervened to suppress the Palestinian fighters and refugees as well as the Lebanese Muslims. It was not based on the notion that Syria was somehow violating the national sovereignty of Lebanon. As we wrote following the Israeli invasion of Lebanon (“Israel Out of Lebanon!” WV No. 308, 25 June 1982):

“There is a fundamental difference between the Syrian and Israeli armies in Lebanon, though both are oppressors and murderers of the peoples of Lebanon. Lebanon is *not* a nation separate and distinct from Syria, but a collection of religious-ethnic fiefdoms sharing a common ethnic makeup with Syria.... The Syrians in Lebanon are no more a ‘foreign’ army than the Maronite Phalange. Lebanon and Syria have been for centuries a common historical entity, united by language, culture and ethnic makeup.”

1982: Israel Invades Lebanon

Israel’s 1982 invasion and occupation of Lebanon, backed by U.S. imperialism, marks a watershed in the history of the region. Buried, along with the 20,000 Palestinians and Lebanese killed by the Zionists, was the fiction that Israel is one reactionary mass. As Sharon’s blitzkrieg into Lebanon spread death and destruction, massive antiwar protests took place in Israel, an unprecedented development in the midst of a military campaign. The Lebanese war threatened to unravel Fortress Israel. In that war we stood for revolutionary defensism of the Palestinian commandos, also recognizing that—given the unpopularity of the war among Israelis and the fact that Israel’s population is relatively small—rising Israeli casualties could serve to widen the wedge between the Hebrew-speaking population and the Zionist rulers of Israel. For this reason, the decision of the PLO leadership to withdraw from Beirut, a surrender arranged by U.S. imperialism, was especially catastrophic for the Palestinian people and the prospects for social revolution in the region.

If the war in Lebanon deeply upset liberal Zionists, it also shattered the myth of Arab unity behind the Palestinian cause. Not a single Arab state came to the aid of the embattled Palestinians facing Sharon’s genocidal terror. As a Palestinian commando exclaimed bitterly to a Western newsman during the siege of West Beirut, “You see where the Israelis are. Well, behind the Israelis is King Fahd [of Saudi Arabia] and Hafez el-Assad [of Syria] and King Hussein [of Jordan]. They are all in this together.” Indeed, from King Hussein’s Black September massacre of 10,000 Palestinians in 1970, under the gaze of 12,000 Iraqi troops stationed in Jordan, to the siege and slaughter of Palestinians by the Syrian-aided Maronites at Tel Zaatar, Arab rulers have been as ruthless enemies of Palestinian national emancipation as the Zionists. For the Arab rulers, the Palestinian question represents no more than a diversion, whereby popular discontent is channeled into a “holy war” against Zionism.

Faced with the impotence and betrayal of the Arab states, the PLO leadership turned to U.S. imperialism as a potential savior. Arafat agreed to allow the U.S.

Vigilantes...

(continued from page 12)

immigrants against these attacks. Latino immigrants are a critical part of the working class in this country and have spearheaded some of the most militant struggles, particularly in Southern California. It is crucial to fight for *full citizenship rights for all immigrants*—anyone who has made it to this country should have

unions, slash pensions and public education, and ax social services. Now he is emulating former governor Pete Wilson, who in 1994 seized on the anti-immigrant Prop. 187 to divert attention from budget cuts and the tanking economy. Schwarzenegger embraced the Minutemen just after a poll announced his approval rating had plummeted 20 points since January to 40 percent. He is appealing to the same racist, xenophobic base he successfully mobilized in the 2003 recall election

posed revival of the notorious *bracero* program to import cheap, docile labor to be expelled when no longer needed. Schwarzenegger himself supports such a “guest worker” program while backing the vigilantes. This is no contradiction. Schwarzenegger, like Bush, wants plenty of Mexican workers in this country—as long as his big-business friends can exploit them and they have no rights. All the better if they are cowed and intimidated by the threat of deportation across a “secure” border.

