

US Politics and the Struggle Against Zionism

The following article was submitted to us by Dale Borgeson of the «Line of March» editorial board. «Line of March» is an anti-imperialist journal published in the USA.

Zionism is one of the most potent instruments of imperialism in the world today, a dangerous threat to world peace and the freedom of the Arab peoples. It is also a major source of opportunism within the U.S. itself that must be confronted in order to build a stable progressive and working class movement within this country.

However, it is quite evident that a broad pro-Zionist consensus is still a fundamental fact of U.S. political life. Since 1948, every U.S. presidential election campaign has seen Republican and Democratic nominees vying for the title of «staunchest friend and defender of Israel.» Liberal Democrats often outdo conservative Republicans in the bidding, as happened this year when both Mondale and Hart challenged Reagan to move the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem. And the U.S. labor movement is also militantly pro-Zionist.

Such a dismal 36 year political history prompts the question of how this pro-Zionist consensus will ever be broken. What are the prospects for cracking, and eventually breaking down, this Zionist consensus? And why is this such a pressing task?

Cracks in the Zionist consensus

Since 1982, two major developments have produced initial cracks in the Zionist consensus. The first was public reaction against the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, with its subsequent bombardment of Beirut and massacre of Palestinian refugees. The grisly TV scenes of Israeli planes bombing civilian housing projects and the media accounts of Israeli complicity in the Sabra and Shatila massacres dealt a heavy blow to the vaunted Zionist «moral authority», which had been so painstakingly built up using the memory of the Holocaust.

Lebanon produced a crisis among U.S. liberal supporters of Zionism, torn between their desire to defend Israel and their shock at the brutality of the invasion. Unfortunately, the U.S. anti-imperialist movement was not able to set an anti-Zionist political pole within the broad anti-invasion front, due to its own problems of conciliating liberal Zionism. As a result, most of the people propelled into political activity by the invasion focused

their anger on Begin and Sharon for having «betrayed the true democratic traditions of Zionism,» and did not come to a general critique of Zionism itself. Still, the fact that many people stepped forward to criticize Israeli «excesses» was a new and important development.

The second major development was the presidential campaign of Rev. Jesse Jackson and the emergence of the Rainbow Coalition as a potent progressive political force. Jackson is the first major U.S. presidential candidate ever to put the issue of peace in the Middle East and Palestinian national rights squarely on the national political agenda. His trip to Syria heightened the pressure on the Reagan Administration to withdraw U.S. troops from Lebanon, and his open support for a Palestinian homeland challenged the traditional knee jerk support for Israel by the other Democratic candidates. Jackson's electoral success proved that millions of Americans, particularly Blacks, would support his Middle East position and opened up public opinion as a whole to further education on Middle East politics.

Ruling class reacts to Jackson

For his efforts, Reverend Jackson was declared «Public Enemy Number One» by U.S. based Zionists as well as by the U.S. ruling class. Even the liberal wing of the ruling class accused Jackson, in the words of the New York Times, of «collaboration with the enemies of democracy in embarrassments of the government of the U.S.» And the establishment press as a whole outdid itself attempting to discredit Jackson, especially by its unrelenting attacks on his unfortunate Hymietown remark. As usual, such attacks were made in the guise of opposition to anti-Semitism but were little more than a demagogic attempt to stop the Rainbow Coalition and discredit its position on the Middle East.

Of course, ruling class hostility towards Jesse Jackson does not stem simply from his Middle East stance. They are disturbed by what they see as his all-sided role as a spokesman for the «dispossessed and dis-enfranchised» of U.S. society. His staunch program of peace and justice has brought

Re-enactment of the Sabra-Shatila massacre in Austin, Texas, staged as part of this year's commemoration sponsored by the November 29th Coalition.

