
WORKERS VANGUARD

U.S. Out of Iraq! Hands Off Syria, Iran!

Down With Zionist Onslaught Against Lebanon, Gaza!

For a Socialist Federation of the Near East!

With Israeli troops poised to invade southern Lebanon, relentless Zionist bombardment is turning large areas of the country into a pile of rubble and twisted metal. At least 350 civilians have been slaughtered, the country's infrastructure is in ruins, and Beirut is once again being devastated. Out of a population of less than four million, some 500,000 have been displaced. Meanwhile, the bloody Zionist rulers continue their murderous rampage against Palestinians in Gaza, pounding the densely populated strip, murdering dozens. The master-race mentality of the Zionist rulers dictates that for every Israeli killed, whether soldier or civilian, a score of Arabs must die. Behind Israel's latest harvest of blood stand the U.S. imperialists, who have given Israel a green light while continuing to enforce their own savage occupation of Iraq and beating the war drums against Syria and Iran. This alone should underscore the futility of appealing to the U.S. imperialists or the United Nations to come to the aid of Lebanon or the Palestinians. *The myriad peoples of the Near East will not know peace, prosperity or justice until bourgeois rule in the region is overthrown through a series of socialist revolutions.*

Israeli Lt. Gen. Dan Halutz has ominously stated that Israel would "turn back the clock in Lebanon by 20 years," a threat of total devastation recalling the 1975-90 civil war. Israel has called up thousands of reservists, having already

made several incursions into southern Lebanon where they faced fierce fighting by Hezbollah forces. It is notable that amid the chauvinist frenzy whipped up by Israel's rulers, some 2,000 people demonstrated in Tel Aviv on July 16 against the assault on Lebanon. As Trotskyists, we in the Spartacist League militarily defend Hezbollah against the Israeli military machine in this conflict, while maintaining our political opposition to this reactionary fundamentalist outfit. *Israel out of Lebanon, Gaza and all the Occupied Territories! Defend the Palestinian people! Down with U.S. aid to Israel!*

Israel's latest offensive comes in the context of the murderous U.S. occupation of Iraq. American imperial barbarism, which includes the torture chambers of Abu Ghraib and mass murders such as in Haditha, has also stoked and unleashed an orgy of ethnic and religious bloodletting there. A recent UN report on Iraq stated that in the month of June alone some 3,000 civilians had been slaughtered—100 per day. In the first half of this year, on average, nearly 80 civilians were killed each day. Now the U.S. is ratcheting up its saber rattling against Syria and Iran, claiming they are the real powers behind Hezbollah.

In the event of an attack on Iran or Syria, whether by the U.S. or by Israel acting as its proxy, it is the duty of the proletariat in the U.S. and around the world to stand for the

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military defense of Iran and Syria, without giving political support to either the Ba'athist dictatorship in Damascus or the reactionary mullah regime in Tehran. In the face of imperialist nuclear blackmail, we say that Iran needs nuclear weapons and adequate delivery systems to defend itself and to deter an imperialist attack. Additionally, as part of our unconditional military defense of the North Korean deformed workers state, we support that country's development and testing of nuclear weapons and delivery systems. ***Hands off Syria and Iran! No UN sanctions against North Korea! U.S. out of Iraq, Afghanistan, the Near East and Central Asia!***

While the Beirut government, which came to power last year with Washington's support, appeals to the Bush administration to rein in Israel, the capitalist Democratic and Republican parties pledge their solidarity with the murderous Israeli rulers. For their part, the European imperialist powers and the United Nations debate whether or not Israel's onslaught is "excessive" or "disproportionate," and several bourgeois Arab leaders have condemned Hezbollah for "adventurism" after it seized two Israeli soldiers. In the face of Israel's savage offensive, there are increasing calls for a UN "peacekeeping" presence in southern Lebanon. An undated Web statement by the liberal "antiwar" outfit United for Peace and Justice demands a "Security Council resolution calling for an immediate and unconditional cease-fire" and "an end to US blocking of UN action." Beware illusions in the UN, an imperialist den of thieves and their victims.

From the Korean War to the starvation sanctions against Saddam Hussein's Iraq, the UN has acted as a tool of imperialist depredation around the world. It was the UN that disarmed Palestinian fighters during Lebanon's bloody civil war, setting up the 1982 massacre of some 2,000 civilians in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps by Christian rightist forces directed by Israeli troops under the leadership of the now-comatose butcher Ariel Sharon. ***No to UN intervention!***

Israel and the U.S. state that their aim is to disarm and crush Hezbollah. This can in the end be accomplished only by the annihilation of southern Lebanon's plebeian Shi'ite population, a larger of the numerous mutually hostile communities in the country. Far from being a nation, Lebanon

is an artificial statelet carved out of Syria by the French imperialists following World War I. The civil war that ravaged Lebanon and killed over 150,000 people represented the bloodiest expression of the intercommunal strife that has always plagued the country.

The reformist Workers World Party, which prettifies Hezbollah as a "national resistance movement," declares that Islamic fundamentalism "is the ideological form whose actual content is the struggle against imperialism" (*Workers World* online, 20 July). Far from it. During the period of the Cold War against the Soviet Union, U.S. imperialism (and Israel vis-à-vis Hamas) fostered the growth of Islamic reaction as a counterweight to Communism and secular nationalism. This was most clearly expressed in the billions funneled by the U.S. to the bloodthirsty *mujahedin* butchers fighting Soviet troops in Afghanistan in the 1980s. We said, "Hail Red Army in Afghanistan!" and called to extend the gains of the 1917 October Revolution to the Afghan peoples. It is an indictment of the political bankruptcy of Arab nationalism and a sign of the reactionary political climate ushered in by the 1991-92 capitalist counterrevolution in the USSR that millions of Arabs today perceive the Islamic fundamentalists to be the best fighters against imperialism and Zionism.

Capitalist rule, which fuels national, ethnic and religious divisions, has driven the constant bloodshed that defines the Near East. As one after another "peace" plan heralds further massacre and immiseration of Palestinians, as every proclamation of "democracy" covers for bloody imperialist occupation and internecine bloodletting, it could not be clearer that there will be no equitable resolution to the conflicting claims of the peoples of the region until bourgeois rule is overthrown and imperialist subjugation ended. This is particularly the case in assuring the right of national self-determination for both the Palestinian Arab and the Hebrew-speaking peoples.

The fight for workers rule in the Near East crucially includes shattering the Zionist garrison state from within through Arab/Hebrew workers revolution. Key to this perspective is the forging of Marxist workers parties throughout the Near East to unite the proletariat—Arab, Persian, Kurdish and Hebrew, Sunni and Shi'ite, Muslim and Christian—in struggle against imperialism and against the Zionists, mullahs, sheiks and all the other capitalist rulers. Such parties, sections of a reformed Trotskyist Fourth International, are essential to break the proletariat from fundamentalism and from all forms of nationalism in the struggle for a socialist federation of the Near East.

The conquest of power by the proletariat in the Near East does not complete the socialist revolution, but only opens it by changing the direction of social development. But that social development can only be consolidated through the international extension of the revolution, particularly to the advanced, industrialized imperialist centers. Defense of those subjugated by the imperialists around the globe demands the pursuit of class struggle in the U.S. and other imperialist centers, pointing toward a proletarian struggle for power. The Spartacist League, U.S. section of the International Communist League, is committed to the fight to forge a revolutionary workers party to lead the multiracial proletariat in the struggle to sweep away U.S. imperialism through socialist revolution.

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