A chorus of Democratic Party politicians denounce Schwarzenegger on the grounds that instead of vigilantes murderously hunting down desperate immigrants in the desert, the government should be doing it. California senator Dianne Feinstein said Schwarzenegger should call for “additional border patrol agents,” rather than praising “untrained volunteers” (*Sacramento Bee*, 29 April). The reputedly ultraliberal senator Barbara Boxer recently opposed Bush’s “guest-worker” program by “saying it would ‘open the floodgates’ to illegal immigration” (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 21 April). Feinstein in turn denounced an alternative bipartisan bill (which Boxer supported) as a “huge magnet” for more “illegal immigration.” Democrats and Republicans—the two parties of U.S. capitalism—differ only over how best to serve capitalist profits.

Arizona Democratic congressman Raul Grijalva has called for an FBI investigation into possible “hate crimes” charges against the vigilantes. Workers should have no illusions in this deadly dangerous strategy. The FBI is *carrying out* the “war on terror” anti-immigrant witchhunt as part of the capitalist state, which will use “hate crimes” laws to go after workers and the left.

AFL-CIO officials have made a lot of noise in recent years about organizing

immigrant workers. Yet at the same time, the labor bureaucracy pushes protectionist chauvinism which helps breed anti-immigrant consciousness among workers, be they white, black or in some cases Latino. This is a poisonous product of the union tops’ policy of collaboration with the capitalist class enemy, a policy embodied politically in the labor tops’ allegiance to the Democratic Party. In California, against Schwarzenegger, just as nationally against Bush, the labor tops and reformist left work to divert opposition into support for the Democrats under the banner of “fight the right.”

An effective defense of the working class requires an *internationalist* program, expressing the common class interests of workers on both sides of the border drawn when the U.S. stole much of the Southwest from Mexico in 1848. The fight for immigrant rights must be seen as part of the struggle against all forms of oppression. And in the U.S., that means a struggle against black oppression, the bedrock of American capitalism. Workers must fight against the capitalist rulers’ attempts to pit one oppressed group against another—such as the recent gross statement by right-wing Mexican president Vicente Fox that Mexican workers “are doing the work that not even blacks want to do in the United States.”

Workers need their own party—a multiracial, class-struggle workers party. Such a party would organize unions to defend Latino immigrants against the border vigilantes, fight for full citizenship rights for all immigrants, and organize the unorganized. It would fight to mobilize the social power of the working class in its own class interests and the interests of all the oppressed, independently of all the parties and agencies of the capitalists. ***Break from the Democrats! Mobilize labor to defend immigrants!■***



WV Photo

Partisan Defense Committee and Labor Black League initiated labor-centered mobilization in Oakland, California, February 2002, in defense of immigrant rights and against “war on terror.”

the same rights as everyone else.

California writer Mike Davis commented that “if the governor sounds like he is channeling his inner Nazi, it is because he is desperate” (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 8 May). Schwarzenegger has run into trouble in his campaign to gut teachers unions and all public sector

against Democratic Party governor Gray Davis, when he pledged to block driver’s licenses for undocumented immigrants. He hopes to use this base as a battering ram against the organized workers movement as a whole.

Bush has criticized the border vigilantes, who in turn excoriate Bush’s pro-

Marines and the French Foreign Legion to disarm the Palestinian commandos guarding West Beirut and escort them to their new exile in Tunisia. American troops were sent into Lebanon for that purpose, eventually becoming a target in the Lebanese quagmire. On 23 October 1983, a powerful bomb exploded near the U.S. military barracks in Beirut, killing 240 Marines. It was to divert attention of the American population, outraged over what many perceived as a senseless intervention into the bloody Lebanese civil war, that President Ronald Reagan ordered the invasion of the tiny island of Grenada (see “Rape of Grenada, Bloody Mess in Lebanon—Marines Out of Lebanon, Now, Alive! U.S. Out of Grenada, Dead or Alive!” WV No. 341, 4 November 1983).

Meanwhile, Arafat’s betrayal in withdrawing from Beirut—setting the stage for the Sabra and Shatila massacre by Sharon’s fascistic Maronite henchmen—liquidated the PLO as an independent military force. In the end, Israel withdrew its forces from southern Lebanon in 2000, concluding its nearly 20-year occupation of that country.

For a Socialist Federation of the Near East!

