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The Mideast Conflict and the PLO — the Marxist View



Palestinian liberation fighters.

Nicaragua

Year at War Steels Mass Organizations



Michael Baumann/IP

May Day 1982 rally in Managua's Plaza of the Revolution.

Argentine General Strike Challenges Military Rule

U.S. socialists score victory for democratic rights

By David Frankel

A major victory for the rights of working people was won December 8 when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) does not have to reveal to the government the names of financial contributors to its election campaigns or the names of those who receive funds from its campaign committees.

The Supreme Court ruling was the culmination of an eight-year battle between the SWP and various state governments, as well as the federal government. Using laws passed in the name of eliminating corruption from elections, government agencies have demanded lists of contributors from the SWP — a ready-made enemies list for the FBI and other police agencies.

In an earlier victory in May, a federal appeals court had ruled that the Communist Party (CP) did not have to disclose names of its campaign contributors, or even keep records of them.

Currently, parties such as the SWP and CP are the immediate target of the campaign disclosure laws that had supposedly been passed to curb the influence of big money in the elections. These laws were pushed in particular by Democratic Party liberals in the wake of the Watergate scandal, and were part of the propaganda campaign designed to restore confidence in the political institutions of the U.S. ruling class.

But the disclosure laws were not just a propaganda ploy, nor were they aimed at just the CP and SWP. They gave the capitalist rulers new legal weapons and put new restrictions on the political activity of all working-class organizations. The ruling class was piling up obstacles to any attempt by broad sections of the labor movement to break with the capitalist two-party system and to engage in independent working-class political action.

The importance of the Supreme Court ruling was widely recognized. It was reported prominently in major capitalist dailies, such as the *New York Times*, and was featured on the front page of the influential *New York Law Journal*.

Key points in the court's ruling are of great importance for the broader political fight being waged by the SWP against government and employer attacks.

To begin with, the Supreme Court held that the SWP is in fact a legitimate political party whose members and supporters have the right under the U.S. Constitution to be protected from "threats, harassment or reprisals" for exercising their political rights.

The top U.S. court also found that "the SWP does not advocate the use of violence." Both police agencies and private employers have sought to justify spying on SWP members, firing them from their jobs, and other forms of harassment with the lie that the party advocates violence.

Rejecting the claim that spying and disruption against the SWP was a thing of the past, the Supreme Court ruled that there is "substantial evidence of both governmental and private hostility toward and harassment of SWP members and supporters," and that "the evidence suggests that hostility toward the SWP is ingrained and likely to continue."

Every one of these findings by the Supreme

Court has been denied by the U.S. government in the overall lawsuit by the SWP and Young Socialist Alliance (YSA) against government spying and harassment. That suit asks for an injunction against such government disruption and \$70 million in damages. The Supreme Court ruling will be a big help in this case, where a final ruling could come any day.

It will also be a big help in other battles for democratic rights that the SWP and YSA are currently fighting. Socialists and other union activists are involved right now in fights against political firings in Atlanta, Denver, St. Louis, San Jose, and Framingham, Massachusetts, among other areas. Giant corporations such as the Lockheed Aircraft company use the same arguments as the government to try to victimize militant trade unionists.

Foreign-born members or supporters of the SWP have also been victimized by government attempts to deport them. Two such cases, that of Héctor Marroquín, a Mexican immigrant who has demanded political asylum in the United States, and Hamid Reza Sodeifi, an Iranian student who is a member of the YSA, are currently before U.S. courts.

The Supreme Court ruling will help in these cases as well. It is a vindication of the fight for democratic rights that has been carried out by the SWP and its supporters. □

Central American war heats up

By Fred Murphy

Each day brings new reports on the expansion of Washington's war in Central America. Unable to push back the workers and farmers of Nicaragua, or the advance of revolutionary struggles in El Salvador and Guatemala, the U.S. rulers have embarked on an escalating military confrontation.

- Major battles are now taking place almost daily along the Honduran-Nicaraguan border. Units of hundreds of U.S.-armed counterrevolutionaries have clashed repeatedly with Sandinista troops and militia since the first week of December.

- The buildup of the Honduran government's military machine by Washington and its allies is proceeding apace. Just days after Reagan visited the country, Israeli Defense Minister Ariel Sharon arrived there to work out new supplies of weapons and aircraft.

- Inside the United States, the remnants of the Somoza dictatorship who help the CIA coordinate the war against Nicaragua have begun operating more boldly, holding news conferences and giving press interviews, despite the illegal character of their terrorist activities.

- The Reagan administration's direct role in organizing and escalating the attacks against Nicaragua is now openly acknowledged in the U.S. capitalist news media. A debate has opened up, with certain sectors of ruling-class opinion expressing nervousness at the prospect

of full-scale war throughout Central America and the Caribbean.

Children die, peasants mutilated

The tragic results of Reagan's drive toward war for the peoples of Central America were shown once again on December 9. Seventy-five children and nine women died when the helicopter that was evacuating them from the northern Nicaraguan war zone crashed. A rescue helicopter sent to the scene was driven off by ground fire from counterrevolutionaries along the Honduran border.

Reporting from the border region in the December 14 *New York Times*, correspondent Marlise Simons noted that "many of the men fighting in the border areas are former members of the defeated national guard. The guard was widely feared and hated for its cruelty and numerous assassinations."

"American Roman Catholic missionaries who frequently visit this border region," Simons reported, "said the raiders had lately been torturing and mutilating captured peasants or Sandinista sympathizers, creating the same terror as in the past."

The Somozaists specialize in such attacks on civilians. They have not fared so well, however, in encounters with the Sandinista People's Army and militia. In a major battle at Loma Oscura, 175 miles north of Managua, outnumbered Sandinista forces crushed three separate attempts by 400 counterrevolutionaries to seize a position in Nicara-

Our year-end schedule

This is the last issue of *Intercontinental Press* that will appear in 1982. Our next issue will be dated January 17, 1983.

guan territory on December 3-5.

Between December 10 and 14, the Sandinista People's Army (EPS) deployed tanks and armored personnel carriers in the course of a still bigger battle near Jalapa, a key town in Nueva Segovia Province. Three counter-revolutionary units totaling 900 men were trying to seize Jalapa and turn it into a provisional capital, EPS regional commander Capt. Rodrigo González told the *Washington Post*. The Somozaists were dispersed and driven back into Honduras after five days of heavy fighting.

After that battle, Nicaraguan Foreign Minister Miguel D'Escoto dispatched a note to his Honduran counterpart warning that such continued aggression from Honduran soil had brought the Sandinista government "to the edge of the total exhaustion of our patience."

Butcher of Lebanon lends a hand

The Reagan administration has poured \$174 million in military and economic aid into Honduras in the past two years. The aim of this buildup is to prepare the Honduran army itself for counterrevolutionary intervention in Nicaragua. The imperialists are well aware that their Somozaist hirelings can play only an auxiliary role in a real fight to topple the Sandinista government.

After Israeli Defense Minister Sharon visited Honduras, the *New York Times* reported December 17 that "Israel is enlarging its military training missions and role as a principal supplier of arms to Central America." *Times* correspondent Leslie Gelb asked a top State Department official whether the Reagan administration looked kindly on such Israeli intervention. "Absolutely," was the reply.

Sharon reportedly worked out a deal to sell new Kfir fighter planes to Honduras. At a December 7 news conference in Tegucigalpa, the country's capital, the butcher of Lebanon declared: "I admire Honduras very much simply because it is one of the third world countries that has demonstrated a firm determination to live within a democratic system."

Also posing as ardent democrats are the collection of Nicaraguan capitalists and ex-officials of the Somoza regime who have coalesced in Miami as the so-called Nicaraguan Democratic Front (FDN). This outfit held a news conference there December 7 to publicize its aim of overthrowing what it termed "a Communist government with Stalinist enslaving tendencies."

Top figures in the FDN include ex-National Guard Col. Enrique Bermúdez, once Somoza's military attaché in Washington, and Alfonso Callejas, vice-president of Nicaragua under Somoza from 1969 to 1972.

Reagan's escalation in Central America has finally forced a public debate inside the U.S. ruling class. As the editors of the *New York Times* pointed out December 8, "There's nothing secret anymore about the training of exile armies in Florida and the recurrent border raids into Nicaragua by insurgents claiming C.I.A.

help; all this has been widely reported for months."

The U.S. rulers are unanimous on the threat posed to them by the revolutionary upsurge in Central America, of which the workers and peasants government in Nicaragua is the highest expression. At the same time, stepping up the war means that the imperialists also have more to lose. Any war between Honduras and Nicaragua would rapidly destabilize the Honduran regime and draw in El Salvador as well. Nor could Guatemala and Costa Rica remain apart.

Moreover, any such war would be sure to involve both Cuba and the United States directly.

Hence significant sectors of the U.S. ruling class are expressing hesitation over the prospect of a regional war, especially in light of U.S. working people's aversion to such a conflict.

"A final justification for covert warfare might be a clear showing that truly vital American interests are at risk," the *Times* editorial suggested. But it cautioned that "no such showing has been made, either to the American people or to our Latin friends."

The editors of the *Miami Herald* charged December 8 that the Reagan administration was on "a destructive course," one that was "reminiscent of two generations of earlier secret wars that became major U.S. blunders. One was in Cuba, at the Bay of Pigs in 1961. Another was in Vietnam a few years later."

But the escalation against Nicaragua is moving ahead. Defenders of the Sandinista revolution need to take advantage of the ruling-class debate to further publicize the facts about Washington's war and to expose its lies before broader sections of the working class. The truth is the greatest threat to Reagan's counterrevolutionary drive. □

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Year at war steels mass organizations

Sandinistas put 'borrowed time' to good use

By Michael Baumann

U.S.-sponsored counterrevolutionary forces came within an ace of mounting a full-scale invasion of Nicaragua earlier this year.

This is exactly what the Sandinistas have publicly charged all along.

That is why they declared a national state of emergency March 15, following the spectacular middle-of-the-night bombing of two strategic bridges in the north.

Now it is being increasingly confirmed in the American press, following nine months of virtual silence.

What was planned last February and March?

Why was it postponed?

How have the Sandinistas made use of nearly a year's extra time?

What Washington planned

The most extensive account to date of U.S. plans for an invasion of Nicaragua was given by George Crile, a CBS news producer and correspondent formerly based in Nicaragua.

His report, openly based on information provided by the CIA, was printed opposite the editorial page of the *New York Times* on December 3.

Crile called the planned invasion "one of Washington's most ambitious attempts to bring down a foreign government since the Kennedys unleashed the Central Intelligence Agency against Fidel Castro."

From the details that follow, this does not seem to be an exaggeration.

"Initially," Crile says, "the Administration went to great lengths to keep its support for Nicaraguan counter-revolutionaries at arm's length by funneling money through Argentina and Honduras to train and arm an exile force built around cadres from Gen. Anastasio Somoza Debayle's old National Guard. But early this year there was a dramatic change. According to intelligence sources who have proved highly reliable, the C.I.A. pulled a number of its most seasoned operatives from assignments around the world and rushed them into Honduras to direct a 'quick strike' attack on Managua, which was set for the beginning of March. . . ."

"The full nature and dimensions of the plan are unclear. But certainly back in February and March something very big and very risky was being considered and, as Guatemala's most powerful general, Benedito Lucas, told me at the time: 'For it to begin and for it to succeed, there must be a green light from Washington.'"

The green light never came, and for a very simple reason. The Malvinas War intervened.

Argentine military preparations to restore sovereignty over the Malvinas Islands, which broke out into open war with Britain April 2, forced Washington to postpone its plans.

Washington's active support for Britain during the war against Argentina sparked such an outpouring of anti-imperialist sentiment throughout Latin America that combining it with an invasion of the republic of Nicaragua became politically untenable.

Moreover, Nicaragua's principled stand of supporting the Argentine people — even at a time when Argentine military advisers were helping to train the counterrevolutionary invading force — won the Sandinista revolution even wider support throughout the continent.

The political situation produced by the Malvinas War temporarily tied U.S. imperialism's hands. It bought Nicaragua nine precious months to deepen understanding of the goals of the revolution and preparation of the population for war to defend them.

The time was well used.

State of emergency

From the beginning, Nicaragua's leaders explained that the state of emergency was not a *decree* imposed by the Sandinistas, but a *reality* imposed by the U.S.-backed counter-revolutionaries. Only over time, however, did the necessity of the measures set in motion March 15 become clear to the overwhelming majority of the population, particularly those in urban areas farther away from the battles taking place along the northern border.

Wartime censorship of the press, radio, and TV was established. Most constitutional guarantees were suspended (but not those outlawing torture, forced labor, and infringement on freedom of religion). These measures, the Sandinista daily *Barricada* explained at the time, have "nothing whatever in common with the superficially similar measures taken in other countries for exactly the opposite reason — to oppress and repress their people. . . ."

"In revolutionary Nicaragua, the government declared a state of emergency because the situation created in our country by the aggressive plans of imperialism is precisely an emergency."

In the first days of the emergency, virtually the entire army, reserve battalions, militias, Sandinista Youth (JS-19), and a good chunk of the Sandinista Defense Committees (CDSs) mobilized on an around-the-clock footing — a dramatic coming to life of the Sandinista slogan "One single army!"

Every bridge, culvert, and railroad crossing

— along with nearly every other conceivable military target — was guarded for a week or more, day and night, by an armed and mobilized population.

Special cartoon pull-out features in *Barricada* explained in detail how to dig air-raid shelters. Neighborhood surveys were taken of work schedules, weapons, tools, and children needing protection. Trenches were dug in several of the large marketplaces in Managua. Sandbag barricades were placed at the entrances of all government and mass organization offices. Hundreds of meetings were held to discuss and explain the nature of the threat the revolution faced.

As the danger of imminent invasion waned, so too did the degree of mobilization. But important gains remained. Tens of thousands of fresh volunteers for the militias reenrolled for further military training. The neighborhood defense committees had sunk deeper roots into the urban centers. In the countryside, the Rural Workers Association (ATC), the organization of the country's rural proletariat, had gone through an important experience of taking on responsibility to assure continued food production and prevent sabotage. And everyone had seen and felt the tremendous support for defending the country against imperialist attack.

'Commander Zero' lives up to his name

A month later, in mid-April, a new challenge came. Edén Pastora, a former hero of the Sandinista revolution, defected to the camp of Nicaragua's imperialist enemies.

Pastora was famous both in Nicaragua and around the world for his role as "Commander Zero" in leading the daring takeover of Somoza's National Palace in 1978 — an operation that resulted in the release of Sandinista political prisoners and a ransom of several million dollars.

Pastora left Nicaragua in 1981, claiming he intended to join the revolutionary struggle in either El Salvador or Guatemala.

But he did neither. In fact, as the revolutionary organizations in Guatemala later explained in a joint statement, they had broken all ties with Pastora because "he insisted on maintaining relations with individuals and forces linked to the counterrevolution in our region."

On April 15 of this year, just a month after the declaration of the state of emergency, Pastora suddenly surfaced at a news conference at a luxury hotel in Costa Rica.

There he delivered an anticommunist diatribe, declaring it was time to "drive the [Sandinista] government out with bullets" because

they had "betrayed" the revolution.

What were his chief complaints? Exactly the same as Reagan's.

Thousands of Cuban and Soviet military advisers (a charge the Sandinistas have repeatedly denied).

Too much preparation for defense (this, he claimed, was "alienating" Washington).

And too many expropriations of factories and farms.

The Sandinistas responded to the challenge by seeking to deepen understanding of the revolution among the population. Using mass meetings, mobilizations, and even a popular, uproariously humorous sketch mounted by the country's favorite satirical troupe, they explained it was not enough simply to get rid of Somoza. What also had to be eliminated, over time, was the whole system of rule, propped up by the United States for more than a century, that had denied peasants access to the land and kept the workers and the rest of the toiling population submerged in poverty, malnutrition, and illiteracy.

In a word . . . capitalism.

'For the construction of socialism!'

Celebrations of Lenin's birthday April 22 and preparations for May Day helped drive this theme home.

Discussions of Lenin's contributions to scientific socialism, of the gains won by the Russian revolution, and how the process in Nicaragua was a continuation of that great class battle dominated organized meetings in the cities, factories, and fields in the weeks that followed.

The Sandinista Workers Federation (CST), the country's major union federation, led the way. It was the CST that initiated the slogan that was to be the theme of this year's May Day celebration: "Defend the revolution through the construction of socialism!"

Partly this was a direct response to Pastora. As ATC General Secretary Edgardo García pointed out, Pastora's "attacks on the National Directorate are really aimed against the workers, because we are the ones who have been demanding the land confiscations, and we are the ones who have been denouncing the bosses who decapitalize and support the counter-revolutionary bands."

The slogan also served as the focus for a campaign of education and discussion carried out by the mass organizations. *Barricada* sought ways to present, explain, and popularize the need to lay the basis for a new society "in which there will no longer be exploitation of man by man."

Articles and speeches increasingly made a distinction between "early Sandinism," the anti-imperialist struggle of General Augusto César Sandino, and "developed Sandinism," the contributions, based on scientific socialism, of FSLN founder Carlos Fonseca.

In popularizing Fonseca's speeches and writings, Sandinista leaders pointed to the important role and responsibility of Nicaragua's industrial working class — which by and large



Barricada Internacional

Bridge destroyed by counterrevolutionaries.

had arisen only after Sandino's time — in leading the process forward. They explained how the lessons drawn from history by Marx, Engels, and Lenin were the only consistent way to defend the gains of the revolution set in motion by Sandino.

The campaign came to a sharp focus on May 1, when Sandinista leaders addressed rallies throughout the country.

In the main speech, given in Managua by the sole surviving FSLN founder, Commander Tomás Borge, the march toward socialism was the dominant theme.

The workers and peasants of Nicaragua, Borge said, did not make a revolution to "allow a regime of exploitation to persist. . . . This revolution was made not to affirm the old society but to create a new one." It was the crowd, 100,000 strong, that chanted in response, "Socialism! Socialism!"

What response to floods showed

A few weeks later, Nicaragua's social cohesion and organization was put to a sudden and unexpected test. Torrential rains, amounting in some areas to half a year's normal rainfall, hit the entire western half of the country at the end of May. Sixty thousand people lost their homes; dozens lost their lives; and total damage, according to estimates by UN observers, topped \$350 million.

In similar circumstances under Somoza, the devastating 1972 earthquake, not only was nothing done to aid the victims, but — as one Sandinista policeman told *Intercontinental Press* — "Somoza wouldn't even let us organize to help ourselves."

The fact alone that so few lives were lost in relation to property damage is testimony to the increased ability to organize quickly. Emergency housing was set up in schools, churches, and public buildings. The army distributed food. Unions were authorized to take whatever steps necessary to maintain industrial production, including finding and allocating

needed raw materials. The Sandinista Defense Committees mobilized to aid victims, repair flood damage, and monitor food outlets to reduce hoarding and price gouging.

The scope of the damage was so great that no single organization by itself could address particular problems. Everything was thrown into the fray. CDSs worked alongside the army and militia. Sandinista Youth chapters worked alongside battalions of union volunteers. Religious, civic, and cultural organizations all provided organized volunteers.

Important practical experience was gained, under conditions of destruction quite similar to those of war.

