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"Our time has come! From the slave-ship to the championship — our time has come. From the outhouse to the White House — our time has come." It was in this manner that Jesse Jackson ended months of flirting with running by formally announcing that he would be a candidate for the Democratic nomination for president at a press conference attended by 2,500 supporters. He sounded twin themes for his campaign "to remove the regressive Reagan regime and to work for parity for Blacks in white society." He also declared that "I don't sympathize with the poor. It's all in the blood. We're talking about a campaign for the poor

and abused and the locked out."

Whose Time?

Newsweek magazine, in a recent cover story on Jackson's announcement, aptly called his chant "Our Time Has Come" a "rousing, revivalist war cry." What this campaign is all about is certainly not a crusade to improve conditions for the majority of the Black masses who have been further ground down since the '60s by intensifying national oppression and generally deteriorating conditions. In fact these masses are most often referred to by Jackson as "chips" that he needs to make his "bid," and unregistered Blacks

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are referred to as "rocks layin' 'round" that need to be picked up and thrown at Ronald Reagan. In other settings, Jesse more clearly identifies those who are to really benefit from his campaign: "... we have gone from no Black elected officials to 5,160, but we hold less than one percent of these offices. In other words we are 53,000 public officials short of our share." Or, "We want to get to the finish line first, but not with an empty wagon. We want our wagon to be full of other candidates as well."

If anybody wants to trot out the shopworn lie that the surest way to Black progress is through increasing the number of Black elected officials, they have to deal with some reality. Over the last 18 years, the unemployment rate for Blacks has remained twice that for whites and the average income for Blacks has remained little more than half that of whites. Since 1965 the percentage of Blacks living below the poverty line has increased by 15%. Forty-seven percent of Black children are impoverished. The infant mortality rate in the ghettos equals that of countries like Honduras. And one out of every thirteen Black people is arrested each year. Among Black people, those who have gained since the '60s are a small stratum of better-off Blacks who have approached parity in white society while the majority of Black people have been further ground down.

The backdrop for this campaign is set by what time it is for the imperialist rulers. Facing an overall showdown with their equally imperialist Soviet rivals for world domination, they are compelled to prepare for war. However, they face a profound contradiction in doing this. The operation of their system has driven a huge section of the masses, including many Black masses, to the point of feeling left out of the system. And the steps the rulers need to take to get ready for war will mean grinding these masses further down. Yet they and many others have to be rallied to fight and die for the empire.

Jackson's candidacy is aimed at help-

ing deal with this contradiction. Born out of the class interests of the Black bourgeoisie (even though many of them are critical of his running) who seek to utilize sections of the masses as political capital for their own bourgeois aspirations, this candidacy is being promoted by the imperialist ruling class in a big way, precisely because it is a vehicle for shoving new levels of American Dream garbage and Black American patriotism down the throats of the masses. Jesse stated it well himself in an interview in Detroit. "Ours is a candidacy to take those who feel that they have no stake in the system and restore to them the feeling that they do have a stake." At the same time that imperialism intensifies its oppression of Black people, the imperialists and their lackeys step up their promotion of "historic Black firsts." As Jesse put it recently, "Look at what's happening now. A Black astronaut, a Black Miss America. There is room for another historic breakthrough."

Viewed in this context, Jesse's run represents the coincidence of the interests of two forces. On the one hand the imperialist rulers, driven to war and out to cash in on the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois strata among Blacks it has propped up since the 1960s. Their way of doing this is unleashing these forces around the program of "Get yours in America" and through them dragging a section of the Black masses and others back into the electoral process and the trenches that lie behind the voting booths. On the other hand, the Black bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie — driven by their class position to want to get into the system and angling for a better seat at the master's table and maybe some extra crumbs.

How his campaign has been handled helps reveal the real aims that underlie it. The national media has promoted Jackson and his campaign very heavily. *Newsweek*, in its recent cover story on Jackson, called his run "far and away the most intriguing element of election year '84" and said that he "has every possibility of becoming the first Black to attain

credibility and political impact as a genuine presidential contender." Even months before he announced, his possible candidacy was given feature coverage by the national media. (At the same time they all admit that he has no chance of winning. If this "symbolic" candidacy is the most exciting element of election '84, that certainly says something about how sham their whole electoral process actually is.)

Maverick

One of the major themes of all this coverage has been to speculate about the danger and uncertainty associated with Jackson's campaign. Talk of him being a maverick and an outsider who will run a radical crusade has flown thick and fast. The *New York Times* in a November 6th editorial stated: "The real unknown about Jesse Jackson is where the practical politician ends and the radical crusader begins in his makeup. In his announcement speech, the radical crusader often had the louder voice." Also in the *Newsweek* cover story, a top Mondale staffer was quoted as saying: "If he or his supporters feel he's subjected to unfair treatment in any way, then that could be very dangerous. No one could predict where all that energy would turn or what it would turn against and no one could control it."

