

Down with The Perpetrators of Palestinian Slaughter: Need for a Total Uprooting

September 19, 1982

The crocodile tears of Ronald Reagan—and even any genuine outrage he may have felt at the slaughter of the Palestinians in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps—will not wash the blood from Begin-Sharon, who paved the way for the butchers of Saad Haddad's private army and the breakaway Phalangists, both of whom had been armed by Israel for years. Nor can they clear Reagan of responsibility for the neo-fascistic acts perpetrated in Lebanon. Nor can they excuse the whole Western imperialist camp which so hurriedly pulled out its so-called international peace-keeping force the minute the PLO guerrillas and their leaders were safely out of west Beirut. The truth is that a solemn pledge was given to the PLO for the safety of the unarmed civilians, which included women and infants as well as men. In varying degrees all of them bear responsibility for the fact that the so-called "law and order" they brought to Lebanon was a form of holocaust, instead.

The only serious opposition to the barbarism is seen in the mass demonstrations within Israel itself, demanding the removal of the Begin-Sharon government. But that, too, is only a beginning. Even if the Labor and Peace parties gain power, that will not change the state-capitalist nature of Israel which resulted in the neo-fascistic Begin-Sharon regime. Nor can we forget that the reason he gained a clear majority was due to the support of Guela Cohen's extreme Right party, Tehiya. In exchange for its three votes on July 25, Tehiya was guaranteed several thousand new homes in the occupied region; seven new settlements on the West Bank; and General Sharon's sponsorship of the whole idea of settling the West Bank as if it were part of Israel.

It was precisely for that aim of annexing the West Bank that the latest imperialist venture into Lebanon was taken. It is not just that PLO Begin-Sharon are out to destroy, but the very idea of Palestinian national self-determination. The whole talk of so-called autonomy in the Camp David Peace Treaty was a sham and a snare. This is clearly not the time for any "half-way houses." The Begin-Sharon government must be overthrown!

The events are moving so fast that we no sooner confront one horror than we are confronted with a worse atrocity. Thus the latest atrocities came only three days after Israel's invasion of west Beirut that immediately followed the assassination of the President-elect, Bashir Gemayel. Far from its claim that its mission was "the restoration of law and order" in the "sovereign state of Lebanon," Israel's goal was the same as in its first invasion of Lebanon in June—not the "sovereignty" of

Lebanon, but the establishment of a puppet regime there, under the illusion that its army could destroy the idea of freedom.

Gemayel's assassination and the fact that all of the "international peace-keeping forces"—the U.S., France and Italy—had been pulled out, made the original Israeli aim of installing its own government into power in Lebanon seemingly easier. Bashir Gemayel, on whom Israel seemed fully dependent, had not only begun to say that it was necessary to get all foreign troops out of Lebanon, but was beginning to look to the U.S., since it, too, was criticizing its prime ally in the Middle East, Israel. Even before Gemayel made these new sounds, it was clear that Israel's support of Gemayel wasn't as total as his rhetoric made it appear.

Ever since 1978, it was Major Saad Haddad who was Israel's direct puppet. Israel's support of Gemayel was based on: 1.) the fact that he had the Phalangist Army behind him (which Israel had largely armed); and 2.) the fact that he had some indigenous support. But ever since the June invasion of Lebanon it was Major Haddad, whose ambition had always been to carve out a piece of Lebanon with him as lord over it, that General Sharon had been encouraging. (1) Israel had been artificially swelling Haddad's militias by taking arms from the Lebanese Army in the South and turning them over to Haddad, who began to talk of increasing his "army" from a few thousand to fifty thousand.

Did Israel think that the invasion of Beirut could accomplish its aim of totally destroying the PLO? Even that Great Delusion—which matches the Grand Illusion that an insignificant puppet like Haddad could be installed as ruler over the whole of Lebanon—did not seem to exhaust General Sharon's schema for the Middle East.

The fantastic lengths to which Begin-Sharon were willing to go included entering the Soviet Embassy itself, and risking nothing short of a confrontation between the two super-powers. Even if that proves to have been only a symbolic gesture with which they wished to threaten the U.S., does Israel wish to imitate the Nazis and translate "Deutschland uber alles" as "Eretz Israel uber alles"?