Reagan sends anniversary 'greetings'

Attacks from the U.S.-supported counter-revolutionaries continued to escalate during this entire period. Special targets included literacy instructors, teachers, health brigade members, agrarian reform technicians, and small sparsely populated farming hamlets near the northern border with Honduras.

The attack was sharply stepped up just before dawn July 19, the third anniversary of the victory of the insurrection that overthrew Somoza and brought the revolutionary government to power.

An unmarked plane flying in at low altitude from Honduras fired two rockets at tanks holding 800,000 gallons of automobile and aviation fuel in the northern port city of Corinto — and narrowly missed.

Had a direct hit been scored, much of the city's population of 30,000 could have perished in the resulting explosion and fire. Only a conscious decision to adjust this year's celebration to wartime conditions prevented disaster.

To assure that major cities and towns remained guarded, only special contingents, selected by their co-workers, were sent to the anniversary celebration from many areas.

As the attempt to bomb Corinto showed, this had been an absolutely necessary measure. Only the barrage of anti-aircraft and rifle fire from troops guarding the port prevented the bomber from zeroing in on its target. Within minutes of the rocket blast, troops of the regular army were joined by 2,000 armed militia members, who took up positions throughout the port in case the bomber tried to return.

Church hierarchy provokes confrontation

A fresh challenge came in mid-August, this time from the Catholic church hierarchy. Tension with church officials had been smoldering for months, as they made no bones about their opposition to the deepening of the revolution.

In February Nicaragua's bishops issued a statement echoing imperialism's slanders claiming Sandinista oppression of the Miskitu Indians. At the end of December 1981 and in early January, it had been necessary to move thousands of Miskitu Indians from their homes near the northern border because the remote, thinly populated region could not be defended against escalating attacks by terrorists based in

Honduras. The Miskitus were resettled in modern, prefabricated homes in half a dozen new towns some 80 miles further from the border.

The fact that none of the bishops who condemned the government's actions had even visited the Miskitu resettlement area proved no obstacle to their joining in the campaign of lies.

In April the archbishop of Managua, Miguel Obando y Bravo, was named by counter-revolutionaries as a prospective member of the "government in exile" they were then considering setting up in Costa Rica. The archbishop did not publicly dissociate himself from the project until he was challenged to do so by Commander Borge on May Day.

In July, a popular priest who was a longtime supporter of the revolution was abruptly transferred from a working-class neighborhood in Managua and replaced by a well-known right-winger. Members of the parish who protested this move were summarily "excommunicated" — expelled from the Church.

Also in July the government decided to delay — in light of the tense situation — publication of a letter from the pope that came down heavily on the side of the hierarchy in any dispute with the church membership and lower-level clergy. This was seized on by conservative church figures to spread rumors that the government had "declared war on the church."

In this situation, in mid-August right-wingers led by a priest from Spain and another from Costa Rica occupied a Catholic school in Masaya, a major city just south of Managua. During the occupation, shots coming from the school ripped into an unarmed pro-Sandinista demonstration, killing two and wounding at least seven.

The fact that the shootings occurred on the edge of Masaya's Monimbó barrio (an area that had been one of the first to rise up against Somoza in 1978), the confusion that immediately followed, and the fact that barricades went up almost immediately in self-defense was enough for several international wire services to declare that Monimbó had risen up again — this time against the Sandinistas.

It was also enough to spread confusion in Nicaragua — testimony to the fact that the church hierarchy still has considerable ability to spread doubt when it is able to conceal the real political issues involved in its hatred of the Sandinista government.

In a display of support for the revolution, however, thousands of residents of Masaya turned out the next day to attend the funeral of one of the victims of the rightist attack. Borge himself addressed the gathering and explained how the shootings had been part of an attempt to "turn the poorest and most backward sectors of the population against the revolution."

Commemoration of Carlos Fonseca

Two simultaneous campaigns were conducted in Nicaragua in late October and early November. On the face of it, it would be dif-

ficult to see how they were connected. But they were.

The Sandinista leadership of the mass organizations conducted rallies, factory meetings, and militia and neighborhood defense committee meetings aimed at explaining the inevitability of increasing conflict with the warmakers in Washington, and at deepening the political understanding necessary to prepare for it.

This campaign was focused around commemoration of the November 8, 1976 death of Carlos Fonseca, killed in battle by National Guard troops.

Next to Sandino, Carlos Fonseca is Nicaragua's most prominent revolutionary figure. So in the context of increasing imperialist attacks, the massive participation in the week's events took on the character of standing up to be counted. And in one activity or another, hundreds of thousands took part to show their support for the revolution.

The reactionary daily *La Prensa* understood perfectly the significance of these meetings, assemblies, and rallies. It printed not one word about them.

'La Prensa' discovers boxing

Instead *La Prensa* campaigned for nearly a month to focus attention on, of all things, a boxing match.

Nicaraguan boxer Alexis Argüello, holder of world titles in three different classifications, was scheduled to take on a top-notch U.S. boxer in Miami November 12.

La Prensa began building publicity for the match more than a month in advance — going to the point of sending special correspondents to Miami weeks ahead of time to write daily front-page features.

Why? Because Argüello, in addition to being one of the world's best boxers, had also been an honorary member of Somoza's National Guard. After the revolution his property in Managua was confiscated. He then made his permanent home among the right-wing exile community in Miami, where he dished out anti-Sandinista interviews.

La Prensa's aim was to try to take advantage of many Nicaraguans' pride in Argüello as an international sports figure and make it appear that this included support for his political views as well.

The attempt fizzled. The revolutionary government refused to fall into the trap that had been set for it. Articles in *Barricada's* sports pages treated Argüello solely as a boxer, not a political enemy. And on the night of the fight itself, the match was shown free on Sandinista TV. With special commercials, of course — from the Sandinista Defense Committees, from the Sandinista Army and Militia, and from the Sandinista Police. So much for Alexis Argüello as a symbol of the counterrevolution!

Polarization deepens

Naturally, no society could go through changes and pressures like the ones Nicaragua has experienced without differences of opinion

— to put it mildly.

The most important differences are those based on social class, and involve more than opinions. The capitalists know exactly what is happening. The revolution is laying the basis to replace them with a social system based on state property and production for human need rather than profit — at a measured pace based on the country's economic and social realities.

Nicaragua's capitalists — who still control a majority of agriculture and 75 percent of industry — oppose this course and the constantly tightening constraints it already imposes on their drive to increase profits.

And they have many ways to express this opposition. *La Prensa*, even though subjected to wartime censorship, is one of the most important.

Copies of all articles struck out by the censors are immediately rushed by *La Prensa* to the U.S. embassy, where they are fed to the U.S. press. They are also shipped to right-wing dailies in Costa Rica and Honduras, where they are often aired on radio and TV as well. And because of the relatively small distances involved, Honduran broadcasts reach most of the north of Nicaragua, and Costa Rican broadcasts cover the south.

Almost all capitalist parties that previously existed in Nicaragua (with the exception of Somoza's Liberal Party) still exist, function, and are represented in the country's parliament, the Council of State. The problem they have there is that representation in the Council of State is based on economic and social reality: the great majority of the population are workers and farmers. Thus the capitalist representatives are far outnumbered by those of the unions, mass organizations, and political parties that support the revolution.

The capitalists also own most of the country's radio stations and, through the Catholic church hierarchy, control much of the country's education in this overwhelmingly Catholic country.

All of these forums are used to exacerbate concern and confusion over precisely the problems the U.S. war against Nicaragua is designed to deepen — unemployment, inflation, and shortages of imported goods.

A class polarization is taking place. On one side are the capitalists, bound and determined to stop the course of the revolution. On the other are the workers and small farmers, whose conscious support of the revolution has been greatly strengthened by direct experience with the war, combined with ongoing political mobilization and education.

In the middle, however, stands a sizable grouping. Even among working people, not everyone either understands the limitations imposed by the war or agrees on priorities within

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Barricada International

Young people mobilize for community water project. Pipeline will provide safe water for the first time.

this context.

Immediate improvements in most people's lives were gained through the revolution, especially in nutrition, educational opportunities, access to medical care, transportation, housing costs, and cheap loans to working farmers. Not only are continuing improvements threatened by the economic consequences of the war, however, but qualitative advances are going to be some time in coming.

Public expression of concern about this — at times in the form of heated debates — can be heard on virtually any street corner, in any bus, or marketplace. But it is just that — a gigantic debate. And a number of bourgeois opponents of the revolution have become impatient. They want action.

Alfonso Robelo, millionaire former member of the governing junta, has left the country and openly called for armed counterrevolution.

Pastora too chose voluntary exile. He has become an open enemy of the revolution but

has, at least publicly, tried to steer clear of too close an association with the CIA or National Guard.

In addition, a number of members of the anti-Somoza wing of the capitalist class, who for a time after the revolution served as ambassadors, banking officials, and economic advisers, have left the country and shifted the base of their operations to Panama, Costa Rica, and Miami.

Why? Because they can't speak as openly or act as publicly against the revolution at home as they can abroad. Not so much because of the police or army, but because of public opinion in Nicaragua — which overwhelmingly defends the country and revolution against such attacks.

Their self-imposed exile is a tacit admission that persuasion alone cannot turn a sizable enough layer of the population against the revolution to turn back the clock.

Armed force is necessary.

The Nicaraguan revolution could never have survived without the support it has received throughout the world.

The revolution in power has recognized this and pursued an internationalist course.

Diplomatic offensive

Nicaragua, along with Cuba, took the lead in Latin America in calling for solidarity with Argentina in its war against Britain and the United States. To protest the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, Nicaragua sent its foreign minister and minister of culture to the besieged city of West Beirut in the midst of the bombing.

This outspoken support for struggles to throw off colonial rule — combined with its record in defending the interests of its own workers and peasants — has won the Nicaraguan revolution the respect of freedom fighters everywhere.

This sentiment in turn has had a powerful impact on governments throughout the world who seek to present themselves as the least bit progressive.

Nicaragua has used the last nine months to mount an international diplomatic offensive to isolate the American warmakers politically.

Top Nicaraguan officials have fanned out around the world, from the Vatican to Moscow, visiting heads of state and in the process gaining extensive news coverage of the aims and gains of the revolution, and of the U.S. war against it.

The results can be seen from the fact that two of the most important *bourgeois* political figures in Latin America, President Herrera Campins of Venezuela and former President López Portillo of Mexico, have taken the lead in pressing Washington to stop its attack on Nicaragua.

The FSLN, which has observer status in the Socialist (Second) International, has also been able to maintain cordial relations with most Social Democratic parties in Western Europe. Concretely, this has helped provide badly needed loans and technical assistance, as well as direct pressure against Washington's war. When Reagan recently visited Central America, for example, the Socialist International sent its own fact-finding team to Nicaragua. The mission, headed by former Venezuelan President Carlos Andrés Pérez, issued a report blasting U.S. intervention.

Difficulties for the United States increased in October when a majority of the world's governments voted to place Nicaragua on the United Nations Security Council, despite a vigorous U.S. campaign to keep the Sandinistas out. Votes don't stop wars. But it was, as Commander Borge told a cheering crowd of 40,000 in Managua celebrating the victory, "a kick in the teeth for the imperialists."

Strengthening the mass organizations

The debates, political campaigns, and education carried out in Nicaragua laid the groundwork for reorganizing and strengthening the fundamental defense of the revolution

— the organized population.

Defense has many aspects, ranging from military preparedness to getting food on the shelves of the corner grocery store. Significant steps were taken to broaden participation in each of these tasks.

One of the most important was reorganization of the CDSs. These committees, based on the neighborhood military and defense squads that arose during the war against Somoza, are new to Nicaragua and often have been loosely organized.

But as the CDSs mobilized to meet the challenge of the war, the floods, and the monitoring of food prices, there has been a sizable increase in membership. At the same time, much of the previous leadership at a local level has been replaced by new activists who stepped forward to help take on these tasks. Today nearly 500,000 people — around half the adult population — are CDS members.

Problems that had developed in the CDSs, including abuse of power by some leaders, were openly and frankly aired, at the initiative of the FSLN national political leadership. (See the accompanying letter from FSLN Commander Bayardo Arce, which served as the basis for discussion in CDSs around the country.)

Active membership in the CDSs has increased to the point that today, in Managua alone, 60,000 people, about one-tenth of the city's population, conduct organized night-watch.

This means that on almost every block there is somebody standing watch all night. They are not paid. And they go to work the next day just like everybody else, and do a full day's work just as if they had had a full night's sleep. They do this an average of two or three times a month per person.

The aim is to provide an early-warning defense against counterrevolutionary infiltration and sabotage. But it has also had an important side benefit — Managua police statistics show an 85 percent decrease in street crime since the state of emergency was declared March 15.

The militias have been beefed up as well, as tens of thousands of volunteers have answered appeals to enroll for basic military training. This is not something you volunteer for lightly. It means giving up three out of four Sundays a month for calisthenics, marching, and target practice — and Sundays are the only day of the week off.

The reserve battalions have also been strengthened, both in numbers and in combat experience. Battalions around the country have been called up for rotating three-month tours of duty and sent to the front lines along the northern border. This has both provided support for the regular army and valuable experience in combat as part of a trained unit. This too is totally voluntary and unpaid.

The regular army, the Sandinista People's Army (EPS), is also voluntary. Although Nicaragua has been at war almost since the success of the insurrection, there is no conscryp-

tion and none is needed. The EPS of today is the battle-tested, highly politically motivated military arm of the revolution.

* * *

The conflict over the Malvinas gave Nicaragua nine more months to prepare for the full-scale war it knows has only been postponed.

DOCUMENTS

FSLN's letter to leaders of Sandinista Defense Committees

[The following is the text of an October 7 letter from Commander Bayardo Arce, Coordinator of the Political Commission of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN), to the municipal, village, neighborhood, and block committees of the Sandinista Defense Committees (CDS). The translation is by *Intercontinental Press*.]

* * *

The FSLN National Directorate sends greetings to the 459,750 CDS members throughout the country, who on a daily basis are strengthening the defense and preserving the gains of our people by carrying out their tasks. That is precisely why we want to repeat to you the concepts outlined by your National Coordinator, Commander Leticia Herrera, and by Sergio Ramírez, at the commemoration of the CDSs' Fourth Anniversary.

We affirm that the entire CDS membership, fully involved in their tasks and continually working to become more responsible, contribute decisively to the way in which the Sandinista People's Revolution confronts the difficulties inherited from the past. The same holds true in regard to the problems brought in by the war policies that have sought to strangle our aspirations to be respected, sovereign, and independent.

We firmly believe that the CDS leadership and membership must express qualities that can be measured by:

- participation in defense activities;
- respect for the revolution's laws;
- discipline and respect in carrying out the directions of their immediate superiors; and
- willingness to be the best servants of the people, avoiding and combatting opportunism, bureaucratism, favoritism, and bossism.

In this framework, a concern has arisen that troubles the National Directorate. We consider it an unavoidable duty to present it to you. There are signs that many coordinators have not accurately understood the line of the revolutionary directives. Based on its persuasive character, this policy has the aim of attracting the sympathy of sectors that, because of their situation, ought to be in favor of defending the revolution.

We refer to arbitrary attitudes and actions

The gains they have registered — social, political, diplomatic, and military — have greatly increased the price the U.S. government will have to pay. The uneasiness this has caused among some sections of the ruling class in the United States is in part responsible for the fact that the war itself is no longer the secret it once was. □

that have effects that are contrary to Sandinista principles. For example:

- Authorization of arbitrary land or building seizures, despite the fact that all legal efforts are being made to give a plot of land to all who need and deserve it.

- Withholding the sugar distribution card from someone who has still not come to understand the revolution, instead of using the revolution's achievements to raise his or her consciousness. We know that this method is used at times to pressure people into doing CDS tasks, which are supposed to be voluntary.

- Harassment by words and deeds of citizens who profess another ideology, religious or political, or who work with persons or institutions not identified with the revolution.

- Arrogant and haughty attitudes, taking on a kind of authority that only discredits the organization; creating small elite groups; and fostering divisiveness and intrigues among neighbors in a community.

- Misusing one's position in order to transform personal problems into problems of the organization, or promoting destructive campaigns to discredit persons with whom one has conflicts.

- Falling into an abuse of authority and using a responsible post in the organization as a way to enjoy personal or family privileges. A concrete case, for example, would be to award lots to close relatives, bypassing the directives of the revolutionary state. This only encourages and puts into practice notions left over from Somozaism.

- To tolerate or lead in abusing revolutionary vigilance [voluntary night-watch duty], especially through taking repressive measures against those who still have not joined in this task. (In some cases this has gone so far as the breaking of someone's door, or the casting of doubt on them, forgetting the fact that all CDS tasks are voluntary.)

It is absolutely necessary that we review our positions and make corrections. We have been thinking that we ought to meet in the near future to discuss these matters internally. Today, more than ever, national unity is the determining factor in defense. That is why we have put forward these ideas, upon which you will surely reflect. □

Repressive rule in new guise

Walesa: 'We have not lost hope'

By Ernest Harsch

Just four days after Gen. Wojciech Jaruzelski declared that the rigors of martial law would soon be suspended in Poland, police in Gdansk picked up Lech Walesa and detained him for more than nine hours on December 16.

The police gave no explanation. But their purpose was obviously to prevent the national chairman of the outlawed Solidarity union movement from addressing a rally scheduled to take place outside the Lenin Shipyard that afternoon.

Through this clear-cut act of political repression, Jaruzelski and the governing bureaucracy showed how limited are their moves to ease up on their repressive policies. The bureaucrats are as determined as ever to deny the workers their right to organize themselves and express their views. That is why the government has been adopting a host of new repressive laws at the same time that it is promising to lift martial law.

The Reagan administration in Washington has seized on this continued repression to maintain its debilitating economic sanctions against Poland, sanctions that have caused more suffering for the Polish working people.

Walesa speaks out

Walesa's latest detention is not only an example of the Polish government's repressive methods, however. It is also a testimony to the continued power of the Polish workers movement.

Although the bureaucrats have inflicted major blows against Solidarity, they still fear the union, including its most prominent leader, Walesa. They are afraid of what he represents and of what he has to say. They are afraid that he can provide a rallying point for the aspirations of working people throughout the country.

Despite the fact that Walesa had only recently been released from 11 months in detention, he has refused to remain silent or to abandon the ideals for which Solidarity fought.

On December 4, he sent a letter to Jaruzelski demanding a general amnesty for all political prisoners, for the reinstatement of all workers dismissed from their jobs, and for a return to trade union "plurality," that is, the right of workers to set up their own trade unions.

In speaking out, Walesa has acted with the confidence that he still has much of the Polish working class behind him.

This was evident in Gdansk on December 16, the day Walesa was detained, which was also the 12th anniversary of the 1970 massacre of striking workers in Gdansk. Despite a massive display of force by the ZOMO riot police,

many people attempted to commemorate the anniversary.

Workers leaving the Lenin Shipyard at the 2:00 p.m. shift change laid wreaths at the monument to the slain workers just outside the shipyard gates. A crowd of several hundred people gathered, chanting, "Solidarity!" and "Where is Lech?" They were dispersed by the police, who also fired tear-gas canisters at crowds of demonstrators near the main railway station.

At the nearby St. Brygida Church, several thousand people gathered for a memorial mass. Just as it was about to begin, someone unfurled a Solidarity banner, and the crowd burst into applause.

Anticipating that the authorities would try to prevent him from speaking publicly, Walesa had circulated a copy of his speech to reporters a few days earlier.