Jesse Jackson a maverick and a radical? His campaign a potential danger to them? Don't make us laugh. *Time* magazine all but annointed him Martin Luther King, Jr.'s successor as leader of the Black movement 13 years ago, which reflects both Jackson's acceptability to the U.S. rulers and the fact that he shared King's political approach of trying to stop the Black masses from rising up in rebellion. During the 1970s, almost every major national publication did favorable feature stories on him. This past summer the U.S. army took him on a tour of military bases in Europe. The State Department has given him classified briefings, and the Secret Service recently began giving him protection. Moreover,

Jesse has always stood for slavish service to imperialism, internationally and here in the U.S. In 1968 at Chicago and again in 1980 in Miami's Liberty City, Jesse was imperialism's willing fireman mainly trying to pour cold water on the righteous anger of rebelling Black youth. Since the '60s, his approach to furthering the movement of Black people has been to promote the development of a Black buffer strata thoroughly tied to the ruling class through backroom deals with politicians and corporate heads. When necessary the masses were used as foot soldiers in the fight to secure his seat at the table.

In 1979, when the U.S. was exploring the possibility of an opening to the Palestinians, Jackson visited the PLO and was even photographed hugging Yasser Arafat. This visit is often used by those who want to portray Jesse as a radical. Actually, in making this trip, he was serving as an unofficial emissary of the Carter administration. (The fact that Jesse was entrusted with such a role helps reveal how the rulers actually view him.) Around the same time, Andy Young, the U.S. ambassador to the U.N. during Carter's presidency, was carrying out discussions with the PLO. While in the Middle East, Jackson challenged the PLO to recognize the right of the Israeli state to exist. Also he made clear what support for the Palestinian people meant to him. "Fighting for Palestinian justice is a way of fighting for the security of Israel."

This trip and his whole history is quite consistent with the role Jackson is playing for U.S. imperialism today in his campaign. One of the Chamber of Commerce types who came to the fore as the revolutionary upsurge among Black people ebbed in the '70s, Jesse has always had a keen sense of the needs of imperialism and a willingness to work in its interests in a militant way. He is well qualified to act as a point man rallying a section of the Black petty bourgeoisie around "getting theirs" in America. All this talk about mavericks and radical crusades is design-

ed to wrap him up in an image that would prove more attractive, particularly to militant reformists among the petty bourgeoisie including those who are influenced by revisionism.

Loyal Opposition

Jackson is a part of the political array of forces grouped around the Jobs, Peace and Freedom programme of the August 27th March on Washington. Such forces are an important part of what imperialism requires to prepare for war. In addition to the John Wayne-types to rally a social base of neanderthals around nuclear saber rattling and naked imperialist power projection, the imperialists also require spokesmen who come forward as critics and rally the masses around schemes to reform this or that ugly feature out of existence while leaving the beast essentially intact. Such a loyal opposition (loyal to imperialism) is important to ensuring the peaceful submission of the masses to the imperialist's war plans.

To talk about jobs, peace and freedom under imperialism is to promote an illusion. Moreover, to promote it as the imperialists are driven to war is to try to hoodwink sections of the masses into defending the empire. (See "The American Dream Roadshow and the Real Way Out of the Nightmare".) That the Black bourgeoisie would play such a role isn't surprising. In the two previous world wars, Black bourgeois forces worked overtime to get the Black masses to do their patriotic duty by pushing the line that "Black people had to show that they were worthy of a place in America." This time around they have to update the lie in order to push it.

Jesse is a quite active part of this loyal opposition. He has crisscrossed the country this year talking about Blacks registering and voting and bringing a new generation into the American political process. He spoke at the August 27th rally and also addressed a rally in D.C. in opposition to the U.S. role in Central America. Also Jackson signed an ad in the *Village*

Voice newspaper condemning the invasion of Grenada.

At the same time, within this grouping Jesse plays a particular role. He combines his critique of administration policies and concern for the poor with naked America Number One chauvinism and he does it in a style that is suited to the role he is out to play. In fact, his style, a rough cross between a country preacher and a street-gang leader (now sporting a three-piece suit), is a very important ingredient of his run. It figures into his ability to speak for a section of the Black elite that goes for militant reformism. It also enables him and his social base to promote this crap among those sections of the masses who have been left out of the political process.

Last year in a meeting with George Wallace, Jackson said that "America is going to need the contribution of Black people if it is going to beat out the Japanese," and that "Blacks and whites in this country have more in common with each other than with the Japanese." In 1980, as the U.S. nervously eyed the prospect of Black people developing support for the Iranian Revolution, Jesse leaped into the breach. At a rally in D.C. he declared, "Black people have more reason to want to keep the U.S. No. 1 in the world. If America is unable to get oil, Black peoples' homes will be the first to go without heat."