The latest events bring new urgency to the Marxist-Humanist Perspectives which were set at the Labor Day Convention of News and Letters Committees, in which the analysis of Israel's first barbarous invasion was tightly integrated not only to a total opposition to Begin-Sharon, but to making that total opposition

inseparable from working out what principles one is fighting for. The focus is on the imperative of new human relations in this age of myriad crises, which calls for a total uprooting of the old, exploitative, anti-national liberationist forces—be they the U.S. or Russia, Israel or Western Europe. No solution can be found among any of the contending powers, all of whom have their own global imperialist purposes.

Here is what was presented on Sept. 5, as Part I of our Perspectives:

Israel's Genocidal invasion of Lebanon: opposition needed against building any half-way houses

Nothing but horror and utter disgust characterizes the world's reaction to Israel's gruesome invasion of Lebanon. Each day of the endless string of Israel's lying excuses for the destruction of that land—from the claim of securing a "25 mile security zone" for Israel and empty talk of the PLO as "terrorists" at a moment when, not the PLO, but Begin-Sharon's Israel was the one committing the atrocities; to the claim of being for Lebanon's "integrity" as a nation, freed of Syria's and the PLO's invasions—only heightened and widened the world's opposition to Israel's ghastly attack. History will not forget such barbarism. Opposition, and even putting an end, to these uncivilized acts, cannot, however, be sufficient unto the day without, at one and the same time, showing how it had resulted from a transformation into opposite of what Israel was at birth in 1947-48, and what it is today, 1982-83...

How quickly forgotten (if, indeed, Begin or Irgun ever knew them) are the true origins of the idea of an "Israeli nationality." The Nazi holocaust, which they invoke today for reactionary purposes, is the fact of history that changed the position of Marxists who had always been for cultural assimilation to the point where nothing deviated from straight socialist goals. (See Leon Trotsky's articles on why, though still fully opposed to Zionism, he now—i.e. 1937—had to be for a "homeland for the Jews." That was the Marxist position on Israel, on the question of national self-determination.) The same was true for those who weren't Marxists. A good essay by a liberal, Alfred Friendly, describes the shock of today, even of those who still favored Israel in the war of 1967.

In "Israel: Paradise Lost" (*Manchester Guardian*, July 11, 1982), Alfred Friendly recalls the 1967 war, when he was for Israel and when the attitude was how temporary the occupation was: 1) As one Colonel put it, "There won't be any struggle getting Sinai back to Nasser quickly"; 2) A short while later, Israel enthusiastically accepted

UN Resolution 242; 3) Israel categorically denied the Arab accusation that the Zionist objective was a so-called "Eretz Israel," as the Bible expressed it ("a realm extending from the Nile to the Euphrates"), insisting instead that only the "crazies" talked about "Eretz Israel" in that Biblical manner. But, in fact, says Friendly, we were soon to see the "Dayan Plan" which proposed "garrison settlements," which was followed by the "Allon Plan" which talked of Biblical Judea and Samaria, and now we have the "Likud-Sharon Plan" or "the triumph of the Eretz Israel boys." The result is the genocidal invasion of Lebanon.

The transformation of Israel into an imperialist state is a very different point of departure from what we have always used as proof of the transformation into opposite when we pointed to the first workers' state into a state-capitalist society. It is true that this, too, is a state-capitalist society. It is true, also, that, at its birth, it certainly wasn't anywhere as clear a social revolution as was 1917. Methodologically as well as practically, the point here is that we could—and did—express the contradictions at its birth. We refused to be silent even when we most enthusiastically supported the establishment of "a homeland for the Jews," by pointing sharply to the fact that the land contained the presence—as a minority, it is true, but a presence, nevertheless—of the reactionary Irgun, whose leader was the terrorist, Begin. What a transformation into opposite of the Israel of "Exodus," 1947-48, into the imperialistic state-capitalist Israel of 1982-83!