In it, he stressed the importance of continuing to fight for the workers' interests. Solidarity, he said, "exists within each of us. . . . We have to act through all possible means: public, open, and democratic means."

The workers' movement, Walesa said, had to fight along four parallel tracks. The first was for "the trade union that we won," that is, for Solidarity's right to function. The second was for the establishment of workers' self-management throughout the country, so that people can become "the genuine managers of their homes, factories, universities, mass media, farmers associations, and cities." The third was for the creation of independent unions and associations of artists and intellectuals, and the fourth for the setting up of new youth associations.

"I address all of you who are expecting these hopes to be fulfilled: Go home in peace, think this over, and work toward these aims," he said.

"We have not lost hope," Walesa emphasized. "Victory will be ours."

The police crackdown in Gdansk prevented Walesa from delivering his speech in person. But that will not keep it from being circulated around the country through Solidarity's many underground newspapers.

The union's network of information centers and factory committees is massive, a fact that the government indirectly acknowledged on December 9, when it for the first time revealed figures on the extent of the opposition activities that it has so far been able to suppress.

Gen. Boguslaw Stachura told the Sejm (parliament) that since the imposition of martial law a year ago, the authorities have broken up 677 committees, silenced 11 clandestine union radio stations, discovered 360 print shops, and

seized 1,196 printing presses and duplicating machines.

What the regime has been able to suppress is only a fraction of the total. Hundreds of union bulletins and newspapers are still being printed in all the major cities, committees exist in most major factories, and several radio stations are still broadcasting.

In the December 4 issue of *Tygodnik Mazowsze*, one of the main union bulletins in Warsaw, Solidarity leader Zbigniew Bujak noted that "during this year, the myth of the omnipresence and omnipotence of the security services has been toppled."

Government highly unpopular

Meanwhile, the government remains politically isolated, with only a very narrow base of social support within the country. The bureaucracy's governing Polish United Workers Party has lost hundreds of thousands of members since the rise of Solidarity — most of them in the factories. Jaruzelski has tried to get around this widespread distaste for the party by setting up a new formation, the Patriotic Movement for National Revival (PRON). But it, too, has attracted little support.

It is in this context that the bureaucrats have now decided to phase out the formal trappings of martial law. By releasing many of those who have been detained and raising the possibility of amnesty for some of the 2,500 union activists who have been sentenced to jail terms, they hope to diffuse a bit of the hostility and opposition that they face among the workers.

But at the same time, they have no intention of lifting the lid entirely. That would only encourage the workers to press the struggle for their rights with renewed vigor. "We cannot afford to renounce all the extraordinary measures," Jaruzelski said in a December 12 speech to the Sejm.

The authorities are replacing many of the specific provisions of martial law with new statutory regulations and laws.

As before, strict censorship will be in effect. The legal penalties for producing and distributing underground literature or for "causing a public disorder or disturbance" have been stiffened considerably. Workers can now be legally fired for participating in demonstrations or strikes. The 200 factories that have been militarized will remain under the control of military officers. Martial-law courts and summary proceedings will be retained. The Council of State will have the power to reimpose martial law anywhere, at any time.

By holding the club of continued repression over the heads of the workers, the government hopes to intimidate and silence them. But a full year of martial law has not been successful in doing this.

In the text of his speech, Walesa stated, "I believe that the seed we have sown has been deeply planted. We are not the same people we were before August," referring to the August 1980 strikes that led to the rise of Solidarity. "We know what we are fighting for." □

24-hour general strike

Antimilitary protest paralyzes country

By Fred Murphy

A massive general strike against military rule and economic austerity paralyzed Argentina on December 6.

The 24-hour protest was one of the most convincing shows of working-class power in Argentine history, and by far the biggest repudiation of military rule since the armed forces seized power in March 1976.

Not only did virtually all industrial and transportation workers stay off the job, some 95 percent of retail trade was also shut down. Most taxi drivers and individual bus operators kept their vehicles off the streets.

The postal and telecommunications systems were crippled. Private banks were closed, and government banks shut their doors at midday for lack of customers. High absenteeism was reported among civilian government employees, even at the presidential palace and many military installations.

The radio stations in Buenos Aires stayed on the air, but observed one minute of silence each hour during the strike. Most theaters and restaurants were closed. And the national lottery drawing scheduled for the day of the strike had to be postponed.

In the northern province of Chaco, the scene of disastrous floods in the days before the strike, emergency workers expressed their support by halting work for periods of one to five minutes during the day.

Working class demands democracy

"Without picket lines, without leafleting, without pressures of any kind, the population halted work for 24 hours in a disciplined way," the Buenos Aires daily *Clarín* commented in an editorial the next day. "The old charge that a group of agitators was really the secret motor of the strike could not be brandished in this case."

The strike was called jointly by both factions of the General Confederation of Labor (CGT) and by an independent bloc known as the Movement of Nonaligned Unions. They demanded measures to halt the drastic decline in living standards, reverse the mounting unemployment, restore civilian rule without further delay, lift restrictions on trade-union and political activity, release political prisoners, and clarify the fate of the thousands of persons who "disappeared" when military repression was at its most brutal from 1976 to 1979.

The Argentine working class currently faces one of the worst economic crises in the country's history. Unemployment, just 2 percent two years ago, now stands at 15 percent or higher. Many factories have closed down en-

tirely. Argentina has no unemployment insurance system, so thousands of jobless line up daily at soup kitchens throughout the country. Even employed workers can now seldom afford meat, formerly the main component of the Argentine diet.

Inflation has often exceeded 100 percent annually in recent years, and is now running at an annual rate of at least 450 percent. Real wages are now 10 percent below what they were in 1950. "People are selling all their furniture to be able to eat," a priest who runs a soup kitchen told the *Washington Post* in November.

Argentina's foreign debt has skyrocketed in recent years. It now stands at \$40 billion, the third-highest among semicolonial countries.

The International Monetary Fund and imperialist banks are demanding that still harsher austerity measures be imposed on working people before the debt can be renegotiated. The regime has already hiked utility bills and carried through repeated devaluations of the peso. More cuts in social spending are planned, along with a hike in interest rates that will mean further plant closings and business bankruptcies.

Discontent over the economic crisis is mounting among Argentine working people. But just as explosive — and still more trouble-

some for the dictatorship — is the question of the "disappeared."

Between 6,000 and 15,000 persons are unaccounted for as a result of the kidnappings and murders carried out by death squads directed by the military regime in the years immediately following the 1976 coup.

Mass graves discovered

For several years, courageous mothers, relatives, and other human-rights activists have been demanding that the fate of the "disappeared" be clarified and that those responsible be brought to justice. But anger on the issue reached the boiling point with the discovery of mass graves of the military's victims, starting in late October.

"The discovery was accidental," the November 21 *Granma Weekly Review* reported. "It happened when a mother obtained the exhumation of her son's body and discovered other remains in the grave with no indication as to their identity." The report continued:

Human rights groups immediately started an investigation and said there were at least 38 graves with 400 bodies under the same inscription. A probe of cemetery records in some cases indicated "killed in clashes with the army," supporting the belief that these were people reported as missing.

As soon as the news became known, human rights groups began to investigate other cemeteries and a few days later the existence of other graves marked N.N. [*nomen nescio*, Latin for "name unknown"] was reported.

By mid-November some 1,500 unidentified remains had been discovered in a dozen cemeteries around Argentina.

The discoveries have spurred demands for a complete accounting by the military of the fate

Protesters battle cops in Buenos Aires

More than 100,000 persons turned out in Buenos Aires on December 16 for the biggest street demonstration in six and a half years of military rule.

The protest, billed by its organizers as a "March for Democracy and National Reconstruction," culminated in a huge rally outside the Casa Rosada, Argentina's presidential palace.

About an hour and a half after the demonstration began, the junta's cops attacked the crowd, firing tear gas and rubber bullets. The pretext for the assault was that some demonstrators had aimed rocks at the windows of the Casa Rosada and the Economics Ministry.

"Most of the peaceful demonstrators streamed away from the plaza, pursued by tear gas," the *Washington Post* reported the next day, "while groups of protesters remained to battle mounted police with rocks, paving stones and firecrackers.

"Others built trash fires in nearby streets,

and many moved in crowds through downtown, fighting with police in armored cars."

Other reports said police fired rubber bullets into restaurants where protesters had sought refuge. The public headquarters of three of the capitalist parties that had sponsored the march were also attacked by the cops.

At least one protester was killed. Witnesses said he was shot from a passing Ford Falcon, the car model favored by Argentina's paramilitary groups.

Before the police attack, the *Post* reported, "the diverse crowd of students, factory workers and middle-class citizens stood beneath a hot setting summer sun and tirelessly chanted such antimilitary slogans as 'It's going to end, the military dictatorship,' and 'Up against the wall, all the brass who sold the country.' There were also loud chants of 'the disappeared — tell us where they are.'"

of the disappeared, and for the punishment of those responsible. Several thousand persons marched in Buenos Aires on October 28 to raise these demands, and on December 9 and 10, up to 6,000 persons defied a threatening police mobilization in the capital to participate in a 24-hour protest around the same theme.

These actions were part of a sustained wave of demonstrations, rallies, and work stoppages that began with a September 22 march by thousands of trade unionists in Buenos Aires. The high point of this upsurge so far was the December 6 general strike.

Recovery from Malvinas defeat

The explosion of protest shows that the anti-dictatorial movement, and the labor movement in particular, have recovered from the disorientation brought on by Argentina's defeat at the hands of British imperialism in the Malvinas Islands in June. It also shows that despite the military defeat in the Malvinas, the overall political impact of the confrontation with British imperialism was to deepen the radicalization of the Argentine workers and to raise their political consciousness.

In the months before the war over the Malvinas broke out, the workers movement had been regaining strength and confidence after suffering through the darkest years of the dictatorship's antilabor repression. Strikes had taken place in key industries, and on March 30 tens of thousands of workers had battled the cops during a march in the center of the capital.

The recovery of the Malvinas on April 2 was ordered by then-President Gen. Leopoldo Galtieri as an attempt to restore the military's tarnished reputation. By rallying the entire Argentine people behind a goal that had overwhelming and legitimate popular support — restoration of sovereignty over an illegally held British colonial outpost — Galtieri and the junta thought they could quiet the burgeoning working-class opposition.

But the military rulers miscalculated. London dispatched its fleet to the South Atlantic immediately, and the Argentine masses reacted by demanding that the anti-imperialist victory on the islands be defended without compromise. Hundreds of thousands demonstrated against U.S. Secretary of State Alexander Haig when he visited Buenos Aires in April. Slogans supporting the fight against British imperialism were joined with demands for democratic rights and continuing opposition to the dictatorship.

A popular slogan captured the mass sentiment — "The Malvinas are Argentine, and so are the disappeared!"

But the junta proved incapable of effectively defending Argentine sovereignty. The garrison on the islands surrendered on June 14, and colonial rule was restored.

Although several thousand persons marched on the government palace immediately afterwards and chanted angrily, "the boys died, the officers sold out," the mass movement was temporarily disoriented by the defeat. The



Buenos Aires, March 30: Cops attack trade-union protesters. Movement has now reemerged on a more massive scale.

military, while rocked by recriminations among the officer corps as to who was responsible, did manage to put together a new government behind Gen. Reynaldo Bignone. Galtieri resigned in disgrace.

President Bignone sought to lull the population further with a pledge that his regime would be a "transitional" one. Elections, he promised, would be held in 1983 and power transferred to a civilian administration "by March 1984 at the latest."

But as Argentine troops returned home from the Malvinas and began to recount stories of their officers' incompetence and cowardice in face of the British attack, confusion gave way to anger among working people. The armed forces were blamed not only for the repression and the economic crisis, but also for the Malvinas defeat. Now, there has been a resurgence of the mass movement on a higher level than before.

'Se va a acabar . . .'

It quickly became clear that Argentines were in no mood to wait until 1984 for an end to the dictatorship. On September 22, between 20,000 and 40,000 workers took to the streets of the capital in a march for "peace, bread, and jobs" called by one of the two CGT factions. (The demand for peace means an end to repression.)

For hours, the workers marched up and down the main avenues of the capital, while the police could do little but stand aside.

"Where are the disappeared?" the workers chanted. "Firing squads, firing squads, for the ones who betrayed the nation!" — a reference to the officers responsible for the Malvinas defeat.

And more than anything else they chanted the slogan that is now on everyone's lips in Argentina: "*Se va a acabar, se va a acabar, la dictadura militar!*" (The military dictatorship is going to end!)

Similar actions were held in Mendoza, Rosario, Córdoba, and Mar del Plata.

Between those demonstrations and the general strike came a series of other actions. Bourgeois political parties such as the Radicals

and the Peronists held rallies of up to 30,000 persons, which also took on an antidictatorial character. The Communist Party held a public rally in early October that drew 15,000.

Strikes have taken place among auto workers, electric-power workers, merchant seamen, and construction, textile, postal, and subway workers. The municipal police forces of Buenos Aires and Córdoba have launched slowdowns to demand wage increases, announcing among other things that they would refuse to act against demonstrators.

When the governor of Buenos Aires Province decreed a steep hike in municipal taxes in mid-November, street protests swept the suburbs of the capital. In the town of Lanús on November 24, 20,000 residents fought a 30-minute pitched battle with police after local officials refused to hear their complaints.

And on December 4, at a homage in La Plata to veterans of the Malvinas War, 300 ex-soldiers booed their officers and chanted "*Se va a acabar. . .*"

Politicians appeal to church

As the protests mounted, the five main bourgeois parties that make up the bloc known as the Multipartidaria called on the Catholic church hierarchy to mediate a solution to the political crisis. Leading bishops began holding talks with labor leaders, politicians, military officers, and human-rights groups. "There is still grave discord," said Bishop Justo Laguna, "very serious confrontations, and the church is trying to fulfill its role as the ministry of reconciliation and peace."

The general strike and other protests have shown, however, that Argentine working people are hardly in a mood for "reconciliation" with the junta. Mindful of this, the Multipartidaria scheduled a huge "people's march for democracy and national reconstruction" for downtown Buenos Aires on December 16. The aim was to provide a safety valve for the discontent and try to convince the junta it had best accelerate plans for turning the government over to civilian politicians. Organizers said at least 100,000 persons were expected to dem-

onstrate.

The regime was rightly worried that such a massive mobilization in the capital's streets could go beyond the politicians' plans. Military officers sharply attacked the opposition parties and warned that the march could have "destabilizing effects."

On the other hand, most of the military troops would prefer to get out of the line of fire and let the politicians take responsibility for managing the crisis. But they must first try to assure that there will be no "Nuremberg Trials" for the many officers whose hands were bloodied in the repression of the late 1970s.

The junta published "guidelines" on November 11 setting out 15 questions the civilian parties would have to agree on in advance before elections could be held. These were "the necessary conditions for a stable democracy," the junta said.

In effect the junta demanded immunity from punishment for the deaths and disappearances and for the defeat in the Malvinas. The generals also insisted on agreement concerning the future role of the military, laws governing trade unions, economic policy, and a vague catchall reference to "investigation into illegalities" committed during the dictatorship.

Within days, the Multipartidaria formally rejected the junta's demand for such a pact. The bourgeois parties were hardly opposed in principle — a smooth transition back to a stable capitalist civilian regime is just what they are seeking. But they are well aware of how deep the masses' hatred is for the armed forces. As the *New York Times* put it November 13, "many political leaders are uncomfortable about the possibility that they may be accused of selling out to the military."

'There must be justice'

The key obstacle for both the parties and the junta is the question of the "disappeared." Before the mass graves came to light, the junta had flatly declared that "all actions carried out against terrorist bands conformed with approved plans." To leave no room for doubt as to which victims this encompassed, General Bignone attacked human-rights activists as the "mothers of criminal terrorists."

Various plans have since been floated in the press for the military to issue an apologetic document, punish a few scapegoats, decree an "amnesty" for itself, or seek official "forgiveness" from the church hierarchy.

Many politicians have indicated willingness to go along with some such plan, but human-rights activists and the families of the victims have vowed not to accept a whitewash. "They will never win in the end, because there must be justice," said Nora de Cortinas, a leader of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, a group that has demonstrated outside the presidential palace every Thursday for several years.

Speaking of her son, a medical student, who disappeared in April 1977, Cortinas declared, "I want him back alive, because he was taken alive. If not, I want justice for the people responsible." □

Lesotho

Apartheid regime kills refugees

Dozens massacred in South African attack

By Ernest Harsch

Dozens of unarmed refugees were murdered in cold blood December 9 in Maseru, the capital of Lesotho, in an unprovoked attack by South African commando units.

The white minority regime in Pretoria claimed that the attack into Lesotho — an independent country that is totally surrounded by South Africa — was directed against "trained terrorists" of the African National Congress (ANC). The ANC, South Africa's main national liberation movement, is fighting to overthrow the racist system of apartheid that op-



presses that country's Black majority.

In a statement issued in Lusaka, Zambia, the ANC called Pretoria's charges "utterly false." The killings, it said, amounted to a "cold-blooded massacre." The ANC vowed to continue its fight against white minority rule.

Numerous witnesses, residents of Maseru, and Lesotho government officials also stressed that those who had been killed were refugees, mostly young Blacks who had fled South Africa after the crushing of the massive 1976 urban rebellions.

"These people were genuine refugees," said Vincent Makhele, Lesotho's minister of rural development and the secretary-general of the country's ruling party. "We allow them in on condition they do not launch any attacks from our territory, and to our knowledge they have kept to these conditions."

The real "trained terrorists" were the South African commandos themselves.

Some 100 of them were flown into Maseru at 1:00 a.m. As people slept, the South Africans attacked 12 different sites in the city. They used bazookas, machine guns, grenades, and incendiary bombs to blast open doors, demolish apartments, and kill everyone found inside. Most of the apartments and buildings that were hit housed refugees.

Clearly acting on outdated information, the commandos attacked one apartment that had

formerly been occupied by a leading ANC member, Chris Hani, who left Lesotho several months ago. The current tenant, a Lesotho citizen, was killed instead.

After five hours, the butchers were picked up by helicopter and flown back to South Africa.

As of December 10, the Lesotho authorities had recovered 42 bodies, 12 of whom were citizens of Lesotho. A number of South African refugees and Lesotho citizens were still missing.

Although white-run newspapers in South Africa refused to condemn the attack, the Black-edited *Sowetan*, a daily newspaper sold in Soweto and other Black townships around Johannesburg, expressed its "total abhorrence" for the "indefensible" action. Many Soweto families were in mourning, since most of those killed in Maseru originally came from Soweto.

Pretoria's attack into Lesotho was also condemned by many governments around the world.

On December 15, the United Nations Security Council voted unanimously to "strongly" condemn Pretoria's attack.

The U.S. representative was among those who voted for the resolution. But it has been the Reagan administration's increasingly close ties with the apartheid regime over the past two years that has done much to encourage the South African racists to carry out such terrorist attacks against neighboring countries. This has included increased U.S. economic ties with South Africa, frequent meetings with South African officials, the posting of U.S. military attachés in South Africa, and the repeated use of Washington's veto powers in the United Nations Security Council to block the adoption of economic sanctions against the apartheid regime.

Just a few weeks before the Lesotho attack, U.S. Vice-president George Bush toured several African countries to press the Reagan administration's demand that Cuban troops be pulled out of Angola before Namibia could be granted its independence from South African rule — a demand that seeks to justify Pretoria's continued war against the Namibian people.