Comparing the initial defeat of the Maronites in 1975 to the events of the French Revolution, LNM leader Kamal Jumblatt declared, “This is our 1789.” In that revolution, the bourgeoisie swept away the feudal order and consolidated a nation-state. However, in this epoch of imperialist domination, the national bourgeoisie in countries of belated development, like Lebanon, is incapable of realizing such goals as national consolidation. In their struggle for hegemony, colonial bourgeois forces may clash with the imperialists that ravage their resources, retard their economic development and create innumerable barriers to national emancipation. But in the age of imperialism, the colonial and semicolonial bourgeoisie can only exist as middlemen and brokers for imperialism. From the oil sheiks of the Gulf emirates to the bankers of Beirut and the bonapartists of



Cedarland

Left: U.S. Marines in Lebanon, 1958. Right: Mass demonstration in Baghdad, July 1958. American troops were deployed to Lebanon as potential intervention force to crush revolutionary upsurge in Iraq, which brought proletariat to the brink of power.



New York Times

Cairo and Damascus, the ruling classes of the Near East are as dependent on the backwardness and balkanization of their countries as the imperialists themselves. Their interests are firmly intertwined with those of imperialism. As Trotsky wrote of the Chinese Revolution in 1927: “Everything that brings the oppressed and exploited masses of the toilers to their feet inevitably pushes the national bourgeoisie into an open bloc with the imperialists” (“The Chinese Revolution and the Theses of Comrade Stalin,” *Leon Trotsky on China* [1976]).

In such backward countries, the perspective for resolving the fundamental democratic questions posed by combined and uneven development, such as ensuring the democratic and national rights of all peoples in the Near East, is provided by the theory of permanent revolution developed by Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky. He wrote in *Permanent Revolution* (1929): “The complete and genuine solution of their tasks of achieving *democracy and national emancipation* is conceivable only through the dictatorship of the proletariat as the leader of the subjugated nation, above all of its peasant masses.” The genuine liberation of colonial and semicolonial countries can be achieved only through the successful

struggle of the proletariat for state power, leading all the oppressed.

Within the historic cauldron of national hatred and communal warfare of the Near East the prospects for even a modicum of intercommunal harmony in Lebanon are bleak under capitalism, for if the historic exclusion of the Muslim population is reversed it will simply lead to the victimization of the formerly dominant Christians. There is no possibility of an equitable solution to national and communal conflict short of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

As we wrote in the last part of our four-part series, “After Lebanon: The Left

and the Palestinian Question—From the ‘Arab Revolution’ to Pax Americana” (WV No. 335, 29 July 1983): “The struggle for the democratic rights of all the peoples of the Near East and for the survival and national emancipation of the Palestinians must necessarily sweep away the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the bloody Ba’athist bonapartists in Syria, bring down the rotten medieval structure in Lebanon and shatter the Zionist state. This struggle must place the revolutionary proletariat with its vanguard party at the head of the exploited and oppressed, and can only find its fulfillment in a socialist federation of the Near East.”■

Trotskyist League Forum

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VANCOUVER

WORKERS VANGUARD

Union Busting at United Airlines

Capitalist Government and Pension Theft

Working people across the country were aghast when a U.S. bankruptcy court on May 10 backed up United Airlines management immunity in ripping off its union pension plans. Many of the 134,000 active and retired United workers will now likely be robbed of at least half their retirement benefits. The message from the bosses is clear enough: just shut up, work hard and die. From shrinking wages and givebacks to the potential shredding of Social Security, labor as a whole faces a similar plight. But this heist takes place at the world's second largest carrier, in a vital industry that is 60 percent unionized. Airline workers have real social power, so why is there no collective fight to stop the bosses' offensive?

It is because they are saddled with a leadership wedded to the rule of capital. The smashing of the PATCO air traffic controllers union in 1981 was the watershed in a decades-long drive by the bosses to turn the clock back against the entire labor movement. At the time, "Solidarity" with PATCO was the rallying cry, and the line should have been drawn then. It was not, and workers have paid dearly ever since. It's time to take a stand!