In a *60 Minutes* interview on October 30, when asked why he had called for the marines to be withdrawn from Lebanon, he said, "If their role there is combat, there aren't enough of them. If it's suicide, there are too many of them. So they should come out." This same crap about pulling them out because "American boys are dying" was run out by several of the other Democratic candidates for president, not to mention every Congressional liberal who voiced the same criticism while fully supporting the beefing up of U.S. forces in their invasion of Lebanon. And Jesse amplified on his position at the November 12 rally in Washington, D.C., giving a real lesson in his U.S.A. No. 1 nonviolence, stating,

"We are here protesting an American foreign policy that is increasingly using military might as a first resort rather than a last resort." In other words, just like his mentors Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr., Mr. Jackson knows how to divide one into two. His non-violent ideology amounts to *non* when it comes to revolutionary violence and *violence* when it comes to imperialist war (but like any common liberal, only as a last resort, of course). How dialectical!

During his trip to Europe, the U.S. army took him from base to base to meet with the troops. In meeting after meeting Jesse urged them to "take advantage of the freedoms you worked so hard to protect for others" by registering and voting. How democratic — preaching this to the cannonfodder for U.S. imperialism! He also pointed out to them that they were "in one of the few military organizations in the world where you can elect your commander-in-chief." (Remember this is the U.S. army which is, according to many of their own studies, quite concerned about whether Black GIs would feel that they had a stake in America that was worth fighting and dying for.)

Then this proponent of nonviolence (who is currently making a bid for commander-in-chief of the U.S. imperialist armed forces!) climbed into an army tank and posed for pictures. (Another noted man of peace, Ron Dellums, was standing beside the tank.) Just in case all of this was too subtle for anyone, after visiting the Berlin Wall, Jesse stated that the Wall represented the dividing line between freedom and tyranny, with freedom on the U.S. side and tyranny on the Soviet side.

And this theme was echoed when he remarked after the 007 incident that "The apparent unprovoked attack by a Russian jet fighter against an unarmed South Korean commercial airliner carrying 265 innocent civilian passengers constitutes an insensitive act of horror and terrorism. We must stand against that type of behavior anywhere in the world." Who says Jesse doesn't have the "right

stuff" — for U.S. imperialism?

There is a social base for this programme of "we'll get ours by sticking with America and doing our part to keep it No. 1." It is the Black bourgeoisie, and in a more contradictory way, the petty bourgeoisie whose ranks were greatly expanded since the '60s by the rulers as a buffer between their system and the rebellious Black masses. These forces are compelled by their position in society to want to get into the system. And given the overall situation U.S. imperialism faces, these forces see the way to do that as delivering a section of the Black masses to the rulers' electoral process.

Jackson's particular approach is best suited to the interests of that section of the Black petty bourgeoisie which has based its careers on pimping the Black masses and marshaling them as chips in their bid for getting their seat at the table. As *Newsweek* put it recently, "He (Jackson) is the champion of those Black politicians who want to play hardball with the party and its eventual nominee." In addition to politicians, there are the preachers and poverty pimps who see Jesse as speaking for them when he cries "Our time has come." (One problem for these forces is that the U.S. rulers are more interested in cashing in on the bourgeoisified forces they've propped up over the past decade than on expanding their ranks.) Indeed, Jesse is arming them with the line to run as they go out to take up the real crusade of the '80s: To promote "rallying around America" broadly among the oppressed and to surround those who have dropped out of the bourgeoisie's political process, drag a section of them back into it and isolate and silence the rest.

Debate

There has also been a major debate launched among the ranks of the so-called Black leadership family over Jesse's run. On the one side are the realists whose ranks include mayors Andy Young of Atlanta, and Coleman Young of Detroit and the heads of the

NAACP and Urban League. They cry that Jesse's run is only symbolic and that Black people can't afford to throw their votes away on it. Further they argue that he will hurt the chances of the electable candidate most favorable to Black interests (read: Walter Mondale) and only aid Reagan's chances of re-election. The logic of this position was baldly stated by Julian Bond, who was quoted in the *New York Times Magazine* as follows: "Bond, who has endorsed Walter F. Mondale's candidacy, is concerned that if other candidates in the primaries 'let Jesse have the black vote, we've got to lose in the end because the winner is going to be one of the white guys, and he will have won without the help of blacks. There would be nothing for us.'" On the other side there's Jesse and his fellow "visionaries" who include Congressman Ron Dellums and Mayor Hatcher of Gary, Indiana. They "dare to dream the impossible dream of a Black in the White House." (In more ways than one this dream is impossible. Especially if this was a campaign by someone who really wanted to make fundamental improvements in the situation of the Black masses, it wouldn't happen. The oppression of Black people is an integral part of imperialism and can't be ended without the overthrow of imperialism.)