And just one day before the Maseru attack, the official South African state radio broadcast a commentary that spoke about a "joint commitment" with the Reagan administration to "a Monroe doctrine for the region" that recognized Pretoria's "special responsibility" for maintaining stability in southern Africa — in the same way, it said, that Washington sought to maintain stability in Central America.

Thus, the blood of the victims of Maseru is as much on Washington's hands as it is on Pretoria's. □

UN vote toes U.S. line

While Reagan greets Pakistani dictator

By Ernest Harsch

Three years after the beginning of the large-scale Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan, the U.S. government and other imperialist powers are continuing to use Moscow's move to fuel their anticommunist propaganda drive and preparations for war.

As the anniversary of the intervention approached, the Reagan administration revived its charges that Soviet troops were using chemical weapons against antigovernment guerrilla forces in Afghanistan. And it once more pressed for passage of a United Nations resolution demanding an immediate withdrawal of Soviet troops from that country. The resolution was passed overwhelmingly, with 114 votes for and 21 against. (Twenty-two countries abstained or failed to vote.)

On the opening day of the debates on the resolution, November 24, U.S. representative Jeane Kirkpatrick charged that Soviet troops had "committed numerous acts of terrorism against civilians," including the use of "boobytrapped objects, such as toys, cigarette packs and pens." She claimed that there were "47 known chemical attacks in Afghanistan" carried out by the Soviet forces.

These U.S. charges of chemical warfare come despite the release of a detailed UN report concluding that there was no proof of such allegations (see following article).

But the U.S.-backed campaign against the Soviet Union and Afghanistan is not limited to propaganda. For several years now — dating from well before the Soviet intervention — Washington has been arming and financing proimperialist guerrilla groups fighting to overthrow the Afghan government.

Washington then used the Soviet intervention to justify increasing its aid to these groups — aid that has been funneled through Pakistan — as well as to step up its military moves throughout the region. Claiming a danger of "Soviet expansionism," and also in reaction to the Iranian revolution, the Pentagon established its Rapid Deployment Force and bolstered its military presence in the Indian Ocean. Within the United States, the Carter administration reintroduced draft registration.

Warm embrace for Zia

Just a week after the UN vote, Pakistani dictator Gen. Zia ul-Haq arrived in Washington for talks with Reagan and other U.S. officials. The discussions, a White House source said, were marked by "openness and warmth."

Reagan praised Zia for providing \$1 million a day to the hundreds of thousands of Afghan refugees in Pakistan. Much of that aid, in fact, has been going toward the arming and training

of the rightist guerrilla groups, which are strung out in some 80 bases inside Pakistan, along the Afghan border.

And by not saying a word about Zia's brutal repression of political opponents within Pakistan, Reagan also gave his domestic policies a stamp of approval. Since Zia seized power in a military coup in 1977, his regime has been marked by wholesale arrests of political activists, public floggings, executions, torture, massacres of striking workers, and continued violations of the rights of Pakistan's oppressed nationalities.

In exchange for the Pakistani regime's willingness to protect imperialist interests in Pakistan and implement U.S. policies toward Afghanistan, Reagan reaffirmed a six-year, \$3.2 billion U.S. aid package for the Zia regime, which included 40 F-16 fighter planes delivered to Pakistan just before Zia's arrival in Washington.

During the UN debate, Pakistani representative Sahabzada Yaqub-Khan denied the "baseless allegations that Pakistan's territory is being used for mounting subversive activity inside Afghanistan."

His denial was strictly for the record. Numerous foreign journalists have visited the guerrillas' camps and bases in Pakistan and have accompanied them on military raids into Afghanistan. The Pakistani border guards let them pass unhindered.

U.S. hypocrisy

Washington's hypocritical campaign around Afghanistan did not go unchallenged during the UN debate. Cuban representative Raul Roa Kouri blasted "the outright manipulation of the events in Afghanistan by the imperialists of the United States to conceal their cynical support for the worst international forces and to promote their own warmonger policy and to make a smokescreen for their own political and moral crisis."

He reaffirmed Cuba's position of voting against the resolution, so as not to "provide grist for the mill of reaction and imperialism."

The Nicaraguan representative, Jorge Canda Morales, while stating that Nicaragua would abstain on the resolution, also attacked Washington's hypocrisy.

"We are particularly displeased," he said, "to see that one permanent member of the Security Council invokes the sacred principle of the duty to refrain from the threat or use of force against the independence of any State in the case of Afghanistan, but does not apply, or even admit the validity of, that principle where Central America is concerned."

"How can anyone condemn the Soviet presence in Afghanistan but remain silent about the occupation of Namibia and other acts of aggression committed by South Africa against the front-line countries? How can anyone praise the rebellious Moslems in Afghanistan while at the same time supporting those who are killing Moslems, Palestinians and Arabs in the Middle East?"

Difficulties of Afghan government

In Afghanistan itself, the Soviet troops and Afghan government forces have been unable to put down the guerrilla forces, despite three years of concerted military efforts.

Major sweeps by infantry troops and airborne and artillery units through the Panjshir Valley and other regions of the country earlier this year inflicted some major military blows against the rebels. But often the guerrillas have returned to these same areas almost as soon as the government forces have pulled back.

One major reason for the strength and resilience of the guerrillas — besides the imperialist backing that many of them receive through Pakistan — has been the Babrak Karmal regime's political inability to undercut their social base of support within the country.

Many leaders of the guerrilla groups are large landowners, members of the Islamic religious hierarchy, or tribal elders who originally launched the revolt against the central government in opposition to various social reform measures adopted following the April 1978 revolution, such as a land reform and literacy effort. But the reforms were drawn up bureaucratically, and the government's heavy-handed efforts to push them through, without seeking to politically mobilize or organize the population, alienated wide sectors of the peasantry, who make up the overwhelming majority of the population. Internal factional disputes, brutal repression against any form of political dissent, and lack of sensitivity to the interests of Afghanistan's various nationalities left the government politically isolated and made it possible for the rightist and proimperialist groups to exploit the widespread discontent.

Rather than solving these problems, the Soviet intervention has worsened them, giving the civil war an aspect of a popular struggle against foreign occupation. None of Karmal's efforts to win greater popular support has elicited any significant response. The guerrillas are today still able to operate throughout wide sections of the countryside and have even begun to make increasingly frequent attacks into the capital, Kabul.

Seeking negotiations

In this context, new feelers have been put out by various governments involved in the conflict to try to achieve a negotiated settlement.

Although the Pakistani regime had originally refused to have any dealings whatsoever with the Karmal government, since June it has been conducting indirect talks through the in-

termediary of UN Undersecretary General Diego Cordovez. This reflects concern on Zia's part about the possible political repercussions within Pakistan of the presence of large numbers of Afghan refugees and of any prolonged conflict with its neighbor.

The Soviet and Afghan governments have repeatedly stated that if the Pakistani regime stopped aiding the guerrillas, that could help foster the conditions for a Soviet withdrawal.

When Zia attended Leonid Brezhnev's funeral in Moscow in November, he met with the new Soviet Communist Party chief, Yuri Andropov. According to Zia, most of the time was spent discussing Afghanistan. During his visit to the United States, Zia publicly stated

that he thought Moscow was sincere in seeking a negotiated accord.

Even before the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, Cuban President Fidel Castro, in his capacity as chairman of the Movement of Nonaligned Countries, offered to mediate discussions between the Afghan and Pakistani governments. In March 1980, following the Soviet intervention, Cuban Foreign Minister Isidoro Malmierca visited Moscow, Kabul, and the Pakistani capital of Islamabad to deliver messages to this effect.

Cuban UN Ambassador Roa Kouri, speaking during the General Assembly debate last month, reaffirmed his government's interest "in contributing to . . . the achievement of peace and stability in Southwest Asia on the

basis of . . . respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-intervention in the internal affairs of States."

Roa Kouri said that the Cuban government welcomes the informal talks begun under the auspices of UN official Diego Cordovez, but that the General Assembly resolution "does not contribute to that end."

In explaining Nicaragua's abstention on the U.S.-backed resolution, representative Canda Morales stated that while supporting "the need to find a political solution" to the situation in Southwest Asia, his government did not believe that the "flexibility and moderation which are so essential to dialogue and to a political settlement of disputes [are] reflected in the draft resolution before us." □

FEATURES

U.S. chemical war charges fall flat

UN team finds no proof for Washington's accusations

By Will Reissner

With enough repetition, even the wildest accusation can begin to sound authoritative. Washington hopes that is what will happen to its charges that Soviet and Vietnamese forces are using banned chemical and bacteriological weapons in Afghanistan, Laos, and Kampuchea.

The charge was first raised by then-Secretary of State Alexander Haig in a September 13, 1981, speech in West Berlin. Days later it was discovered that Haig's total evidence was a single "leaf and stem sample" turned over to

Washington by Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge forces battling the government of Kampuchea.

When Pol Pot ruled Kampuchea between 1975 and 1979, his regime was responsible for the deaths of up to 3 million people there. Despite that genocidal record, the Reagan administration welcomed Pol Pot's collaboration in its campaign against communism.

Over the past year, the U.S. government has repeated its chemical and biological warfare charges at regular intervals, presenting new assertions each time its previous inventions have been challenged by scientific analysis. (See "Mycotoxins, anthrax, and credibility gaps," *Intercontinental Press*, October 12, 1981.)

On November 26, 1982, a four-person team assembled by the United Nations secretary-general to examine Washington's charges issued a 109-page report on its findings. The team had been set up at Washington's insistence.

"U.N. Inquiry Finds Suggestive Evidence of Soviet Toxic War" exclaimed a headline in the December 5 *New York Times*. The December 7 *Washington Post* was even more emphatic: "U.N. Unit Finds Evidence of Toxic Arms."

But despite these headlines, the team's report admitted *it had found no such evidence*.

Conclusions of UN team

Washington cannot claim that the panel was biased against it. The investigative team was made up entirely of representatives of proimperialist governments — including a major general in the Egyptian armed forces and a colonel from the Philippine ministry of national defense — and it relied heavily on evidence provided by the Reagan administration.

In its conclusions, the team rejected the charge that banned chemical or biological weapons had been used in Afghanistan, although it claimed that there was evidence

of "harassing agents" such as tear gas.

Regarding charges that toxic chemicals had been used against the Hmong people in Laos, the group had to stretch its evidence to the utmost to come up with the following mealy-mouthed conclusion:

"While the group could not state that these allegations had been proven, nevertheless it could not disregard the circumstantial evidence suggestive of the possible use of some sort of toxic chemical substance in some instances."

It was this convoluted statement that provided the basis for the headlines in the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*.

The flimsiness of the supposed evidence becomes clear when reading the team's full report.

Not one piece of the physical evidence collected by the team stood up to laboratory analysis! In fact, the team's description of the laboratory results indicate that any previous claims based on laboratory analysis must be viewed with great skepticism.

For example, samples collected in refugee camps in Thailand in 1981 were examined by three different laboratories. Each was given the sample, a contaminated control, and a non-contaminated control. Two laboratories found



Afghan refugees in Pakistan. UN team found their stories "impossible to believe."

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no toxins whatsoever, including in the contaminated control. The third found toxins in all the material, including the "corresponding control samples supposed to be free from mycotoxins."

In samples taken from Thailand in 1982, the group reported that no toxins "were found either in the blood samples or in the sample consisting of pieces of leaves with yellow spots." The yellow spots were allegedly the residue of poisonous "yellow rain."

Testimony of 'victims'

In the absence of any physical evidence, the group had to rely exclusively on the claims of

alleged victims of such attacks. But the investigators themselves acknowledged that these sources were unreliable.

The report adds that while interviewing Afghan refugees in Pakistan, "the Group was inconvenienced in its efforts at carrying out adequate cross-examination of the alleged victims and eyewitnesses due to intervention and promptings by leaders of political refugee organizations who were present at the interviews."

Each and every alleged victim claiming to still be suffering from the effects of the chemical attacks was found upon examination to be suffering from clearly identifiable diseases!

The group found, for example, that it was "extremely unlikely" that a chemical agent caused the cancer on the hand of one alleged victim.

The group also examined nine people who claimed to have eye problems caused by exposure to a chemical warfare agent. In each case the supposed victims were found to be suffering from allergies.

One patient who was vomiting blood was diagnosed as suffering from a gastric stress ulcer.

Two Hmong refugees from Laos "had a rash that they attributed to exposure to a chemical attack two weeks earlier inside Laos." But an examination by the head of the Thai Institute of Dermatology revealed that "clinically both cases were of fungus infection and that the lesions were at least three months old."

Two other people were also found to be suffering from fungal infections, while another supposed victim actually had malaria.

The investigators acknowledged that some claims strained credulity. The report notes, for example, that although some Afghan guerrillas claimed they were attacked by a "lethal chemical agent that would not only kill but also induce rapid deterioration of the dead bodies," "the Group is not aware of the existence of any chemical compound that would have the effects described in the statements."

Moreover, "the Group also found it impossible to believe that some camels and dogs had developed rabies as a result of chemical attack."

'Clear discrepancies'

In comparing medical records with the statements of alleged victims, the group discovered that "medical records available on the alleged victims interviewed were devoid of any specific information concerning injuries by chemical agents."

Furthermore, "in many cases, there were clear discrepancies between the earlier statements as summarized in the medical records and the testimonials obtained by the Group."

Representatives of the hospital run by the International Committee of the Red Cross in Peshawar, Pakistan, testified that "they had not come across any cases which could be attributed to a chemical attack." A representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Peshawar told the group that during his two years in Pakistan he "had not come across any chemical casualties."

Among refugee-camp physicians in Thailand, according to the report, "some stated that they had never come across cases that could be attributed to an exposure to chemical warfare agents. Others mentioned that they had come in contact with many patients that claimed to have been exposed to chemical attack . . . but were unable to reach a definite conclusion."

Of the 16 people interviewed about alleged chemical attacks in Laos, eight volunteered the information that after taking opium their condition improved. Perhaps Reagan should try a pipeful. □

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Marxist view of Mideast conflict and PLO

Fifteen years of struggle for Palestinian national liberation

By David Frankel

For the past 15 years the Middle East has been a focal point of the international class struggle. In that brief period the world has witnessed the rise of an independent mass movement for Palestinian national liberation, three Arab-Israeli wars, civil wars in Jordan and Lebanon, the Iranian revolution, the Iraqi invasion of Iran, and numerous smaller uprisings and conflicts.

This same period saw Israel's consolidation as an imperialist power in its own right. Among the factors resulting in this were Israel's territorial expansion and the incorporation of the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip as a new pool of superexploited labor for the Israeli capitalists. Along with the escalating conflict between imperialist Israel and its Arab neighbors, a class polarization developed inside Israel itself between the workers and the imperialist ruling class.

The Israeli invasion of Lebanon in June and its results have marked a turning point in this tumultuous history.

World imperialism dealt a grave blow to the Palestinian people and the Arab masses as a whole through this war. More casualties and greater destruction were inflicted by the Israeli army in Lebanon than in any previous Arab-Israeli war.

Summarizing the cost of this military defeat in a speech before the Arab summit conference in Fez, Morocco, this September, Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) chairman Yassir Arafat declared: "In this murderous war we have suffered 49,600 Lebanese and Palestinian civilians martyred or wounded, as well as 5,300 military personnel martyred or wounded. . . . We still have about 6,000 combatants missing."

Arafat estimated that the war had left about 1 million people homeless. In addition, the Israeli army "wiped out on its way to Beirut 14 Palestinian camps and destroyed 32 Lebanese villages and three other cities. This happened prior to the siege and destruction of Beirut."

Just looked at from the point of view of the human toll, Arafat explained, "The Israeli-US invasion has opened a wound in the body of the Arab nation that is deeper and bigger than all its wounds and sufferings from 1948 until now."

Moreover, Israel has taken over nearly half of Lebanon. The imperialists have installed a rightist government and have begun dictating the future of the country in a way they have not been able to do since the occupation of Lebanon by U.S. Marines in 1958. Now, the marines have returned, along with French and Italian imperialist forces.

'This war was essentially a U.S. war . . . supported militarily, politically, economically and diplomatically by the United States. . . '

"This meeting," Arafat told the Arab rulers assembled at Fez, "must evaluate truthfully the seriousness of this change on the map of the Arab homeland and the Middle East region, which seeks to establish an Israeli empire that lies in the US orbit. . . ."

U.S. diplomatic offensive

"This war was essentially a US war," Arafat declared. He pointed out that the Israeli aggression was "supported militarily, politically, economically and diplomatically by the United States. . . ."

Washington is now pressing to consolidate the political advantage that it has gained as a result of the Israeli military victory in Lebanon. This is the meaning of the so-called Reagan plan announced at the beginning of September, as PLO forces were being evacuated from Israeli-besieged West Beirut.

The U.S. government hopes that the demobilization of the Arab masses and blows to their morale following the war will enable it to pressure more Arab governments — those in Saudi Arabia and Jordan in particular — to join Egypt in granting recognition to the Israeli state. In exchange, the Palestinians are offered the promise that negotiations might eventually lead to Israeli withdrawal from some part of the West Bank and a vaguely defined form of "autonomy" under the supervision of the Jordanian regime.

A similar proposal was part of the Camp David accords in 1978,

Besides angling for recognition of Israel by more Arab governments, the U.S. diplomatic offensive aims to destroy the PLO . . .

which only the Egyptian government went along with at the time.

Besides angling for recognition of Israel by more Arab governments, the U.S. diplomatic offensive has a second, related aim: to destroy the PLO.

To begin with, Washington is trying to isolate the PLO and downgrade its status. Reagan is demanding that the Arab governments rescind their recognition of the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. He has proposed that King Hussein of Jordan be empowered instead to negotiate in the name of the Palestinians.

At the same time, U.S. policymakers are telling the PLO that if it does not retreat from its intransigent struggle for Palestinian self-determination and accept Reagan's proposals, the Palestinians will be left with nothing at all. Washington hopes that such blackmail will split the PLO. False reports in the imperialist press claiming that Arafat and other PLO leaders have already agreed to Washington's demands are intended to help this process along.

But it is one thing for the imperialist rulers to launch an offensive against the Palestinian national liberation struggle — even an offensive that is based on big military gains — and it is quite another thing for them to succeed in destroying the PLO. That fight is far from over.

The PLO has successfully brought the plight of the Palestinian people to world attention and made their cause the central issue in the politics of the Middle East over the past 15 years. Even the State Department officials responsible for carrying out the drive against this revolutionary nationalist organization have been expressing their doubts about the prospects for Washington's success.

As *New York Times* reporter Leslie Gelb admitted October 31 in a major article on the Mideast negotiations: "United States officials said they were not sure of Arafat's exact position, and most doubted that he would choose this course" of recognizing Israel.

Moreover, this entire fight is taking place in a world situation where the overall relationship of class forces has never before been so favorable to the Palestinians.

It is this fact that explains the political price that the imperialists have had to pay for their gains in the Middle East.

Shift in working-class consciousness

After the savage massacre in West Beirut, people around the world — including growing numbers in Israel itself — have been forced to look anew at the situation in the Middle East. And the vantage point of working people in 1982 is different from what it was even a few years ago.