Despite the tremendous social power

that the heavily unionized airline industry workers have, they have been picked off one by one in devastating rounds of wage-slashing, pension-stealing, union-busting giveback contracts. Instead of organizing a powerful, united stand by all airport workers—mechanics, pilots, flight attendants, ground personnel—to defeat the union-busting and shut down the airports, the union tops have played by the bosses' rules and are complicit in creating this disaster for airline workers. It is necessary to forge a leadership not hamstrung by the bosses' rules, one that will take the offensive—such as organizing non-union carriers like JetBlue—to advance the battle from the viewpoint of class war, not acceptance of capitalist exploitation and oppression.

As Leon Trotsky, co-leader with Lenin of the 1917 workers revolution in Russia, wrote in the Transitional Program (1938):

"The question is one of guarding the proletariat from decay, demoralization, and ruin.... If capitalism is incapable of satisfying the demands inevitably arising from the calamities generated by itself, then let it perish. 'Realizability' or 'unrealizability' is in the given instance a question of the relationship of forces, which can be decided only by the struggle. By means of this struggle, no matter what its immediate



United Airlines flight attendants protest last winter against company's threat to tear up contracts.

practical successes may be, the workers will best come to understand the necessity of liquidating capitalist slavery."

There is a lot at stake. The U.S. economy has undergone a significant deindustrialization in recent years, with many workers thrown out of production altogether. Seniors, desperate to make ends meet, are forced into low-wage non-union McJobs. Most young workers can't even

get those jobs anymore. Layoffs, union-busting and recurring economic crises are all features of a system of private ownership, where capitalists make profits off the toil of the working class.

Other companies will undoubtedly use what is the largest pension default in U.S. history as a bludgeon against their own unions. In fact, United's major rivals

continued on page 4

Full Citizenship Rights for All Immigrants!

Down With Border Vigilantes!

California

OAKLAND—Hundreds of armed vigilantes mobilized by the Minuteman Project flocked to the Arizona-Mexico border in April to terrorize undocumented Mexicans and Central Americans braving the harrowing desert crossing to seek work in the U.S. Such vigilante gangs have proliferated since the September 11 attacks, with the racist, anti-immigrant, anti-labor "war on terror," which they constantly invoke with lurid fantasies of foreign terrorists swarming through the desert. Shootings, beatings and kidnappings of immigrants in the border area have multiplied. From March 2002 to March 2003, the bodies of nine immigrant men were found in one 20-square-mile area of Arizona, according to one report.

These border vigilantes got a big boost on April 28 when California governor Arnold Schwarzenegger phoned the anti-immigrant talk radio "John and Ken Show" in Los Angeles to rave that the Minutemen have "done a terrific job" (*Sacramento Bee*, 29 April). Schwarzenegger's office later specifically invited the Minutemen to come to California, where anti-



April 2: Racist "Minuteman Project" vigilantes gather from across nation at Arizona border, with Confederate flag flying.

Mexican fanatics plan to mobilize on the border near San Diego in August. Emboldened bigots besieged a day laborers center in Laguna Beach in early May. When 40 supporters of a sinister outfit called "saveourstate.org" staged a

provocation in the heavily Latino L.A.-area city of Baldwin Park on May 14, they were met by hundreds of counter-demonstrators, joined by supporters of the Spartacist League.

The Minuteman Project is a racist,

nativist, armed extra-legal mobilization against Mexican immigrants. Its chief spokesmen, Jim Gilchrist and Chris Simcox, supposedly disavow any "racist" allies. But Gilchrist's Web site rants that the U.S. is being "devoured and plundered by the menace of tens of millions of invading illegal aliens," while Simcox raved that "we need the National Guard to clean out all our cities and round them up" (*Intelligence Report*, Spring 2003). The vigilantes range from disgruntled white suburbanite Republicans to outright fascist race-terrorists. The Southern Poverty Law Center exposed supporters of the neo-Nazi National Alliance among the Minuteman Project participants in Arizona.

Anti-immigrant border vigilantes wax and wane with the booms and busts of the capitalist economy. In the early 1990s, there was the "Light Up the Border" mobilization around San Ysidro by right-wing vigilantes, joined by fascist skinheads. KKKers led by Tom Metzger, later leader of the White Aryan Resistance, "patrolled" the border near San Diego a decade earlier, boasting of murdering immigrants. These same forces are gunning for blacks, unionists and all workers.

The power of the multiracial labor movement must be mobilized to defend

continued on page 11