Some debate! Both the bourgeois "visionaries" and the bourgeois "realists" are compelled by their class position to want to get into the system. Also both sides admit that he isn't running to win but to build up the ranks of the Democratic Party and aid in dumping Ronald Reagan. So what is all this "clout" and "bargaining power" and "Black power" they are talking about? Nothing but a scam to get the Democratic candidate elected, whichever ruling class spokesman it turns out to be. This debate reduces to an argument within the Black elite over how best to prove their worth to the master by delivering a section of the Black masses to the voting booths and the imperialist war that lies behind them. Jackson's approach is to run through the

primaries, talk a lot about winning for Black people a new place in America and through that deliver several million new Black voters to the ranks of the Democratic Party; his critics, the "realists," plot a course of latching onto Walter Mondale and pointing the finger at Reagan for the plight of Black people as the best way to rally Blacks to the Democratic Party. And here it must be said again that, to the oppressed, it doesn't matter which representative of imperialism is chosen to preside over what they are being forced to prepare for and carry out in the '80s.

(The role of the CPUSA in all this deserves some mention. The CP has influence among forces grouped on both sides of this debate. Apparently they plan to use their usual "three-legged stool" approach to elections with an eye to gaining the most influence among various sections of the bourgeoisie. They plan to run their own candidates, support so-called "progressive independents," and be active in the Democratic Party both in support of Jackson's campaign and in opposition to it.)

Agenda for War

This debate also plays a real role in allowing the rulers to set the terms of debate around this question. "If you think that all this shit sucks, then cast your lot with the 'visionary' and 'radical crusader,' Jesse Jackson." This would be quite safe for the imperialists. They want to, and desperately need to, rule out of bounds debate over whether to throw down in the streets or line up at the ballot box in the '80s. Actually both Jackson and his critics push the line of the ballot box as where it's at for the Black movement. For those who go for this crap of getting theirs in America, both their approaches are quite realistic. And equally reactionary.

Under any circumstances this business of "getting into and becoming somebody" in America comes down to fighting for a "share" of the worldwide plunder of U.S. imperialism. And

with the stakes what they are today, with world war shaping up, an inter-imperialist bloodfest which portends untold oppression for the masses of the earth, this chauvinist garbage that is being run out to the Black masses — who are an important component of proletarian revolution in the U.S. — is sickening. When what is required above all is a proletarian internationalist outlook so that the masses can make the greatest contribution to revolution worldwide, including the liberation of the Black people, those who make it their business to narrow the sights of the masses to "what's in it for Black people" are truly degenerate. This is the outlook of the petty bourgeoisie at its most narrow — "me" and "mine," "they grabbed, now let me have a go" — although sections of these class forces can and will be won to a different outlook as allies of the proletariat. (And we might add that in a different period and a quite different international situation, some of those forces now influenced by this reactionary ideology demonstrated that their sights could indeed go far higher than *this* backward stuff.) To put this stuff out to the oppressed is simply to spit in their face.

We stated earlier that there is a social base for this crap. But it doesn't jive at all with the conditions of the majority of the Black masses. While the rulers were propping up a buffer section among Black people, the majority were being ground further down. These conditions give many of the Black masses (and others among the oppressed as well) the potential to develop powerful feelings of wanting out of, not into, the system. At the same time that the imperialists are trying to drag sections of these masses into their plans to win a showdown for world domination with their Soviet rivals, these conditions of existence provide the objective basis for the development of proletarian internationalism among a section of the working class in this country. For such people there is a programme which is both realistic and visionary, preparing to lead millions in rising up and ending

the criminal rule of U.S. imperialism. And the very contradictions that are forcing the imperialists to try to drag a section of the dispossessed back into their political process are also working to create a situation where the actions of a class-conscious section will have greater potential to influence millions toward the revolutionary position. This points to why the imperialists desperately need to work overtime to promote their crap.

In spite of all this there are those on the "left" who argue that Jackson should be supported because of the progressive agenda he is injecting into the campaign. This is sorry politics indeed. His agenda is nothing more than one-part marshaling a section of the Black masses as chips in his bid to win a few more seats at the table for some among the Black bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie and one-part naked American chauvinism. What can there be progressive in any of this?