The extension of the world socialist revolution in Vietnam and Central America, and the massive revolutionary mobilizations in Iran that brought down the shah, have put working people around the world in a stronger position in relation to the capitalist rulers. At the same time,

exploitation and oppression are intensifying because of the worldwide capitalist economic crisis and the imperialist offensive against the working class. As a result, the working class and its allies are being drawn into struggles and are beginning to undergo profound changes in their consciousness.

With these experiences in mind, working people thought about the meaning of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and took a fresh look at Israel's 15-year occupation of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and the Golan Heights. New light was shed on Israel's increasingly murderous attacks against its Arab neighbors and its more and more brazen alliance with the most hated and reactionary forces in the world — from the racist rulers of South Africa to the gorilla dictators in Central America.

The massacre in West Beirut served as the catalyst to bring all this together. The result has been a leap in consciousness among working people around the world about the just and progressive character of the Arab peoples' struggle against Israel.

The Israeli state will never regain the moral standing that it has lost. Millions have come to realize that the image of Israel as a beleaguered underdog, repeatedly forced to go to war by fanatical Arab Jew-haters, is a lie.

Within Israel itself, masses of people came to the realization that their government was carrying out a war of aggression marked by atrocities from its opening day. An antiwar demonstration of more than 70,000 took place in Tel Aviv on July 3, and on September 25 some 400,000 people poured into the streets to protest the massacre in West Beirut. It was the biggest demonstration in the country's history.

These same events, which have posed big questions for working people in general, have also presented a challenge to the Marxist wing of the workers movement. How do communists see the Middle East and the political issues in the Arab-Israeli conflict? How has this analysis stood up to the test of events? What more can be learned from the war

in Lebanon about the class lines in the Middle East and the evolution of the various forces in the struggle there?

Imperialist oppression

Except for Israel, all the countries in the Middle East are oppressed and exploited nations. Their economies are warped by imperialism and their natural resources — oil in particular — are looted for the benefit of the superrich in New York, London, and Paris. Their political life has been repeatedly subjected to crude and brutal imperialist intervention.

This imperialist oppression, and the struggle of the oppressed peoples fighting for national liberation, is central to the politics of the Middle East, as it is to most of the world. It is one of the most important forms of the class struggle on a world scale.

Lenin, in this regard, insisted in his articles on *The Revolutionary Proletariat and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination*, written in 1914, that "the focal point of the [Marxist] programme must be that division of nations into oppressor and oppressed which forms the *essence* of imperialism. . . ." (Emphasis in original.)

During its first five years, the Communist International — founded under the leadership of the Bolsheviks in 1919 — further developed the program of the revolutionary workers movement in regard to the oppressed nations. Introducing a document on the question to the organization's second congress in 1920, Lenin stressed that "the cardinal idea underlying our theses. . . . is the distinction between oppressed and oppressor nations."

This framework was reaffirmed by the Fourth International in its May 1940 resolution on "The Colonial World and the Second Imperialist War." The resolution explained:

"Colonies and subject lands cover more than half the earth's surface. More than one billion people, yellow, brown, and black, are subject to the insignificant minority of supercapitalists who rule the Western



A survivor in ruins of Tyre, destroyed by Israeli forces in June.

world. The striving of this great mass of dispossessed to be free represents one of the two great progressive forces in modern society. The other is the struggle of the proletariat in the advanced countries for its emancipation."

The 1940 resolution explicitly pointed to the role of the Arab peoples in the struggle for liberation from imperialism. "The World War of the Allies against Germany," it said, "continued after 1918 in the form of a world war of the Allies against the peoples they sought to keep in subjection. . . . Promises of independence freely given during the war to

Except for Israel, all of the countries in the Middle East are oppressed and exploited nations . . .

the Arab peoples of the near and Middle East were redeemed in the form of iron imperialist rule, asserted and maintained by bomb and bayonet and gallows. Nationalist insurrections swept Egypt and the rest of the Moslem world. The Turks alone successfully won their independence."

Role of Israel

Although the British and French rulers were forced to give up direct political control of their Mideast colonies following World War II, the imperialists continue to control the economies and to determine, including through direct military power, the political destiny of these former colonies.

The coup organized by the CIA in August 1953 to return the shah of Iran to his throne is one of the best known examples of how the imperialists intervene in the political life of the semicolonial countries. But it is by no means an exception. In fact President Reagan publicly vowed in October 1981 that Washington would use military force against any attempt by the people of Saudi Arabia to rise up against the absolute monarchy that holds them in chains.

When push comes to shove, the system of imperialist oppression in the Middle East rests on naked force. That is where Israel fits in.

The Israeli state is an imperialist bastion in the Mideast. It offers the

U.S. rulers something they lie awake at night wishing for in Central America — a counterrevolutionary army of more than 400,000 troops, armed with the most advanced weapons, and backed by its own nuclear arsenal.

Because of its particular origin as a colonial settler-state, Israel has always been pitted against the Arab peoples as an ally of imperialism. Even during the 1920s and 1930s, when Palestine was still a British colony and Israel did not yet exist, the Zionist organizations supported the British against repeated uprisings of the Palestinian people fighting for their independence.

An independent Arab Palestine would have put an end to the Zionist scheme for the establishment of a Jewish state at the expense of the Arab majority. Therefore, "whoever betrays Great Britain betrays Zionism," declared David Ben-Gurion — later to become Israel's first prime minister — in 1935.

After World War II, the Zionist organizations came into armed conflict with the British, who tried to hold on to Palestine as a colony instead of supporting the creation of the Israeli state. But in the meantime, the Zionist forces gained the support of Washington.

Although some Zionists try to portray their conflict with the British as an anticolonial struggle, it was really a fight between thieves. The establishment of Israel in 1948, with the full support of Washington, was made possible only by the expulsion of 700,000 Palestinians from their homeland and the confiscation of their land. The Palestinians who remained became, by law, second-class citizens in their own country.

So hated was this illegitimate new state among the Arab masses that no regime in the region, however reactionary and subservient to imperialism, dared to recognize Israel.

The character of the Israeli state as an outpost of imperialism was made crystal clear in October 1956. Responding to the anti-imperialist measures of the Egyptian government, capped by its nationalization of the Suez Canal — a move that inspired the Arab world and the oppressed peoples as a whole — Israel joined Britain and France in an invasion of Egypt.

Rise of Palestinian struggle

Israel's aggression against Egypt, Syria, and Jordan in June 1967 was motivated by the same aims as the 1956 invasion of Egypt. The Israeli



Palestinians being forced from their homes at gunpoint by Zionist forces in 1947. Some 700,000 Arabs were expelled to make way for establishment of the Israeli state.

ruling class hoped to be able to hold on to any territory it grabbed. In addition, it sought to bring down the nationalist regimes in Egypt and Syria and replace them with governments that would be more amenable to imperialist pressure — especially pressure for the recognition of Israel.

The June 1967 war proved to be a turning point for Israel and the Middle East as a whole. Before the 1967 war, Israel's capitalist economy had been heavily subsidized by aid from the United States and West Germany. This imperialist aid, which continued and increased after 1967, combined with Israel's territorial expansion in the war, laid the basis for Israel's transformation into an imperialist country in its own right.

A second outcome of the June 1967 war, however, was the rise for the first time of an independent mass movement among the Palestinian people fighting for their national liberation. Various Palestinian guerrilla organizations, such as Fatah, had existed previously. But until the 1967 war, the masses of Palestinian refugees looked to the Arab governments. They relied in particular on Egyptian President Gamal Abdul Nasser to win their demands for the restoration of their homeland.

The PLO was originally set up in 1964 at Nasser's initiative, but with the agreement of the other Arab governments. At first it operated under Egyptian control, with a staff of paid functionaries, who issued declarations in the name of the Palestinian people. Statements by the PLO's first chairman, Ahmed Shukairy, who declared that the Arab armies would drive the Jews into the sea, are still quoted by supporters of Israel to back up their claim that the Palestinian liberation struggle is anti-Semitic.

With the defeat of the Arab armies in June 1967, however, broad layers of the Palestinian people began to look for an alternative to Nasserism. Independent organizations such as Fatah and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) began to grow.

On March 21, 1968, Fatah commandos held their ground against a major attack by Israeli forces on the Palestinian refugee camp of Karameh, in Jordan. The battle of Karameh had an electrifying impact throughout the Arab world. As a report from a refugee camp in Amman, Jordan, in the Dec. 27, 1968, *New York Times* described it:

"The heroes now are the commandos, especially those of Al Fatah, the largest and most active group. Posters of guerrillas carrying automatic weapons are displayed in every prominent place. . . ."

"After Karameh, President Nasser, who had been lukewarm to the movement, recognized the commandos and gave Fatah an hour's daily radio time. That program is today probably the most popular in the Arab world. . . ."

By November 1968, after major clashes between Palestinian fighters and King Hussein's army in Amman, the guerrillas had established their right to operate openly in Jordan. The guerrillas were also able to establish their control over the PLO, with Fatah leader Yassir Arafat being elected PLO chairman in February 1969.

A revolutionary nationalist movement

In the meantime, the PLO had been transformed from an office in Cairo functioning under the direction of a capitalist government, to a mass organization based in the Palestinian refugee camps. The various guerrilla organizations functioning under the umbrella of the PLO organized educational programs, newspapers, political discussion groups, health care, and other aspects of life in the refugee camps.

This transformation was a fundamental one. There was a *class difference* between the PLO as a mass movement of the oppressed Palestinian people and the creature of the Egyptian government that had existed previously.

This development was not something peculiar to the Palestinian struggle, but an example of a more general phenomenon in the oppressed nations — one that Lenin pointed to in his report on the national and colonial questions at the Second Congress of the Communist International, held in 1920. He noted that it was necessary to distinguish between bourgeois and revolutionary nationalist movements in the oppressed countries. Experience had shown, Lenin said, that the bourgeoisie in these countries would generally join forces with the imperialists against "all revolutionary movements and revolutionary classes."

What was decisive, in Lenin's view, was the attitude of the national movements in the oppressed countries toward the organization and mobilization of the masses. An effective struggle for the rights of the oppressed nation can only be carried out by relying on the toiling masses. Lenin proposed that national movements that do not stand in the way "of educating and organizing in a revolutionary spirit the peasantry and the masses of the exploited" be called "national revolutionary."

Such revolutionary nationalist movements, Lenin explained, are not communist, but they deserve the support of communists because they help to mobilize the toilers of the oppressed nations against imperialism.

Since World War II and the huge upsurge of anticolonial struggle that followed it, there has been a mushrooming of revolutionary nationalist organizations, such as those that led the independence struggles in Angola, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe. Others that are familiar today include the Polisario Front in the Western Sahara and the South West African People's Organisation in Namibia.

The July 26 organization in Cuba originated as a revolutionary nationalist organization that was based on petty-bourgeois forces, as well as urban working-class cadres and small farmers, even attracting support from a layer of bourgeois opposition figures. In the course of the struggle that led to the 1959 victory and under the impact of the subsequent revolutionary mobilizations of the Cuban workers and peasants,

The national oppression of the Palestinian people cannot be ended as long as the Israeli state is maintained . . .

which it encouraged, the leadership of the July 26 movement around Fidel Castro went through an evolution. It became clear that the struggle for national liberation could only be carried out consistently and to the end under the leadership of the working class, and as part of an anti-capitalist social revolution. The central leadership of the July 26 Movement maintained its commitment to the democratic demands it had started out fighting for, and in the process became the nucleus of Cuba's revolutionary Marxist vanguard, the Communist Party.

The experience of the Cuban revolution and the internationalism of the Cuban CP leadership won a broad layer of national liberation fighters in Latin America to a communist perspective. In Nicaragua and Grenada today, the Sandinista National Liberation Front and the New Jewel Movement, while in the forefront of the struggle for national liberation, are not revolutionary nationalist movements. They are Marxist proletarian parties.

In the case of the PLO, the group's parliament in exile, the Palestine National Council, includes many prominent Palestinians from around the world, including some individual capitalists. But it is the guerrilla organizations, based on the masses in the refugee camps, that have the decisive say in the PLO's leadership councils.

Guerrilla organizations such as the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the Democratic Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine declare their support for socialism. Al Saiqa and the Arab Liberation Front follow the lead of the Syrian and Iraqi regimes, respectively. Fatah, by far the largest group, describes itself as a national liberation movement.

Arafat described the approach taken by Fatah in an interview with *New York Times* correspondent Dana Adams Schmidt that appeared Dec. 3, 1968.

"Our ideological theory is very simple," Arafat said. "Our country has been occupied. The majority of our people have been kicked out by Zionism and imperialism from their homes."

"We have waited and waited and waited for the justice of the United Nations, for the justice of the world and the governments gathering in the United Nations while our people were suffering in tents and caves. But nothing of this was realized. None of our hopes. But our dispersion was aggravated."

"We have believed that the only way to return to our homes and land is the armed struggle. We believe in this theory without any complications and with complete clarity, and this is our aim and our hope. . . ."

"We believe that resistance is a legal right of all oppressed peoples."

Responding to another question from Schmidt, Arafat replied: "We are not against the Jews. . . ."

"We welcome with sincerity all the Jews who would like to live with us in sincerity in an Arab state as citizens having equal rights before the law and constitution."

These basic positions — the right of the Palestinian people to return to their homeland, the establishment of a democratic, secular Palestine where both Arabs and Jews could live, and the need to carry out an independent armed struggle for these goals — have been upheld by the PLO to this day.

SWP's view of PLO

The political approach of the U.S. Socialist Workers Party is not to single out those in the PLO who call themselves socialist and counterpose them to those who don't. The PLO *as a whole* is a revolutionary nationalist movement, and it should be supported on that basis.

This approach by communists to movements of oppressed nations was spelled out in the 1940 resolution of the Fourth International referred to earlier in this article. The resolution explained:

"Nationalism in the West is a tool of capitalist power, a weapon used to pit exploited peoples against each other in wars fought by military and economic means for exclusively capitalist interests. But in the backward, subject countries of the East, the nationalist movements form an integral part of the struggle against world imperialism. As such they must be supported to the fullest possible extent by the working class of the entire Western world."

In keeping with this approach, the Socialist Workers Party adopted a resolution on "Israel and the Arab Revolution" at its August 1971 convention. The resolution stated:

"The Socialist Workers Party gives unconditional support to the national liberation struggles of the Arab peoples against imperialism, that is, we support all these struggles regardless of their current leaderships."

Israel, the resolution noted, "could be set up in the Arab East only at the expense of the indigenous peoples of the area. Such a state could come into existence and maintain itself only by relying upon imperialism. Israel is a settler-colonialist and expansionist capitalist state maintained principally by American imperialism. . . . It is an imperialist beachhead in the Arab world that serves as the spearhead of imperialism's fight against the Arab revolution. We unconditionally support the struggles of the Arab peoples against the state of Israel."

As the principal victims of the creation of Israel, the Palestinians have borne the brunt of the battle against the Zionist state. "The struggle of the Palestinian people against their oppression and for self-determination," the resolution said, "has taken the form of a struggle to destroy the state of Israel. The currently expressed goal of this struggle is the establishment of a democratic, secular Palestine. We give unconditional support to this struggle of the Palestinians for self-determination."

A democratic, secular Palestine

Usually, struggles for self-determination take the form of the oppressed nationality demanding the right to separate from the oppressor nation and form its own independent state, as today in Puerto Rico, Quebec, or British-occupied Ireland. In South Africa, the struggle for self-determination takes the form of the struggle for the rule of the Black majority.

Palestine presents still another variant. There, national oppression was carried out by the establishment of a colonial settler-state through the forcible partition of the country and the expulsion of much of its native population.

As Yassir Arafat noted when he spoke before the UN General Assembly in 1974: "This General Assembly, early in its history [1947], approved a recommendation to partition our Palestinian homeland. . . . The General Assembly partitioned that which it had no right to divide — an indivisible homeland. . . ."

"Furthermore, even though the partition resolution granted the colonial settlers 54 percent of the land of Palestine, their dissatisfaction with the decision prompted them to wage a war of terror against the civilian



The PLO is a revolutionary nationalist organization that has mobilized the Palestinian masses in a determined struggle for their democratic rights.

Arab population. They occupied 81 percent of the total area of Palestine, uprooting a million Arabs."

The demand for a democratic, secular Palestine arose out of this specific history. It flows from the reality that the Israeli state is antidemocratic, since it denies the rights of the majority of the country's original inhabitants and prevents them from determining or even participating in its future.

The PLO calls for a secular state in opposition to the state of Israel, where Jews, by virtue of their religion, are granted rights that are denied to Christians and Muslims. Jewish religious law bears down heavily on Israeli life, regulating everything from marriage to public transportation. The fight for separation of church and state has been part of the program of democratic revolutions for more than 200 years.

Finally, the demand for a unitary Palestinian state addresses the forcible partition of "an indivisible homeland."

The class character of the social system that would be established is left open by the slogan of a democratic, secular Palestine. There are forces inside the PLO that favor the establishment of a capitalist Palestine, others that favor a socialist Palestine, and still others that are unclear on the question. But it would be the height of ultraleft sectarianism to oppose the demand for a democratic, secular Palestine for this reason.

At the same time, Marxists do not advocate the establishment of a capitalist state. For revolutionary socialists, the demand for a democratic, secular Palestine is a key demand for the mobilization of the toiling masses on the road to the establishment of a workers and farmers government in Palestine — a government that would lead the workers and peasants in the expropriation of the capitalists and landlords and the establishment of a workers state.

The struggle of the Palestinians for the democratic right to self-determination is thus an essential part of the program for social revolution in the Middle East.

What is self-determination?

The principle of self-determination means that an oppressed people has the right to choose whatever state forms *it* decides are necessary to end its oppression. To reverse their oppression, the Palestinians demand

the dismantling of the colonial settler-state that took over their land, the right of the refugees to return, and the establishment of a united Palestine.

Any demand that the oppressor nationality have veto power over the choice of the oppressed guts the demand for *self-determination*. This is the unilateral and unconditional right of an oppressed people.

Most political tendencies in the workers movement that claim to stand for the rights of oppressed peoples are opposed to the demand for a democratic, secular Palestine. Instead, they support the partition of Palestine between the two peoples living there.

Former Soviet President Leonid Brezhnev, for example, put forward a six-point proposal for a Middle East settlement this September. The proposal argued that "peace must be established between the Arab states and Israel. And this means that all sides in the conflict, including Israel and the Palestinian state, must commit themselves to mutually respecting each other's sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity. . . ."

In keeping with this position, the Communist Party of Israel supports the maintenance of the Israeli state, as does the U.S. Communist Party, which has actively polemicized against the demand for a democratic, secular Palestine.

A similar stance is taken by the Socialist International, which numbers the Israeli Labor Party — the capitalist party that governed Israel until 1977 — among its members.

Shortly after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) passed a resolution saying:

"We continue to call for negotiations based on the right of self-determination for the Palestinian people through its own elected representatives and on the right of the state of Israel to a secure existence."

But self-determination for the Palestinians *means* the dismantling of the Israeli state and its racist institutions. How can the Palestinians exercise their right to self-determination if they are not allowed to return to their land? Yet if the Palestinians do return, and are accorded their full rights, then, as the Israelis themselves point out, it would mean the end of Israel as a separate Jewish state.

The real political position of the U.S. social democrats was made clear in the last point of their resolution. There they rejected participation in protests against the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the murder of Palestinian protesters in the occupied territories except "under circumstances where our support for *both* Palestinian self-determination and the right of Israel to a secure existence is made clear" (emphasis in original).