Lest anyone have any illusions that Reagan's "pressuring" Begin to back away from the dehumanized continuation of the war in Lebanon meant opposition to Israel's invasion of Lebanon or the present attempt by Israel to saddle Lebanon with a fascist regime, it is necessary to remind them that that was precisely the U.S. position for Lebanon ever since the 1975-76 Civil War there. It isn't Reagan who stopped Begin. What actually stopped Begin is the totality of the world opposition and the emergence of an opposition within Israel that has appeared there, for the first time ever during an ongoing war.

It is good that a peace movement has arisen in Israel demanding an end to Israel's invasion of Lebanon at once. It is even better that some of that Left has raised the question of self-determination for Palestinians in Israel—or, rather, the part Israel occupies illegally. (Indeed, what Israel is now trying to annex is Palestine.) But that, too, will hardly solve much if, at the same time, a new banner of genuine liberation is not unfolded.

The immediate, urgent question now is: What kind of regime in Lebanon? Does anyone doubt that Begin-Sharon wanted that small-time neo-fascist, Bashir Gemayel to become its President? What is needed is to see to it that genuine national liberation is the predominant demand and that none will stand for any colonization anywhere—be it by Britain in the Malvinas/Falklands or Israel in Lebanon and the West Bank and the Golan Heights. Let's keep in mind that precisely because Thatcher thought she could revive British chauvinistic patriotism—especially when it had U.S. support and is so militarily dominant over technologically backward lands like Argentina—she thought a military victory would assure her holding onto the Falklands/Malvinas. Nothing could be further from the truth. The reason that even militaristic neo-fascist Argentina could threaten Britain with transformation of her military victory into a defeat, and Argentina's military defeat into a victory, is the Third World's implacable opposition to neo-colonialism; it will not allow Britain to keep its war booty.

Here, too, philosophy is no abstraction. Its concretization, as politicalization, warns that whole New Left not to stop at half-way houses, not even when that manifests deep sensitivity to Third World desires for freedom unless they are willing to transform that desire into an outright revolution. I'm referring to that part of the New Left which uncritically accepts the unfinished Latin American revolutions as if that is the answer—i.e. what will destroy imperialist capitalism. There was a special issue of *Contemporary Marxism* (Winter, 1990), edited by Immanuel Wallerstein, in which Samir Amin, in an essay on Nicaragua, concluded that the primary task is "revitalization of the economy." No one needs a reminder that the counter-revolution in Poland, headed by General Jaruzelski, is using precisely that excuse for destroying Solidarity.

Why being against "what is" is incomplete without the corollary, what one is for

Because the economic and political crises wracking the capitalist-imperialist world are so horrendous—whether we look at the acknowledged, official 10 percent unemployment (which is not 10 percent but 17 percent in industrial centers, and fully 50 percent among Black youth—and which characterizes not only the U.S. but circles the world with 30 million now unemployed in the industrialized nations!), or whether we look at the many recently ongoing wars, from Iran-Iraq to the Falklands/Malvinas to Israel's genocidal invasion of Lebanon—it is all too tempting to express oneself solely in opposition

to what is, without ever specifying what one is for, so weighted down does one become by all these crises crying out for an end.

History, however, warns us of other critical periods which give us historic proof that mere opposition to such monstrous degeneration does not lead to new societies. On the contrary. It only assures the transformation of that type of bare opposition into one form or another of a half-way house. That is true both when we look at the failure of bourgeois democracy and when we look at fascism. Both brought on World War II. Such a victory over fascism only laid the ground for the restoration of state-capitalism—Gaullism as well as Stalinism. Indeed, state-capitalism became a universal.

As we know from WW I, even the magnificent opposition that was successful—the Russian Revolution—once it didn't spread beyond national borders, ended in the transformation of the first workers' state into its opposite, state-capitalism.