There are also those who see big problems with Jesse and his program (who will cynically admit he's a demagogue and a stone opportunist), but still say that his campaign should be supported. Their argument is generally that it represents a step forward because it can set large numbers of people into motion during a period of overall political retrenchment and through that they can learn the limitations of the electoral process and move forward. Now, the fact that the imperialists are compelled to drag the masses of Black people into political life is a good situation, signaling as it does the sharpening of the contradictions in the world, but the question for revolutionaries is what to do. Tail behind the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois forces? Or use the situation to expose the workings of the imperialist system, its electoral sham and the class interests at work, and spread *revolutionary* — not reformist and chauvinist — thinking?

Really, isn't this "ballot box" movement like some kind of obscene con game? Today, registering to vote is a "movement" that is being supported whole hog by the rulers. The *New York*

Times promotes it in their editorial pages. The Democratic Party is helping to finance it. The state of Georgia changed its laws so that corporations in the state could register voters on their premises. The Justice Department has provided additional federal registrars to register voters in some southern states. In New York City, employees in city agencies were made part-time voting registrars and registered 42,000 people as they sought public assistance. The organizers of this experiment are attempting to institute it nationwide, and the Republican National Committee has endorsed the idea. This line-up of forces behind the "movement" to get Black people lined up at the voting booth is nothing but a line-up of zombies outside some pornographic horror show. Having once fought for the right to vote, the Black masses must now develop the political sophistication and awareness not to use it.

The trouble with Jesse Jackson isn't that he can't deliver on his promises, but that he is working to draw a section of the oppressed into a crusade to extend the U.S.'s holdings in a worldwide show-

down with the Soviet social-imperialists. He's offering the Black masses and others to "be somebody," on the front-lines of World War 3. Can anybody calling themselves a revolutionary tail this kind of motion?

This campaign represents something that must be exposed. Its sham nature and the reactionary aims and interests beneath it must be dragged into the light of day. It won't do just to be clear that it's bullshit or merely avoid being sucked in by it. Such exposure will play a critical role in preparing for the only real way out of this system and all the putrid shit that it means for people all over the world. The necessity to make all-around preparation for proletarian revolution must be powerfully advanced into the debate that is swirling around Jesse's run.

Jesse Jackson is fond of saying, "If you run, you may lose, but if you don't run you're guaranteed to lose." But those who have truly nothing to lose but their chains have a different view: If you go for revolution you might lose, but those who go for the road of trying to get into this system have already lost. □

The American Dream Roadshow and the Real Way Out of the Nightmare

On August 27, 1983, the twentieth anniversary commemoration of the 1963 march on Washington, called under the slogan "We Still Have A Dream!" by a coalition of forces initiated by political representatives of the Black bourgeoisie, drew some 250,000 to the capital. What are the social contradictions and class forces giving rise to such an event; what do the political forces and programs manifested there reveal about the situation shaping up in the world; and how in this light can the behavior of these various forces and the necessary behavior of proletarian revolutionaries be seen: these are the questions which must be addressed if one is to pierce the fog of both unqualified and somewhat qualified praise of this march from various quarters.

Billed as a commemoration of the 1963 march on Washington, the 1983 version in some respects was indeed a commemoration and a continuation of the "historic tradition" of its forerunner, but under different conditions and with different aims. The 1963 march, aptly called by Malcolm X a circus led by clowns, was a desperate attempt on the part of the U.S. ruling class in league with various "respectable Black leaders" to channel the growing protest and rebellion of the Black masses into acceptable channels. It has been well exposed how Kennedy, fearing that the march would be a real mass outpouring, summoned Wil-

kins, Randolph, King and other Black bourgeois leaders to the White House for coffee and put them at the head of the march. Well, the Black bourgeoisie still can't turn down the coffee. The "lofty" dream which Martin Luther King intoned twenty years ago — the tired refrain of the house slave begging to rise to the "majestic heights" of sitting down at the masters' table — and the strategic goal of these class forces, the goal of "getting in" on the action of U.S imperialism, were proclaimed loud and clear by the so-called new "civil rights leaders" from the pulpit at the Lincoln Memorial in 1983. But this march occurs under different conditions; and with higher stakes all-around, one can only say that if the first time was a farce, the second time was worse.

This time around, the march was not a question of immediately diverting a threatening rebellion of the masses, but a question of preparation and positioning for the future. It should be clear: there is no "civil rights movement" — that movement was transformed and developed into a powerful revolutionary upsurge of the Black people and in large part the "we want in" program was repudiated in practice by a significant section of the Black masses in the 1960s. Anyone who is calling himself a "civil rights leader" today is nothing but a pimp in priest's clothing. And while it is also true that today there is not the kind of

revolutionary upsurge which developed in the '60s and the class polarization among the Black people has resulted in part in a significant social base for the line of "we want in," the important thing is to understand the underlying contradictions, and as Marx pointed out, what the masses will be compelled to do by the development of contradictions in the world. This march was not the product of a "new civil rights movement" but the product of the separate but related needs of two different class forces in particular — the U.S. imperialist ruling class and the Black bourgeoisie.