To demand self-determination for an oppressor nationality robs the concept of its democratic content . . .

Thus, for the DSA, support to the maintenance of the Israeli state is fundamental, taking precedence over the struggle of the Palestinians. This was shown in practice by the fact that the DSA refused to support the teach-ins and demonstrations against the Israeli invasion of Lebanon.

The 'Israel exists' argument

Defenders of the Israeli state use three key arguments in rejecting the demands of the Palestinians. First and most important is the argument of brute force.

Israel, we are told, exists. The big majority of Israeli Jews support its existence, as does the U.S. government. And the Israeli rulers have the military power to overcome any challenge from the Arab peoples. If the Arabs are smart, they had better recognize reality and negotiate with Israel for the best deal they can get.

This is the essence of Reagan's Mideast "peace" plan, which rests on the foundation of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon.

A good example of how this approach is presented in practice was an article by liberal columnist Anthony Lewis in the November 1 issue of the *New York Times*.

Lewis described how the Israeli regime is moving rapidly ahead with its *de facto* annexation of the West Bank. He put part of the blame for the Israeli land-grab on Arab leaders who, he claimed, "have maneuvered for years, avoiding negotiation. But unless they move now — unless they accept the fact of Israel and talk about ways to secure the rights of Palestinians in accommodation with that fact — there will be nothing left to negotiate."

Lewis talks about "facts" — above all, "the fact of Israel." But the simple truth is that the national oppression of the Palestinian people cannot be ended as long as the Israeli state is maintained. Just as there will be no peace in southern Africa as long as a racist, white-minority regime rules there, the Middle East will have no peace so long as the Israeli colonial settler-state continues to exist. That, too, is a fact.

The real alternatives were revealed by the war in Lebanon. Nothing short of actual genocide will stop the struggle of the Palestinian people for self-determination.

When does self-determination apply?

Since the "Israel exists" argument is, at bottom, merely an appeal to force, a waving of the big stick, it is generally mixed together with two ideological justifications for support to Israel. First is an appeal to the right of self-determination in the abstract.

According to this line of argument, the Jewish people, after being oppressed throughout the world, have a right to self-determination. The establishment of the Israeli state was the realization of that right. Because of the historical oppression of the Jews, their right to maintain the Israeli state supersedes the national rights of the Palestinian Arabs.

Another, more left-sounding version of this argument asserts that the national demands of both the Palestinians and the Israeli Jews are legitimate, or even that the demands of the Palestinians should take precedence, since they are oppressed by the Israeli state. Nonetheless, the argument continues, isn't it necessary to guarantee the Jews self-determination within the framework of a future democratic and secular Palestine? Isn't that the only way that Jewish workers inside Israel can be won to the fight for Palestinian national rights and social justice?

All variants of this argument mix together the plight of the Jews elsewhere in the world, who do face discrimination and oppression, and the situation of Jews in Israel, who are the dominant nationality in a state that oppresses the Palestinians. As we've seen, the right to self-determination means the right to form a separate state. The Israeli Jews already have a separate state — one constructed on the homeland of an expelled people, the Palestinians. That's the *source* of the problem, not one possible solution.

To demand self-determination for an oppressor nationality robs the concept of its democratic content. There is nothing progressive about the demand for self-determination in the abstract. It is a progressive demand insofar as it helps to mobilize an oppressed people against its oppression and the workers of the oppressor nationality against their own ruling class. Support by the toilers of an oppressor nationality for the right to self-determination of the oppressed lays the basis for an internationalist alliance between the working people of both nations.

Thus, self-determination for South African Blacks is progressive. The demand for self-determination of South African whites is reactionary. White working people in South Africa can fight effectively for progress and the interests of their class only if they unconditionally support the struggle of the Black majority for self-determination.

Similarly, in the United States the Socialist Workers Party stands for the right of the oppressed Black and Chicano nationalities to self-determination. This includes the right to set up their own separate states, if they so choose. But proletarian revolutionists are against whites having the right to set up a "white state" in North America. There could be only one political content to such a state. Like the demand for "white power" or "white rights" today, its purpose would be to perpetuate the oppression of Black, brown, yellow, and non-English speaking peoples, not to liberate whites.

In the case of Israel, the demagogic claim that Zionism is the national liberation movement of the Jewish people cannot hide its reactionary political content. A political movement that fights as part of the world imperialist system, and whose aim is to perpetuate the oppression of

another people, is the opposite of a national liberation struggle. It is also an obstacle to the fight against anti-Semitism, which can only be waged and won in alliance with the workers and toilers of the world in their struggle against imperialist oppression and capitalist exploitation.

Specter of future oppression

A third argument raised in behalf of the Israeli state is that however much one may disagree with its present policies or the manner of its creation, Israel must be supported against the Arabs because its destruction would result in genocide, mass expulsion, or the oppression of the Jews currently living there.

At bottom, this is the same argument that was used against the Vietnamese revolution when Richard Nixon warned that there would be a "bloodbath" if the revolutionary forces triumphed.

Similar dire warnings about the fate of European settlers if the "natives" took over were raised by the French during the Algerian revolution and by the white-minority regime in Rhodesia. The same line is used today by the racist rulers in South Africa.

In every case it has been the imperialists and the imperialist-backed colonial settlers who have been responsible for the vast bulk of bloodshed and killing in these struggles. The criminals then turn around and accuse their victims. Psychologists call this process projection — the attribution of one's own motives and actions to others.

There is no reason whatsoever to suppose that the Palestinian people will institute a system of national oppression against the Jews. This would be contrary to everything that their leaders and organizations have stood for for the past 15 years, and contrary to the experience of national liberation struggles everywhere else in the world. There is a very simple reason for this — it is not in the interests of the oppressed to impose a system of national oppression.

Under the excuse of opposing a fake and nonexistent national oppression, the defenders of the Israeli state support the actual oppression of the Palestinian people taking place right now. This oppression is not reflected just in the refugee camps of Lebanon and Jordan, but inside Israel as well.

Per capita income of Palestinians inside Israel's pre-1967 borders averages less than half that of Jews. In 1973, while 25 percent of the Arab

The real issue in the Middle East is not whether or not Israeli Jews can live there, but whether they have the right to dispossess and oppress another people . . .

population in Israel lived in housing with four or more persons in one room, the corresponding figure for the Jewish population was 1.5 percent.

Infant mortality for Jews in Israel was 13.9 per thousand in 1977, compared to 31.1 per thousand for Palestinians. This is a far greater gap than exists even between whites and Blacks in the United States.

Similar figures could be provided in every other field, from education to employment.

Experience shows that historical patterns of oppression do not go away merely by the declaration, or even enforcement, of formal equality, even after a victorious revolution. A conscious policy of preferential treatment for oppressed nationalities — affirmative action — must be followed if the legacy of national oppression is to be overcome.

Lenin explained this in his 1922 notes on "The Question of Nationalities or 'Autonomisation.'" "Internationalism on the part of oppressors . . . must consist not only in the observance of formal equality of nations," he said, "but even in an inequality of the oppressor nation, the great nation, that must make up for the inequality which obtains in actual practice. Anybody who does not understand this has not grasped the real proletarian attitude to the national question, he is still essentially petty bourgeois in his point of view and is, therefore, sure to descend to the bourgeois point of view."

This also applies to Israel. Abolition of the racist institutions that make up the Zionist state would not, by itself, eliminate the inferior pos-

ition of the Palestinian people in housing, education, health care, employment, etc. Guarantees for the oppressed nationality, including preferential treatment to eliminate the vestiges of inequality, would be necessary. That is the revolutionary working-class program on the national question in Israel.

Any idea that the Israeli Jews — the oppressor nationality — need to be guaranteed self-determination, as Lenin explained, can only lead to the bourgeois point of view, in this case, support for the Zionist state.

Zionist slanders

Although there is nothing in the program and actions of the Palestinian liberation organizations to support the idea that they want to annihilate or oppress the Jewish people, that doesn't stop those who oppose the Palestinian struggle from leveling this slander. Take the example of a September 29 speech given by DSA National Executive Committee member Irving Howe.

According to the account of Howe's speech in the October 1982 issue of the New York DSA publication *Democratic Socialist*, "The conflict in the Middle East involves two rights, Howe argued, but those on one side have pledged annihilation of the other side consistently."

Furthermore, the report said, "All the efforts to compromise were rejected and Arab leaders from 1948 onward clung to the aim proclaimed by Nasser 'to drive the Israelis into the sea.'"

By attributing the "drive the Israelis into the sea" slogan to Nasser, Howe tries to justify Israel's 1967 war of aggression against Egypt. But leaving that question aside, the fact is that the leadership of the Palestinian liberation movement not only rejected calls for the annihilation of the Israeli Jews, but also carried out a public political fight within the Arab world on precisely this issue. Palestinian youth in the refugee camps are educated by the PLO to understand that imperialism and Zionism, not Jews, are their enemy.

Real position of Palestinians

This position has been explained clearly by the major guerrilla organizations in the PLO. The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, for example, said in a document prepared for its Second Congress in February 1969:

"The Palestinian liberation movement is not a racial movement with aggressive intentions against the Jews. It is not directed against the Jews. Its object is to destroy the state of Israel as a military, political, and economic establishment which rests on aggression, expansion and organic connection with imperialist interests in our homeland. . . . The aim of the Palestinian liberation movement is to establish a democratic national state in Palestine in which both Arabs and Jews will live as citizens with equal rights and obligations. . . ."

In an official statement published in Beirut in 1969, the Democratic Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine put forward its theses for "A Democratic Solution to the Palestine Question." It called for:

"Rejection of the chauvinistic solutions of some Palestinians and Arabs, which were put forward before and after June 1967, and are based on slaughtering the Jews and throwing them into the sea. . . ."

"The establishment of a people's democratic Palestinian state in which the Arabs and (Israeli) Jews will live without any discrimination whatsoever . . . and which gives both Arabs and (Israeli) Jews the right to develop their national culture."

Similarly, in an interview in the January 1969 issue of *Tricontinental* magazine (which is also published in Arabic), Fatah leader Yassir Arafat stressed:

"We have not taken up arms to force two million Jews into the sea or to wage a religious or racial war. . . . We are a national liberation movement which is struggling just like the fighters of Vietnam, Bolivia, or any other people of the world. . . ."

If Howe had taken the trouble to read Arafat's speech to the United Nations General Assembly in November 1974 — a speech that was published in the *New York Times* and broadcast live throughout the Arab world — he would have heard this position reiterated.

In that speech, Arafat said that "if the immigration of Jews to Palestine had had as its objective the goal of enabling them to live side by side with us, enjoying the same rights and assuming the same duties, we



PLO chairman Yassir Arafat speaking at the United Nations in 1974.

would have opened our doors to them as far as our homeland's capacity for absorption permitted. . . .

"But that the goal of this immigration should be to usurp our homeland, disperse our people and turn us into second-class citizens — this is what no one can conceivably demand that we acquiesce in or submit to."

Arafat further declared that "we deplore all those crimes committed against the Jews; we also deplore all the real discrimination suffered by them because of their faith. . . .

"In my formal capacity as chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization and as leader of the Palestinian revolution, I proclaim before you that when we speak of our common hopes for the Palestine of tomorrow we include in our perspective all Jews now living in Palestine who choose to live with us there in peace and without discrimination.

" . . . I call upon Jews one by one to turn away from the illusory promises made to them by Zionist ideology and Israeli leadership. Those offer Jews perpetual bloodshed, endless war and continuous thralldom. . . .

"We offer them the most generous solution that we might live together in a framework of just peace in our democratic Palestine."

Real interests of Jewish people

As Arafat and other PLO leaders have repeatedly explained, the real issue in the Middle East is not whether or not the Israeli Jews can live there, but whether they have the right to dispossess and oppress another people. And as Arafat also explained, the oppression of the Palestinians is not in the real interests of the Jewish people.

This point was also taken up by the SWP's 1971 resolution on the Middle East. Like the PLO, the SWP advocates full civil, cultural, and religious rights for Israeli Jews within the framework of a democratic Palestine.

"The source of the oppression of the Jewish people in this era is the capitalist system, which in its period of decay carries all forms of racist oppression to the most barbarous extremes," the SWP's 1971 resolution said.

Moreover, "The struggle against anti-Semitism and the oppression of Jews is part of the struggle to abolish all forms of racism and national oppression. This struggle can be fully and finally won only in alliance with all the oppressed of the world. . . .

"The imperialists and Zionists to the contrary, the basic interests of the Jewish masses of Israel reside in alliance with the Palestinian liberation struggle and support of the goal of a democratic Palestine. We have incessantly warned Jews throughout the world: Zionism leads you into conflict with your potential allies — the oppressed of the world — and has led you to ally with your worst enemy, imperialism. Imperialism in its death agony has already led to one holocaust against European Jewry; it can inflict similar catastrophes again unless it is overthrown in time by the mass force of the socialist revolution."

Not just an end to anti-Semitism, but also the national liberation of the Palestinian people, the SWP resolution explained, cannot be attained under the political leadership of the capitalist class. The capitalist rulers in the Arab countries fear that the mobilization of the masses around democratic demands such as self-determination for the Palestinians will spill over to other social questions in the region and within their own borders. Therefore, they seek to limit, suppress, and divert such democratic struggles.

Only the working class, at the head of all the toiling masses, especially the peasantry, can fight effectively for democratic tasks such as an end to national oppression. That is why a consistent struggle for national liberation in the Middle East points toward the establishment of workers and peasants governments through revolutions against the imperialists — in particular the Israeli imperialists — and the Arab capitalists.

At the same time, democratic and anti-imperialist demands are central to the struggle of the workers and peasants for political power in these countries. The Palestinian struggle confirms this lesson from the history of revolutions in the colonial world in this century.

Pressures on the Egyptian regime

From the point of view of the capitalist rulers in the Arab countries, the Palestinian liberation movement represented a deadly threat because it pushed them into confrontation with the Israeli state, and thus with imperialism. Such confrontations caused the masses of these countries to demand effective military mobilization, the distribution of arms and military training, stronger steps against imperialist economic interests, the dismissal of corrupt and incompetent officials, and other measures. As the capitalist rulers demonstrated their inability to carry out an effective fight against imperialist domination, the struggle of the Palestinians began to destabilize Arab governments.

There was even pressure on the government in Egypt, where Nasser's anti-imperialist credentials were far stronger than those of King Hussein or the Lebanese rulers, and where the direct presence of the Palestinian refugee population was much smaller than in any of the other countries bordering Israel.

Thus, in February 1968, students and workers staged six days of demonstrations in Helwan, Cairo, Alexandria, Assiut, Tantah, and other major Egyptian cities. They were protesting light sentences meted out to air force commanders accused of negligence in the June 1967 disaster.

"The Israelis are practically at the gates of our main cities," one student declared, according to a report in the March 2, 1968, *Christian Science Monitor*, "and yet one group of overfed military men tries another group when they should all be on trial. What a mockery."

Beginning in October 1968, the Israeli regime initiated a policy of air raids, commando attacks, and artillery bombardment against Egyptian cities, which continued into 1970.

In March 1969, hundreds of thousands of people turned out in a spontaneous demonstration in Cairo on the occasion of the funeral of the Egyptian chief of staff, who was killed in an Israeli artillery barrage. "Give us guns!" they cried, and "Revenge, Revenge, O Gamal [Nasser]!"

Hundreds of thousands demonstrated once again in February 1970 after Israeli warplanes dropped napalm and fragmentation bombs on a factory outside of Cairo, killing 70 workers and wounding 90 more.

But it was in Lebanon and Jordan that the rise of the Palestinian resis-

tance and Israel's brutal response had the greatest impact. In December 1968 Israeli commandos began the raids on Lebanon that have lasted up until this day with an attack on Beirut International Airport and the destruction of 13 aircraft.

Mindful of the anger among Lebanese citizens over the lack of resistance to the Israeli assault, the government banned all demonstrations and threatened to use the army against any that might be attempted. Nevertheless, on Jan. 4, 1969, some 25,000 students began a strike in Beirut. They demanded the introduction of universal conscription and the arming of frontier villages against Israel, punishment of those responsible for the lack of military defense against the Israelis, and the removal of restrictions against Palestinian organizations operating from Lebanon.

The uproar over the Israeli raid resulted in the resignation of the Lebanese cabinet.

Clashes between Palestinian forces and Lebanese troops in March and April 1969, after the army attempted to prevent the guerrillas from operating in southern Lebanon, led to a new crisis. Big demonstrations in support of the Palestinian fighters took place in Beirut, Saida, Tyre, Tripoli, Baalbek and Nabatiye. At least a dozen people were killed when police opened fire on demonstrators, and the government declared a state of emergency.

An editorial in the April 26, 1969, *New York Times* complained: "The resignation of Lebanon's Premier after clashes between Palestinian refugees and Lebanese troops constitutes another ominous manifestation of the emergence of the Palestinians as a militant, radical force in Middle East politics. . . ."

"Although they total only about 10 per cent of the Lebanese population, the Palestinians have gained widespread support for their cause among the Lebanese people. . . ."

"Jordan's King Hussein is at least equally threatened by Palestinians who make up nearly half [actually a majority — D.F.] of his subjects. Hussein has managed to coexist with his Palestinians by giving their guerrilla forces practically free rein in his country."

The *Times* editors concluded by warning against a "grim development": "The Palestinian militants are bent on converting the entire Arab world into one big guerrilla camp dedicated to uncompromising struggle with Israel."

October 1969 confrontation

Further attacks by Lebanese government forces against the Palestinians took place in May and reached a climax in October 1969, when two weeks of fighting brought Lebanon to the brink of civil war. Fatah passed out arms to the population in the Muslim quarter of West Beirut. In Tripoli, according to an Oct. 26, 1969, dispatch by *New York Times* cor-

respondent Eric Pace, "the authorities today let armed leftist dissidents hold sway over neighborhoods containing 100,000 people — a third of the city's population."

At the same time, the guerrilla organizations were able to take control of the Palestinian refugee camps. An agreement signed in Cairo on Nov. 3, 1969, recognized the right of the refugee camps to administer their own affairs, and also the right of the PLO to maintain bases in southern Lebanon and carry out attacks against Israel from there.

From the beginning, the struggle waged by the PLO in Lebanon was closely tied to the social conflict between the workers and poor peasantry there and the country's ruling landlords and capitalists. The Palestinian movement was seen as the ally of all the progressive forces in Lebanese society, and its struggle changed the relationship of forces in Lebanon as a whole to the advantage of the working class.

An indication of this new relationship of forces came in August 1970, when the Lebanese government legalized the Communist Party and the Baath Socialist Party, along with the Arab Nationalist Movement, the parent-organization of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

U.S. pressure in Jordan

But after the big battles of 1969, 1970 was relatively quiet in Lebanon. The focus shifted to Jordan, where in February 1970, one day after meeting with the U.S. ambassador in Amman, King Hussein put his forces on alert.

Following a royal ultimatum to the guerrillas, Hussein's troops began erecting roadblocks around Amman. Two days of fighting followed. Although Hussein backed off, it was clear to all that tensions were reaching the boiling point, and the standoff was only temporary.