Today, we cannot evade asking: What Now? Is the PLO the absolute opposite of Israel, or just one more narrow nationalism? In our age, when a nuclear war threatens civilization as we have known it, we cannot, must not, accept half-way houses as the answer. Nor do I mean only outright nuclear holocaust. Rather, the immediate crises of today are both in the "Love Canals" of the world and at the point of production....(2)

We cannot satisfy ourselves with detailing only what we are against or with enlarging atrocity stories. They surely abound in Israel's invasion of Lebanon.(3) Many atrocity stories, I'm sure, can also be told of the PLO and its fantastic covenant "to drive the Israelis into the sea." Nor should our support of the Palestinians for self-determination and the PLO as a bargaining agent lead us away from re-examining what happens to aborted revolutions—in this case, specifically Lebanon and specifically as aided by the PLO in the 1975-76 Civil War there. Which is why we correctly entitled our Philosophic-Political Letter (August 6, 1976): "The Test Not Only of the PLO But of the Whole Left."

Because the Left did not meet the challenge but followed the PLO is one substantial reason for the totality of the crisis today. Just at the point when there was a near success by the indigenous Lebanese Left, and the outcome of the 1975-6 Civil War hung in the balance, the PLO insisted that the concentration must be, not on the native ruler-oppressors represented by the so-called Christian, i.e. neo-fascist, Phalangists, but on Israel alone, though at the moment Israel was

nowhere present in Lebanon and Syria was all ready to invade. It is Syria the PLO had dubbed "liberators" instead of a new imperialistic force. The great tragedy was that the whole Left—indigenous Lebanese under Jumblatt, Stalinists, Trotskyist—followed the PLO lead. Here is what we wrote in that Political-Philosophic Letter:

"...the New Left, born in the 1960s, so disdainful of theory (which it forever thinks it can pick up 'en route'), has a strange attitude toward imperialism. It is as if imperialism were not the natural outgrowth of monopoly capitalism, but was a 'conspiracy, organized by a single imaginary center, rather as the Nazis used to refer to the Judeo-Catholic-Masonic Alliance, or Communists under Stalin to the conspiracy of the Trotskyists and Rightists in league with the imperialist secret service'...

"And even, it should now be added, as Khomeini not refers to the U.S. and Israel as the Great Satan.

"Evidently nationalism of the so-called Third World is of itself revolutionary even when it is under the banner of a king, a shah, or the emirates, or the Syrian Army. Thereby, they canonize nationalism, even when it is void of working class character, as national liberation.

"It is not that class is the sole characteristic of national liberation movements that revolutionaries can support. It is that the working class nature is its essence and it is that the revolutionary and international impact emerges from masses in motion...

"This does not mean that we give up the struggle for self-determination, Palestinian especially. It is that we do not narrow our vision of the revolutionary struggle for a totally different world, on truly new Humanist foundations, the first necessity of which is the unity of philosophy and

revolution."

As has now become painfully clear, Begin-Sharon, bent on the mad delusion that an Army can kill the idea of freedom, were not stopped even though their invasion of west Beirut assured a clear road for the massacre of hundreds upon hundreds of Palestinians by Major Haddad and the breakaway Phalangists. Just as the Polish masses never forgave Russia during World War II for staying outside the gates of Warsaw in 1944, waiting for the Nazis to complete their destruction before they moved into "save" them, so the masses of the world will never forgive Begin's Israel for the Lebanon massacre.

What is necessary is to see that the opposition to this horror does not stop with being against Begin-Sharon. It must demonstrate what it is for—which can only be the total uprooting of the state-private capitalism that brought this horror into being, and the unfolding of the kind of "revolution in permanence" that Marx projected, and will not stop until we have truly human relations.

1. See two articles that develop this point, both in *The New York Times*, Sept. 16, 1983: "Gemayel's Impotence" by Guy Sifon; and "living by the Sword" by Anthony Lewis.
2. See "A Worker Looks at the Anti-Nuclear Movement" in our Pre-Convention Discussion Bulletin (excerpts to appear in the November *N&L*; and my letter to the Youth in Pre-Convention Discussion Bulletin Number 4. Both are available from *News & Letters*.
3. In her interview with that neo-fascist, so-called Defense Minister of Israel, Ariel Sharon, Oriana Fallaci reveals his insane, night-marish vision: "Israeli strategic interests...must be broadened to include countries such as Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, regions such as the Persian Gulf and Africa, particularly the countries of north and central Africa..."