With the imperialist system engulfed in a profound and deepening crisis, which the imperialists can only resolve through a war between the West and the East blocs to redivide the world, the U.S. ruling class needs to mobilize and retain the loyalty of a large social base to fight and die to make America No. 1 again. As an extremely important part of this, the U.S. rulers need to rally and retain the loyalty of the Black masses and in particular to attempt to cash in on the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois class forces among the Black people which the U.S. government made a conscious attempt to develop in the wake of the revolutionary upsurge of the 1960s. At the same time, and as a partial answer to their hopes of "fulfilling the American Dream" — that is, a "fair share" in the spoils of U.S. imperialism — the Black bourgeoisie (and, in a more contradictory way, the Black petty bourgeoisie) are compelled to "want in." Thus the political program advanced for the 1980s by bourgeois and aspiring bourgeois forces among the oppressed of "getting into and becoming *somebody* within the system" — a program which advances the parliamentary road (that is, the *ballot* and by all means not the bullet) and working within the system as the only "realistic solution" for the Black masses — is an attempt by the Black bourgeoisie to rally the social base for such a program which exists among the Black petty bourgeoisie and the better-off sections of Black workers (and to also drag in as

many of the lower strata as they can) as political capital in the achievement of their lofty dream of an equal spot at the imperialist table. And this program and outlook is also being widely advertised by the imperialist ruling class who have vigorously pushed this as the essence of the struggle against oppression and inequality (all except the part about the "equal" spot at the table).

D.C. Congressman Walter Fauntroy, the national coordinator of the march, expressed this outlook and program rather crassly when three days after the march he announced "phase two" of the work of the "New Coalition of Conscience": "It will be a classic get out the vote effort on Judgement Day, er — I mean payday, er — I mean election day." In other words, when these bourgeois politicians deliver the Black masses as their political clout — first at the ballot box, and then at the trenches — they will be judged fit to further cash in on the glorious future the U.S. ruling class has in store for the people of the world. But if this seems too crude, Martin Luther King Jr. made it clear himself 20 years ago in his famous "I Have A Dream" speech when he said: "So we have come to cash this check — a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice."

This brings to mind a statement made more than 100 years ago by Engels who pointed out that the "realm of reason" promised by the bourgeois-democratic revolutions of the 18th century proved in reality to be "nothing more than the idealized realm of the bourgeoisie; that eternal justice found its realization in bourgeois justice; that equality reduced itself to bourgeois equality before the law; that bourgeois property was proclaimed as one of the most essential rights of man; and that the government of reason, Rousseau's social contract, came into being and could only come into being, as a bourgeois-democratic republic."

But today is not the 18th century, the period of historically progressive

capitalism. Given the realities of modern imperialist relations (not to mention the fact that the first gentleman to preside over the American Realm of Reason was an outright *slavemaster*), the ideal "realm of freedom" of Martin Luther King Jr. and his dream — before the words had even left his lips — were nothing but the dream of rewards for services rendered as a political broker for the present-day slavemasters and amounted to calling on the masses to uphold the ideals of a rotting corpse. Twenty years, and a somewhat less glorious presentation, have only enhanced the stench considerably.

A Profound Contradiction

However, the U.S. ruling class and the Black bourgeoisie are compelled by their different but related class interests to advance such a program and to drag the masses into political life in an extremely contradictory and potentially explosive situation — a situation in which both national oppression and the class polarization among the Black people are intensifying. While there is a social base, and one which is somewhat broader than existed prior to the 1970s, for social chauvinism, reformism and "Black American patriotism," at the same time the material situation of the *masses* of Black people does *not* correspond to these politics. The same crisis which is lending urgency to the calls for safe reformism, for "we want in" and for "Black patriotism" is simultaneously driving huge sections of the Black (and other oppressed) masses into ever deeper misery — and potentially into profound feelings of "we want out" of this imperialist system.

Only three weeks before the march on Washington, the *New York Times* reported that the latest official census statistics revealed that the poverty rate among Black people overall was 35.6% in 1982, nearly three times the poverty rate for whites and *higher* than it was in 1972 when it was 33.3%. The poverty rate for Black children was officially figured at

47.0%. Meanwhile, no sooner had the march on Washington ended than a Black astronaut was in orbit providing a role model for Black youth who, all the bourgeois studies indicate, would be "lucky" to get a job selling Star Wars glasses at McDonalds. A Black Miss America was chosen singing "Happy Days Are Here Again" while 70% of Black families below the poverty line are headed by women. And Jesse Jackson was being flown around to the troops in West Germany, compliments of the U.S. Army, talking about how the U.S. is one of the few countries in the world where you get to elect the commander-in-chief, and preaching at the Berlin Wall about how "this is where freedom stops and tyranny begins." Can we not draw some correlation between the rate at which the material conditions of the masses of Black people are deteriorating and the rate at which all this clap-trap American Dream ideology is being shoved down their throats? Sure there's a class base for this line, and it is bigger than it was when Lyndon Johnson launched his so-called War on Poverty, and this shit is paralyzing and demoralizing people even among the proletariat. But is it not also a product of a real and growing gap which the U.S. ruling class has to try to paper over, a gap which will become even more gaping as what they have in store for the future comes clearer into view?