A new round of fighting broke out in June, after the Jordanian army attacked a unit of guerrillas from the Democratic Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. Hussein had apparently hoped that an attack on one of the smaller guerrilla organizations would not be answered in a united way, but he was proved wrong. The king was forced to retreat once again after five days of fighting.

In the meantime, however, pressure was coming from another direction. U.S. Secretary of State William Rogers had announced a plan for a Mideast settlement in December 1969. Like the Reagan proposal today, it held out the bait of Israeli withdrawal from some of the occupied territories in return for Arab recognition of the Israeli state.

When King Hussein announced his support for the Rogers plan on July 26, 1970, U.S. officials responded that his first step must be to assert control over the Palestinian guerrillas.

Nasser had already accepted the Rogers plan and closed down the PLO's broadcasting center in Cairo. The PLO's refusal to back the U.S.-proposed plan set the stage for a decisive confrontation in Jordan.



Palestinian refugees in Jordan after June 1967 war. Refugee camps provided mass base for PLO.

Part of the pressure against the PLO in this period was an imperialist press campaign aimed at splitting the Palestinian national liberation movement. Then, as now, articles appeared in the imperialist press that were calculated to fan suspicions within the PLO and among its supporters worldwide. In particular, the campaign sought to play off the "moderate" Arafat against other sectors of the Palestinian movement.

Imperialist press campaign

For example, Dana Adams Schmidt wrote in the June 14, 1970, *New York Times* that "if Mr. Arafat decides to cooperate with the King, as he seems personally to desire, an alliance of the Army and Fatah could suppress P.F.L.P. and guarantee the King's future, at least for a while. Lacking the P.F.L.P.'s ideological hangups, Mr. Arafat is understood to favor the monarchy as a compliant framework within which the commandos can carry out their campaign against Israel."

Of course, the idea that Arafat or any other PLO leader viewed the Jordanian monarchy as "a compliant framework" for the activity of the Palestinian movement is laughable. When Fatah guerrillas began carrying out their attacks against Israel in 1965, they had to contend with Jordanian border guards as well as the Israeli army. Prior to the 1967 war there were 408 Palestinian guerrillas in Hussein's prisons. After the 1967 war, the PLO had to fight pitched battles against the Jordanian army to win its right to operate openly in Jordan, and at the time of Schmidt's article it had just come through another such battle.

But Schmidt's drivel is no different from the kind of stuff being written today about how Arafat has already decided to accept the Reagan plan and is just trying to figure out how to sell it.

PLO maneuvers for time

The stance of the PLO leadership in Jordan and Lebanon — and it was a prudent one — was to avoid confrontation with the government, while continuing to build up the strength of the independent Palestinian mass movement and its ties with the working people in these countries.

Arafat, in a June 1968 interview with the magazine *Jeune Afrique*, declared: "Since there is no interference on our part in the internal affairs of the Arab countries, where we have no ambitions; since we have a common objective with the Arab states and peoples, which is principally ending the Israeli occupation; we do not see why there should be any conflict between us."

Similarly, Fatah leader Abu Omar explained in an interview that appeared in the June 14, 1970, *New York Times*: "Our policy is not to interfere in the affairs of Jordan. The only condition is that the Government should not interfere in our affairs to organize and arm ourselves. The only government we aspire to is the government of Palestine."

While insisting, "We do not welcome clashes with the Government," Abu Omar added: "But the Palestinians, who are now a majority of what's left of Jordan, insist on their right to organize, to meet publicly, and to carry arms for the liberation struggle against Israel."

Nobody had any doubt about the implications for Hussein's dictatorship if the Palestinians continued to exercise their democratic rights. Eric Pace described Hussein's capital in mid-1970, saying:

"Once a quiet desert town, Amman is now drenched in fedayeen prose. Commando broadcasts resound from radios everywhere. The strident new newspaper published by Al Fatah, the largest fedayeen group, is eagerly read. Commando leaflets are legion and commando handbills shout silently from hundreds of walls."

At its meeting ending on June 4, 1970, the Palestine National Council had refused to seat the official Jordanian delegation and had recognized an opposition group, the Jordanian National Union. The council also called for the formation of joint committees by the Palestinian and Jordanian people.

Danger of adventurism

But a frontal attack on the Arab governments by the PLO would have been an irresponsible, ultraleft adventure. In Lebanon, and even more in most other Arab countries, the Palestinians were a small minority. Any attempt to substitute the Palestinian national liberation movement for the whole of the working class and its allies would have been a



Nick Medvecky/Militant

August 1969 demonstration in Beirut in solidarity with Palestinian struggle.

bloody fiasco that could only have ended with the destruction of the PLO.

In the case of Jordan, although the Palestinians were a majority and the PLO was in the leadership of a mass movement, the Palestinian population was by no means unanimous, and the massive Bedouin minority was still tied to the monarchy. Meanwhile, Hussein's army, which remained loyal to the king, outnumbered the PLO's forces by nearly 3-to-1, with some 700 tanks and armored cars, compared to none for the guerrillas.

Therefore, the PLO sought to gain time. By declaring its adherence to the principle of nonintervention in the internal affairs of the Arab countries, and by challenging the Arab governments to live up to their verbal support for the Palestinian struggle against Israel, the PLO exposed the unwillingness of these regimes to confront imperialism. At the same time, the PLO made it as difficult as possible for the Arab governments to take action against the Palestinian movement.

Time finally ran out for the Palestinian fighters in Jordan in September 1970. On September 16 Hussein proclaimed martial law and demanded that the guerrillas turn in their arms. The next day his army opened up full-scale assaults on Palestinian refugee camps and commando offices throughout the country.

People's committees in Irbid

Hussein's assault did not take the Palestinians by surprise. It had been expected for months, and on September 14 Arafat told a group of Arab ambassadors in Amman:

"Gentlemen, please inform your governments that King Hussein has deliberately prepared a detailed plan which must culminate in a blood bath. I have irrefutable evidence that he intends to liquidate the Palestinian resistance fighters. I presume that your governments cannot or will not wish to do anything for us. But I insist on informing you of this matter so that you cannot one day wash your hands of all responsibility" (*Le*

Monde, Sept. 17, 1970).

The PLO leadership called for a general strike and other forms of mass opposition to the government. In Irbid, Jordan's third-largest city, the PLO organized popular committees and began fortifying the city a few days before Hussein's declaration of martial law.

According to a report by Loren Jenkins in the Sept. 28, 1970, issue of *Newsweek*, "to replace the city administration, the commandos set up on every street 'people's committees,' which in turn elected members to larger district committees. These groups, composed of commando commissars as well as leading residents of Irbid who support the Palestinian cause, held evening meetings to discuss such matters as the future organization of the city and preparations for its defense."

Some of the work that had preceded the establishment of what *Newsweek* called the "Irbid Soviet" was described by A. Yoldachs in the Sept. 28, 1970, issue of the French revolutionary socialist weekly *Rouge*. According to Yoldachs:

"There was a campaign for building shelters to defend the population against the daily bombings to which the Israeli army subjected the city for a long period. There was a literacy campaign. Palestinian militants worked in the union federations. There was a training program involving the creation of craft workshops (the craft sector absorbs essentially women and young high school students)."

Defeat in Jordan

But the decisive battle was fought in Amman, and there the Palestinians were unable to carry the day against the heavy weapons of Hussein's army. As Associated Press correspondent Alex Efty described in the Sept. 25, 1970, issue of *Le Monde*:

"After six days of fighting, it is rare to find an undamaged house; certain neighborhoods have been pulverized by artillery, especially the vast refugee camps in the outlying districts where thousands of Palestinians live cramped up as many as a dozen to a room."

Arthur Chesworth reported in the Sept. 24, 1970, *Washington Post*: "Two-thirds of a once proud royal capital of 600,000 has been utterly destroyed. . . ."

"The commandos say that at least 8000 Palestinians have died and that their total casualties number tens of thousands."

Although the Palestinian forces still controlled sections of Amman, as

Any attempt to substitute the Palestinian national liberation movement for the whole of the working class and its allies would have been a bloody fiasco . . .

well as the cities of Irbid, Ramtha, and Jerash when a cease-fire was agreed to 10 days after the eruption of the civil war, Hussein had proved that his forces held the balance of power. The Jordanian army was able to move step by step, driving the Palestinian guerrillas out of one position after another, until another all-out attack forced the PLO out of Jordan altogether in July 1971.

Abu Omar, in an interview with *Intercontinental Press* that appeared in its Nov. 22, 1971, issue, commented on some of the conclusions drawn by the PLO leadership following the defeat in Jordan.

"We have learned some lessons from our experience in Jordan and have not adopted too defiant a stance vis-à-vis the Lebanese government that might lead to confrontations that we might not be able to handle," Abu Omar explained.

In regard to Syria, where President Hafez al-Assad had come to power in November 1970, right after the defeat in Jordan, the PLO leader said, "The present regime is not as enthusiastic about the people's war slogan as the previous one. . . ."

"I think it is quite natural given the type of regime, which is based mostly on the bureaucracy and the military, with a very weak mass party.

"Most of our forces are in Syria at the present time, not secretly but at open bases. This means that we cannot but take Syrian attitudes and policy into account. We are quite vulnerable in our presence in Syria."

Speaking of the need to engage in diplomatic activity involving the various Arab regimes, Abu Omar noted, "There are powers that exist around us, influence us. We cannot define them out of existence. We have to take them into account, even though our main dependence is on our internal resources and the mass support that we might have."

When asked about the stance of the PLO toward the Jordanian regime, Abu Omar explained:

"I think there is really no disagreement in the resistance movement about the nature of the Jordanian regime. There is disagreement about how things are put forth — the kind of slogans."

In this regard, Abu Omar added, "The question is not whether one wants [Hussein] or not, but what slogans to use; what public pronouncements do you make — the PLO and Fatah, for example, have tended to emphasize moderate slogans, rather than big slogans.

"We want freedom of action. We know very well we cannot have freedom of action, except if we get a democratic national government.

"The problem is the level of activity that we need to bring down the regime and to create a political organization among the Jordanian masses and establish some sort of Jordanian-Palestinian framework or a national front."

In general, Abu Omar commented, "The more the movement of the masses is weakened around us, the more vulnerable we are."

Polarization in Lebanon

The defeat in Jordan had a big impact throughout the rest of the Arab countries. Nevertheless, despite regular Israeli attacks on southern Lebanon and frequent clashes with the Lebanese army and police, the PLO was able to maintain its presence in Lebanon.

A major attempt to wipe out the PLO was carried out by the Lebanese army in May 1973. It followed an Israeli terror raid on Beirut in which scores of people, including three PLO leaders, were killed. As in the December 1968 raid on the Beirut airport, the lack of government response to the Israeli outrage brought big protests. On April 12, the funeral for the slain PLO leaders drew as many as 300,000 people into the streets of Beirut in what became probably the largest antigovernment demonstration in Lebanon's recent history.

Continuing protests against the government were answered with an attack by the Lebanese army against Palestinian refugee camps. Although the army used heavy artillery, and called in the air force as well, it was unable to repeat King Hussein's defeat of the PLO.

For a while, events in Lebanon were overshadowed by the October 1973 Mideast War. But there was no letup either in the Israeli attacks or in the mounting anger of the population over the government's refusal to take action against the murderous raids.

According to a dispatch by John Cooley in the May 17, 1974, *Christian Science Monitor*, "Lebanon's Council of the South, which tries to help Lebanese refugees from the border area, estimates that nearly half of this region's people have fled their homes in the past year."

Le Monde correspondent Edouard Saab reported from Beirut on May 19, 1974, that "a wave of hatred for Israelis has spread across the country. At the same time, fraternization between the Lebanese and Palestinians has never been more sincere, more spontaneous."

During the latter half of 1974 there were almost daily Israeli attacks on southern Lebanon. Meanwhile, social tensions were intensifying within Lebanon. Christian rightist forces were opposed by a largely Muslim coalition grouping together the PLO, the traditional leadership of the Druse community, the Communist Party, various Arab nationalist parties (Baathists, Nasserists, etc.), and many smaller groups. A majority of the Lebanese people were united in their support for the Palestinian struggle, their desire to eliminate Lebanon's discriminatory political system, and their anger over social inequality and exploitation.

Civil war breaks out

In February 1975, demonstrations broke out in Saida against the government's decision to grant a monopoly on fishing rights to a newly formed company — one that happened to be headed by Tony Franjeh, the president's son, and Camille Chamoun, a former Lebanese president who was at that time minister of the interior.

Eleven demonstrators were gunned down by the army, provoking an



PLO fighters in Amman, Jordan, during September 1970 battle.

uprising by the Lebanese and Palestinian population, who seized control of the city.

The right-wing Phalangist militia responded to this action on April 13, 1975, by machine-gunning a busload of Palestinians returning from a rally. These proved to be the opening shots in the Lebanese civil war.

If the civil war in Lebanon had been decided according to just the relationship of forces within that country, there seems to be little doubt that the Palestinian-Muslim-leftist coalition would have won the war. As these forces gained ground in the conflict, however, they were opposed by an increasingly active Syrian intervention — a military intervention that had the blessing of Washington, and the tacit agreement of Israel.

The Syrian armed forces were far stronger than those of King Hussein, which had defeated the PLO in Jordan. Acting in conjunction with the rightist forces in the civil war, they had little difficulty in turning the tide of battle. Faced with this unfavorable relationship of forces, the PLO negotiated to try to get the best deal that it could out of the situation.

The result was that the PLO was able to preserve its freedom of action in the south and its autonomy within the major refugee camps. The cities of Tyre, Saida, and large parts of southern and western Lebanon were left in the hands of the Muslim-Palestinian-leftist coalition. The Syrians occupied West Beirut and eastern Lebanon above the Litani River, while the rightist forces were left in control of East Beirut and the traditional Christian strongholds in north-central Lebanon. This de facto partition of the country remained in force until the Israeli invasion in June 1982 rearranged the map.

PLO's activity in Lebanon

The PLO did much more in Lebanon than just fight. It was a social movement that ran schools, vocational training facilities, clinics, and other services for the Palestinian population. It helped organize popular committees, political education, and other activities. Many of these involved sectors of Lebanon's toiling population, as well.

A revealing indication of the PLO's activity in Lebanon during the years leading up to the latest Israeli invasion was given by David Shipler in the July 25, 1982, *New York Times*. Shipler's article, an attack on the Palestinian movement, was titled, "Lebanese Tell of Anguish Of Living Under the P.L.O."

Among the anguished victims interviewed by Shipler was Dr. Ramsey Shabb, whose country estate was occupied by the PLO. Shabb "stopped taking his family there for weekends, staying instead in an apartment he kept in the private hospital he owned in Sidon."

Dolly Raad, an executive for Middle East Airlines, was reduced to keeping her "well-kept Mercedes Benz" locked up in the garage and driving "an old, beat-up Mercedes."

Another heart-wrenching story was told by the wife of a wealthy importer who said that "she protected her luxurious house in the hills outside Nabatiye by never leaving it empty, by never going away on trips, by staying alert to any sign of P.L.O. encroachment."

However, Shipler admitted, "Some in the crowded camps recall the pitifully low wages the citrus-pickers once received in the south, and they credit the P.L.O. with forcing employers to improve the pay. The results were reflected in rising living standards.

"'Conditions improved,' said Sami Masri as he stood amid the rubble of the Rashidiye camp on the outskirts of Tyre. . . ."

"There used to be no electricity here. In all of Rashidiye there were no refrigerators, no automatic washers.' The P.L.O., he said, organized not only military training for the youngsters of the camp, but also soccer teams, chess clubs, Ping-Pong tournaments. A youth recreation center was set up in a concrete building that now lies crushed under the weight of war."

One government official complained to Shipler, "Men repairing roads were supposed to work eight hours a day, but they worked five or six. They would come at 10 and be gone by 4."

"The rank and file of the guerrillas seemed to come from the lowest strata," according to Shipler, who made clear his class bias by accusing "the P.L.O.'s armed muscle" of "a bitter material greed."

Clearly, Shipler doesn't think these people are worthy of sympathy — not like the hospital owner trying to hold on to his country estate, or the airline executive defending her Mercedes-Benz.

Fighting in the diplomatic arena

During the years that the PLO was fighting arms in hand to defend its existence and to advance the Palestinian struggle, it was also fighting a political battle to win world public opinion.

In 1974, intensive diplomatic activity was in progress, and the possibility of a Geneva conference on the Middle East was being raised. The PLO correctly insisted on its right to speak for the Palestinian people in any Mideast negotiations.

At the same time, the PLO took a step forward by placing more emphasis on the transitional step of an Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories. Moreover, it asserted the PLO's right to govern those territories, as opposed to the Jordanian or Egyptian government, or to some kind of puppet authority set up by Israel.

Meeting in Cairo June 1-9, 1974, the Palestine National Council declared, "The PLO will fight by all means at its disposal, by armed struggle in particular, to liberate the territory of Palestine and construct an independent and fighting people's national authority on any part of Palestinian territory that is liberated."

Liberation of the occupied territories was seen as a step in the fight for a democratic, secular Palestine. Points three and four of the 10-point program adopted at the Cairo meeting said in this regard:

"The PLO will fight against any plan or Palestinian entity that would entail recognition of the enemy, conclusion of a peace with it, and the renunciation of our people's historic right to return to their homeland and decide their own future.

"The PLO holds that any measure of liberation is only a step toward the realization of its strategic objective, namely the construction of a democratic Palestinian state in conformity with the resolutions of previous sessions of the Palestine National Council."

Other points in the 1974 program called for continuing the PLO's underground work in Jordan and asserted that the organization would "fight to strengthen its links with the socialist countries and the liberation movements around the world. . . ."

Just how successful the PLO was in bringing the cause of the Palestinian people to world attention was shown when Yassir Arafat addressed the UN General Assembly in November 1974. Arafat presented a

powerful statement of what the Palestinians are fighting for. The General Assembly had voted by 105 to 4 in October 1974 to recognize the PLO as the "representative of the Palestinian people." Following Arafat's speech, the PLO, against Washington's opposition, won permanent UN observer status. The General Assembly also voted to recognize the right of the Palestinians to independence and sovereignty in Palestine.

PLO's 1981 program

As indicated earlier in this article, the PLO has maintained its basic program for the national liberation of Palestine since the rise of the guerrilla organizations as a mass movement following the June 1967 war. This was clearly reflected in the resolution approved at the April 1981 meeting of the Palestine National Council. At the same time, the PLO

The PLO took a step forward by placing more emphasis on the transitional step of Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories . . .

has gone through big experiences, broadened its political vision, and responded to new developments around the world.

Thus, the final political statement of the April 1981 national council meeting warned of Washington's "attempts to impose its control and domination on the Arab homeland and the neighbouring areas by various means, in particular the establishment of military bases and the call for the establishment of pacts on the pretext of an alleged Soviet danger."

The meeting "stressed the importance of close alliance between the forces of revolution throughout the world," and in particular "expressed its concern for the unity of the Non-aligned Movement on the basis of its hostility to imperialism, Zionism and racism." It also "affirmed its resolute support for the struggles of the peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean area, and condemned the aggressive moves of the American government in that area."

The council's emphasis on mass organization and struggle was also evident in the statement, which "expressed its great pride in the level of struggle attained by the uprising of our people in the occupied homeland." It pointed out in particular:

"The Council laid emphasis on the importance of support for trade unions, students' and women's organizations and all professional associations and municipalities, to enable them to perform their role in consolidating the steadfastness of our people in their land. . . ."