This is a big contradiction facing the ruling class. It is also the case that their ability to build up bourgeois and petty-bourgeois forces as a buffer to help divert and suppress the Black masses is being undermined by the very crisis which is gripping their system as a whole, though they must and will devote efforts to build-up such forces and especially to entice them into being political firefighters. This contradiction was reflected in an editorial in the *New York Times* on the usefulness of a Black presidential candidate, when they made the point that: "The question for black America and all America is how to consolidate the civil rights gains of the past and press for equality in new ways.

Whether a black runs or sprints in 1984, the best weapon for promoting the welfare of black America is the ballot."

What they mean here, if we may be permitted to put their liberal jargon in perspective, is that it is a pressing necessity for the Black bourgeois forces and the U.S. ruling class to *consolidate* a social base among the Black petty bourgeoisie and better-off workers, to cash in now on this potential base for American patriotism and to utilize their influence to try and drag the oppressed, even kicking and screaming, into the bourgeois political process. This was exactly a major purpose of the march on Washington: to make headway in consolidating such a social base. (And we should note their emphasis is on *consolidating*, not expanding this base. The decades of the '60s and '70s are over; there is no plan for, or ability to engineer, a major new "move on up" for a section of the Black masses. Crisis and war are what lie ahead.)

The organizers of the march did not attempt to turn out the dispossessed Black masses. (There were few posters for the event to be seen in the D.C. ghettos in the *months* of preparation for the march, for example.) In fact you might say the proletariat was not invited, and was notably almost completely absent from this event. The *Washington Post* even ran an article on this point noting that many Black people from Washington, D.C. did not go to the march. And, as in other large cities, the great majority of Black masses are by no means middle class. The fact that the class forces organizing the march did not want the proletarian masses of the oppressed at their big commemoration is another indication that, even while they hope to stifle and even influence them, they view these people as quite a problem and that is certainly favorable for the proletariat. The fact that there were not any significant number of proletarians there to oppose the politics of the march indicates something about the objective situation *and* that revolutionaries have some work to do.

Black Middle Class

Overwhelmingly the Black people who did attend, comprising about 60% of the march crowd, were from the petty-bourgeois strata and the better-off sections of the working class. Many of these forces had in fact been active in the early '60s in the civil rights movement or took that as their political frame of reference. And there was a smaller number which had been drawn into the revolutionary upsurges of the '60s but who, due to the objective situation and their class position, express the kind of cynical "realism" which has quite a bit of currency with formerly revolutionary forces among the petty bourgeoisie. Also evident was the contradictory mood among these strata which corresponds to their class position. On the one hand they have to some extent tasted the fruit of the American Dream and are now faced, if not with a serious threat to their position (which many do face), then certainly with the fact that their aspirations for further advancement are clouded not only by the overall crisis of imperialism but by the intensification of national oppression.

This has given rise to a somewhat contradictory mood among these forces, alternating between conservatism of the "hold onto what you got" variety and militant reformism. One interesting development along these lines was the appearance at the march of Louis Farrakhan, of the Nation of Islam, who normally espouses militant separatism and likes to maintain somewhat of a distance between himself and the politics of the more exposed political representatives of the Black bourgeoisie. In his speech, Farrakhan (who trades off the militant reputation of Malcolm X even while his own initial rise within the Muslims coincided with the censure of Malcolm by that organization) made a big point of distinguishing himself from the historical stand of the Muslims when Malcolm was influential. "Many people have asked me, 'Brother Louis Farrakhan, why are you here to march when 20 years ago,

when Dr. King marched, the Nation of Islam under the leadership of Elijah Muhammad was not present?' And I say to you in answer to that question, I am here today because I realize and recognize that every Black man, woman and child in this country, indeed, every Black person on the earth has benefited from the civil rights movement and the leadership of Dr. Martin Luther King and all of the martyrs who shed their blood to make his dream a reality." Farrakhan then went on to quote George Washington and Abraham Lincoln to show how America has failed to live up to their vision and to militantly declare his support for "*making* America overcome its propensity toward racism." Farrakhan's militant rhetoric combined with fence-mending was very well received by the crowd and indicates something about both sides of the mood of the Black petty bourgeoisie these days.