In reaffirming its call for "the development and escalation of armed struggle against Zionist occupation," the council also "reaffirmed the necessity for all Arab fronts to be opened up to the valiant fighters of our revolution."

It singled out "the importance of firm relations in struggle between the Palestinian and Jordanian peoples and affirmed its support for the Jordanian nationalist movement in all fields." It also declared that "the oil wealth of the Arab homeland should be utilized in the interests of the welfare and progress of the Arab nation and of its current issues, headed by the cause of Palestine."

Finally, "The Council expressed the view that no initiative can be valid if it regards the Camp David agreements and methods as the basis for a solution, and does not recognize the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and the right of our people to return, to self-determination and to establish an independent state on the soil of our homeland."

Fifteen years of struggle

Over the past 15 years, the PLO has remained true to its original goal of building a mass, independent struggle of the Palestinian people for their national rights. As an organization, the PLO is based firmly on the masses of the Palestinian people. No Arab government has been able to take over the PLO and turn it into a puppet organization.

To defend its independence, the PLO has demonstrated its readiness, when forced to, to fight not only Israel, but also the regimes in Lebanon

and Jordan, arms in hand. Its political activity has served to advance the class struggle throughout the Middle East. And when the Israeli army invaded Lebanon, it found the Palestinian refugees there armed and organized, and ready to resist Israel's vastly superior firepower, thanks to the PLO.

While continuing to call on the Arab governments to unite in support of the Palestinian struggle, the PLO has also been quite critical in pointing out their failures. For example, an editorial in the Aug. 8, 1982, issue of the official PLO newspaper *Filistin al-Thawra*, written during the siege of West Beirut, declared: "We have expected the confrontation and steadfastness front, but no one came, we have expected the Arabs, but no one came. We have expected our friends in the world, but no one came."

Arafat himself, speaking to the Arab heads of state at the Fez conference, described the "world's ineffectual reaction to the events in southern Lebanon." He told the assembled rulers, "You control the Arab decision. You are all responsible, initially and ultimately, for the fate of this nation." He added, "At this point, the feeling of guilt will not help," and said:

"Let our Arab nation unite and wake up from its deep sleep in order to face facts and events and in order to confront the challenges to our destiny and civilization. . . ."

Although the Arab rulers declined to live up to Arafat's challenge, the point has not been lost on the Arab masses. "The man in the street had more intense feelings about this war than any other war in the Arab-Israeli history," a professor at Kuwait University told *New York Times* reporter Thomas Friedman.

"For the first time, an Arab capital was being besieged and the resistance was being mounted not by an Arab army, but a popular movement. People tried to volunteer, they tried to demonstrate, but in almost every case they were prevented from doing so by their governments."

Finally, the PLO has won through struggle the allegiance of the Palestinian people as a whole, as well as the respect of the toilers of the world. The PLO is in fact the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. This fact has been clear in Lebanon for a long time.

In the West Bank, in addition to the hundreds of demonstrations where the PLO flag has been flown, and the election of mayors throughout the area who solidarize with the PLO, two polls were conducted shortly before the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. One, conducted for *Time*



Children in a Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon. PLO operated as a broad social movement, not just a military force.

magazine by the Israeli Public Opinion Research Institute (PORI), found that 88 percent of those on the West Bank considered the PLO to be their sole legitimate representative. Eighty-six percent wanted a Palestinian state under its leadership.

A second poll, taken by Najah University in the West Bank city of Nablus, found that 66 percent viewed the PLO as their sole legitimate representative. Seventy-six percent favored an independent state under its leadership.

The *Time* poll also found that 56 percent favored a democratic, secular Palestine (35 percent favored an Islamic government), and 57 percent favored a socialist economic system.

Since the PLO's heroic resistance against the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, its standing and support in the occupied territories, among Palestinians inside Israel, and among working people around the world have risen dramatically. But there is no denying that with the outcome of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, the Palestinian struggle for self-determination and the anti-imperialist movement in the Middle East as a whole have suffered a grave defeat.

Retreat from West Beirut

While exacting the biggest political price that it could from the Israeli rulers for their aggression in Lebanon, the PLO was ultimately forced to lead a retreat from West Beirut.

West Beirut was surrounded by a military force whose central political aim was to destroy the PLO. The Israeli army, which as Leslie Gelb noted in the October 31 *New York Times*, is now "the equal of West Germany's in numbers of front-line weapons," faced a numerically smaller force that had no tanks, no aircraft, and no open line of supply.

After holding off the Israeli army for 88 days, the Palestinian fighters marched out of West Beirut with their banners flying.

The alternative to the course taken by the PLO leadership would have been a futile last stand in West Beirut. Such a decision would have resulted in far more civilian casualties. Nor would such a fight to the finish have accomplished anything, beyond helping the Israelis in their aim of wiping out the PLO. It would not have prevented the consolidation of a rightist government in Lebanon, ended the occupation of Lebanon by Israeli forces, or prevented massacres of Palestinians such as those at the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps.

Surrounded as it was in West Beirut, the PLO leadership had to make the best of a bad situation. To facilitate the withdrawal of the Palestinian fighters under conditions less likely to expose them to Israeli army attacks, the PLO leadership agreed to the deployment of U.S., French, and Italian troops in the city as part of the disengagement agreement.

What Washington wants

To understand the lessons of the events in Lebanon and the prospects for the Palestinian struggle in the wake of this defeat, it is necessary to look at the latest war in the context of what has been happening in the Middle East as a whole over the past dozen years.

Many things have changed in the Middle East since 1970. From Washington's point of view, however, one fundamental problem has remained the same. The existence of the PLO and its continued authority among the Arab masses have prevented the consolidation of a stable political relationship between Israel and the Arab countries. Failure of the Israeli state to gain recognition from the Arab regimes closes the Israeli ruling class off from the markets and arenas of investment that it needs. Within the Arab countries, the ongoing conflict with Israel destabilizes the most proimperialist governments.

But the U.S. ruling class does not want stability in the abstract in the Middle East. It wants to stabilize its own domination. It cannot do this through concessions to the anti-imperialist aspirations of the workers and peasants, who would only be encouraged by such measures to advance their struggles.

Nor can Washington strengthen its position by weakening Israel, which is the main imperialist bulwark in the Middle East.

Thus, when the U.S. government put forward the Rogers plan in 1969, its purpose, despite what Rogers said, was not to pressure Israel to withdraw from the occupied territories. Rather, it was to pressure the Arab regimes to recognize Israel, and in the process to join in the effort

to crush the PLO.

Precisely the same thing is involved in the Reagan plan today. U.S. policymakers issue public declarations about the need for Israel to withdraw from the occupied territories, just as they talk about the importance of human rights and land reform in El Salvador. Washington's real policy, however, is to support the Israeli occupation.

The U.S. ruling class is well aware of the crucial role that the West Bank now plays in the Israeli economy and in the ability of the Israeli rulers to project their military power throughout the Middle East.

Nor is Washington about to give up on imperialist Israel, with its massive military machine, and switch to the governments of semicolonial Egypt or Saudi Arabia as its main ally in the Middle East.

Because the Arab countries are oppressed by imperialism, their governments cannot be relied upon by Washington in the same way that it can rely on any government in Israel. No State Department official or brass hat in the Pentagon can say what kind of government will be in power in Egypt, Syria, or Saudi Arabia a few years from now — a fact they were reminded of once again when the Iranian masses tossed out the shah.

The unreliability of the Arab rulers from the point of view of the imperialists has nothing to do with the intentions or desires of the capitalists in the Arab countries. It stems from the objective workings of the imperialist system.

Foreign domination and exploitation have given rise to deep nationalist sentiment and periodic mass movements in the oppressed Arab countries. At the same time, such domination has kept the Arab ruling classes weak, making it more difficult for them to stand up to mass anti-imperialist movements that develop in their countries.

Moreover, the Arab capitalists themselves come into conflict with imperialism. They chafe under their subordinate political status, and seek a better price for their oil and other exports on the world market.

Insofar as the capitalist governments in the Arab countries stand up to imperialism and to the Israeli dispossession of the Palestinians, the working people of those countries and of the whole world have an interest in fighting alongside them. Marxists support such struggles by an oppressed nation unconditionally, that is, regardless of the leadership involved.

Over the past 15 years the PLO has remained true to its original goal of building a mass, independent struggle of the Palestinian people for their national rights . . .

Insofar as these regimes retard the fight against national oppression, ally more and more openly with imperialism, and exploit and oppress the workers and peasants of the Arab countries, they are subject to internal turmoil and revolutionary change at the hands of the toilers.

Clearly these governments are not as reliable allies for Washington as the Israeli imperialist state. The rise of the Palestinian movement, Arab nationalism in general, and the Iranian revolution have all driven this point home to Washington time and again.

The October 1973 war

All of this bears directly on the October 1973 Middle East war.

Once the PLO had been defeated in Jordan, Washington dropped the Rogers plan. It gave every indication of being willing to live indefinitely with the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, and even of Egypt's Sinai Peninsula. This, by the way, is further proof of what Washington was really after in the first place when it proposed the plan.

What was acceptable for U.S. imperialism, however, threatened to prove deadly for the Arab rulers, especially in Egypt. By 1973, the pressure that had already been building up in Egypt prior to Nasser's death in September 1970 had become explosive.

President Anwar el-Sadat had promised that 1971 would be the "year of decision" in the conflict with Israel. Then he announced that 1972 would be the "year of inevitable confrontation."

But no confrontation came.

In September 1972, in an indication of what lay in store, a battalion



PLO fighters withdrawing from West Beirut August 30.

of the Egyptian army on the Suez front mutinied over Sadat's inactivity in the face of the murderous Israeli raids on Lebanon.

Ultimately, the mass pressure on Sadat became so great that he was forced to go to war with Israel. Sadat's purpose in going to war was quite clear at the time. He wanted to force Washington to stop ignoring Egyptian demands and to put pressure on Israel for a negotiated settlement. Thus, Sadat attacked the imperialist bastion of Israel in hopes of ultimately strengthening his collaboration with imperialism.

What was decisive, however, was not Sadat's plans and intentions, but the objective fact that Egypt was an oppressed nation fighting to improve its position against imperialism. As the Fourth International explained in its October 1973 statement, the war marked "a new phase in the armed resistance of the Arab peoples to the counterrevolutionary policy of aggression systematically practiced by the Zionist state. Even though this war pits the armies of bourgeois Arab regimes against the Zionist armies, its character is that of a struggle against Israeli colonialism and expansionism. It follows that revolutionary Marxists affirm the legitimate character of the struggle of the Arab states against Zionism and call for their victory."

And the showing of the Arab armies in the October 1973 war did put the Palestinians and the other peoples of the Middle East in a stronger position against imperialism. This was reflected in the dramatic diplomatic gains made by the PLO in the year following the war, and in an unprecedented mass upsurge by the Palestinian population in the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

Sadat's capitulation

The 1973 war did not end in a decisive victory for the Arab side, however. Because of this, Sadat was able to move step-by-step toward realizing his plan for a deal with imperialism.

While U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger negotiated in Cairo and Tel Aviv, Sadat began denationalizing various state enterprises and passing laws to reduce restrictions on foreign capital. When President Richard Nixon visited Cairo in June 1974, he was met by a forest of American flags and signs saying, "We Trust Nixon." In March 1976, Sadat repudiated his treaty of friendship with the Soviet Union.

It was in this international political context that the Syrian regime collaborated with Washington in moving to prevent a victory by the Muslim-Palestinian-leftist coalition in the 1976 Lebanese civil war. Like Sadat, Syrian President Assad was hoping for some kind of agreement that would enable him to regain the Golan Heights in return for recognition of Israel.

An essential part of U.S. diplomacy, however, was to insist on recognition of Israel as the precondition for any deal with the Arab regimes. In the meantime, Sadat was left hanging. Soviet arms supplies to Egypt had been cut off, but Washington refused to give substantial military aid. The Egyptian economy was in drastic straits, but the hoped-for imperialist investment and aid failed to materialize.

The pressure finally forced Sadat to capitulate and make his trip to Jerusalem in November 1977.

As the Fourth International explained at the time, Sadat's decision to go ahead with a separate deal at the expense of the Palestinians and the Arab peoples as a whole could only result in strengthening Israel's hand against Lebanon and Syria, and new military attacks by the Israelis against these countries. This was borne out by the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in March 1978, which devastated the southern part of the country and created some 300,000 refugees. The Camp David accords also set the stage for the current Israeli invasion and the blow that has been dealt to the PLO.

Role of the Iranian revolution

Sadat's trip to Jerusalem and the signing of the Camp David agreement were among the biggest political victories for imperialism in the Middle East since the establishment of the Israeli state. What requires explanation is not that five years later the Israelis were finally able to deal such a heavy blow to the Palestinians in Lebanon; that was the function of the Camp David accords. What needs explanation is why the Israelis had to wait so long to strike this blow and why they have been forced to pay such a high price for their victory.

What forced the Israelis to delay so long was above all the impact of the Iranian revolution, which reached its climax as the final negotiations over Camp David were taking place. The triumph of that revolution in

1979 left Sadat holding the bag. Neither King Hussein of Jordan nor the Saudi rulers were about to step into the Camp David framework just as the Iranian masses in their millions were shouting "death to America!" and getting a sympathetic response throughout the Middle East.

Washington, Tel Aviv, and the Arab governments all feared that revolutionary uprisings elsewhere in the region would be sparked by the Iranian revolution, and they gauged their moves accordingly. The drive against the PLO in Lebanon was slowed down, while President Carter initiated the development of the Rapid Deployment Force and the Pentagon began acquiring new bases throughout the Middle East.

The Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq did an important service for the U.S. and Israeli rulers by invading Iran in September 1980. Saddam's war, supported by the most strongly proimperialist Arab regimes, was aimed at weakening the Iranian revolution and reducing its impact on the Arab masses. This in turn emboldened Tel Aviv, which took advantage of the effective removal of Iraq's armed forces from the Arab-Israeli confrontation. In mid-1981 Israeli jets destroyed Iraq's only nuclear reactor and a few weeks later bombed neighborhoods in West Beirut. These were among the preliminary moves to the June 1982 invasion.

Changing consciousness of working class

As for the political price that the imperialists paid for their invasion of Lebanon, the biggest credit must of course go to the PLO fighters and their allies among the Lebanese workers and farmers. The worldwide sympathy and support that their fight won, and the kind of shift it sparked in the way Israel is viewed, is an indication of how the world has changed over the past few years.

Not only did the struggle of the Palestinians in Lebanon highlight changes in working-class consciousness on a world scale, it also contributed to further advancing that consciousness.

The Israeli invasion was an indication of what imperialism has in store for the oppressed peoples of the world. The massacre in West Beirut was no fluke — it fit in completely with the kind of devastation that Washington carried out in Indochina, is sponsoring in Central America today, and will sponsor elsewhere tomorrow. Moreover, the agreement between Washington and Tel Aviv on the basic aims of the invasion, and their close military and political coordination in carrying it out, was a further step in Israel's integration as an essential partner in the international imperialist mafia.

Finally, the massive antiwar protests inside Israel itself were dramatic

The Israeli invasion of Lebanon was an indication of what imperialism has in store for the oppressed peoples of the world . . .

testimony to the fact that the Jewish workers there are undergoing the same changes in working-class consciousness that are being manifested in other imperialist countries.

When was the last time in history that a victorious army came slinking home, not to victory parades and cheers, but to protests and recrimination?

Massive pressure inside Israel forced Prime Minister Menachem Begin to reverse his original position and establish a commission of inquiry into the massacre in West Beirut. Public testimony by Begin, Defense Minister Ariel Sharon, and other Israeli leaders has laid bare many of the government's lies to Israeli working people.

Commenting on the impact of the war within Israel, *New York Times* reporter David Shipler pointed out November 14: "The morality of the Government, the ethics of the army and the use of military power for political ends have been questioned so profoundly that some feel the country's future maneuverability may be diminished."

Disillusionment with the Israeli government's war policies, widespread realization that what was involved was a war of aggression, and exposure of the government's lies have all come in the context of a deep economic crisis. Inflation in Israel has been running at the rate of 130 percent. Widespread cutbacks in social programs, such as government subsidies to basic foods, are being implemented. Even as the war in

Lebanon was in progress, workers of the El Al airline were fighting against a government attack on jobs, wages, and working conditions.

All this is the background to the wave of antiwar protests inside Israel. Imperialist Israel, at the moment of its greatest victory, has never been so divided.

As a result of the colonialist adventure in Lebanon, an increasingly large layer of Jewish workers have begun to realize that the Israeli ruling class is taking them on a road to new wars, new attacks on the living standards and democratic rights of the working class at home, and into an alliance with the most hated forces on our planet.

'Our nation has remained'

For the imperialists, the central question in the wake of the war in Lebanon is whether or not they can now use the military victory they

When was the last time in history that a victorious army came slinking home, not to victory parades and cheers, but to protests and recrimination? . . .

have scored to force the PLO into a political retreat, above all by getting it to recognize Israel.

Washington failed to get the PLO to abandon its struggle for Palestinian self-determination with the Rogers plan in 1970-71, with Kissinger's years of diplomacy following the 1973 war, or with the Camp David proposals for a phony Palestinian autonomy. Now, based on the bloody imperialist onslaught in Lebanon this year, a new chapter in this long political fight has opened up.

An indication of how the prospects in this fight are viewed inside Israel was a poll released October 4 by the Israeli daily *Ha'aretz*. It found that 32.3 percent of Israelis believed that the PLO's political influence had been strengthened by the war, while 37.5 percent felt that it was unchanged.

On November 25 the PLO's Central Council, the broadest leadership body to convene since the defeat in Lebanon, met in Damascus and denounced the Reagan plan. "The Reagan Plan," the council said, "ignores the right of our people to self-determination and to establish its own independent state under the leadership of the P.L.O., without which there can be no just and lasting peace in the Middle East."

Barely able to conceal their anger and dismay, the editors of the *New York Times* complained November 28 that "the P.L.O.'s Central Council still refuses to recognize the reality of Israel and lays claim to all its land for a state that the P.L.O. alone would run."

Resorting to new threats of force — imperialism's only answer to the just demands of the Palestinian people — the *Times* editors declared: "If defeat in Lebanon, the futility of Soviet and Arab support and the dispersal of its guerrilla forces cannot rouse the P.L.O. from its fantasies and shake its commitment to violence, there is, sad to say, only one remaining source of pressure: the relentless absorption by Israel of the West Bank and Gaza, where 1.3 million Palestinians can still make a plausible territorial claim."

But underneath the complaint of the *Times* that "those who make a bad war cannot make a good peace" is fear of the deepening polarization in the Middle East. The U.S. rulers are well aware that short of breaking the PLO, their victory in Lebanon may turn out to be hollow. As one U.S. official remarked to *Times* reporter Thomas Friedman, the impact of the war in Lebanon is likely to be "wider in its revolutionary potential than the war of 1948, which led to the downfall of almost every important Arab leader."

Arafat himself, speaking to the current Arab rulers at the Fez conference, reminded them that the PLO has no intention of giving up its struggle.

"I have great confidence and faith that our nation is capable of facing the challenges and ordeals," Arafat declared. "This nation has faced many, many invaders and tyrants, all of whom have moved on. They tried to humiliate, defeat and harm this nation. All of them have gone and our nation has remained on this good earth." □

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