In a somewhat different category, the stand of various revolutionary nationalists is also worth noting. While some participated and "critically" tailed the politics of the march, overall these forces mostly engaged in tailist abstentionism — that is neither participating in nor exposing the politics of the march. This indicates both dissatisfaction with the leadership and politics of the event, on the one hand, but on the other hand, a stance which is still governed by nationalism. This is reminiscent of the phenomenon during the 1970s where many revolutionary nationalists, who during the revolutionary upsurge of the '60s stood sharply with Malcolm against the bootlicking of Martin Luther King Jr., attempted to reconcile the two — due to both the objective situation (the ebbing movement) and their own nationalist outlook.

That the organizers of this march were hip to the contradictory mood among these class forces was indicated (as was the direction they are leading in) when they tried to get people at the rally to sing "America the Beautiful" and were forced to preface it with an explanation that even

though they realized that many people wouldn't be too happy about singing praise to America today, still they should join in the song with the spirit of "bringing America back to the people."

The March's Program, Or War Time and the Black Bourgeoisie

This refrain of "making America fulfill its promise" was at the heart of the program advanced at this march under the slogan of "Jobs, Peace and Freedom." Hailed on the "left" as a sweeping progressive platform which objectively poses a "challenge to the capitalist system," this platform is, on the contrary, a reactionary platform designed to rally a loyal opposition (with the emphasis on loyal) and has the particular feature of being both profoundly American social-chauvinist and offering considerable maneuvering room for the revisionists of the Communist Party, USA (who are maneuvering like crazy in these political waters).

Is it a shock that the class forces leading this march have to come around and say "make America fulfill its promise"? Did anyone seriously expect them to come around and say, "America has fulfilled its promise," and that what it promises for the future is to drag the masses into untold misery and destruction? Maybe somebody thought they could get up and say, well, we've got more than 20% unemployment in the ghetto and more than 50% unemployment among the youth — see America has fulfilled its promise — so go join the Army and be all you can be? Are they expected to tell the Black masses that all their talk about a "new social contract" for jobs has never amounted to anything more than the so-called American Dream for certain strata of the oppressed while the masses of oppressed get the American nightmare? Or that the American Dream handouts that have been offered to a section of the oppressed people here are based on the position of the U.S. as number one economic power in the world and maintaining and expanding that position means war regardless of how many times

and how many people talk about “re-ordering priorities”? Of course they’re not going to do that. It would be quite contrary to their class interests.

As to the demand for freedom, here too America has certainly fulfilled its promise to the oppressed all over the world and a million times over. The concept of freedom under imperialism becomes bizarre when it is pointed out that in the routine workings of the system this “freedom” translates out to the fact that over 8% of all Black people are arrested each and every year. There are more than 600,000 people who are currently prisoners in the U.S. — one of the highest percentages of prisoners in the world — and more than 50% of them are Black. Twenty-five percent of all the people arrested in the U.S. in any given year are Black. Actually, a fair idea of U.S. imperialism’s notion of freedom and jobs was provided by chief justice of the Supreme Court Warren Burger’s proposal that prisons be turned into “factories with fences.” Perhaps this was a solution to the dilemma posed by M. Carl Holman, president of the National Urban Coalition, in a *New York Times* roundtable discussion after the 1983 march which touched on the problem of the growing number of impoverished Black masses: “You’ve got really only a couple of options. Either you are going to make them a part of the economic future you’re planning or you’re going to spend money, as the states and cities are spending it now, on how do we get them into jails as fast as we can.” It really does make one wonder just what Coretta King is talking about sharing when she says, as she did at the march, that she does not just want freedom for people in this country but for people in El Salvador, South Africa and so on. But the people of Asia, Africa and Latin America have always had *more* than their share of freedom á la Americana (and more than their fill of people like Mrs. King, too).

Historically the Black bourgeoisie has always led the charge under the banner of “progressive imperialism.” Especially in

war time it has been the program of such class forces to support the war effort and “fight for recognition” — promoting a kind of perverse reverse logic like focusing the attention of Vietnam veterans on the fact that they haven’t been honored! In this regard it is worth noting a comparison drawn by Black social democrat Manning Marable, which appeared in the special issue of *The Guardian* newspaper distributed at the march, where he states that the 1983 march on Washington has, in his view, more in common with the 1941 march on Washington called by A. Philip Randolph, than with the 1963 march. “Thus, despite the formal title of a ‘twentieth anniversary march,’ the potential and force of this mobilization and its linkage of these major democratic and anti-corporate demands evokes greater parallels to the more militant 1941 march.”

The 1941 march on Washington was a march that never happened. The situation among Black people at the time was explosive, especially among Black workers and urban poor. Walter White, the executive director of the NAACP at the time, described the scene as follows, “Discontent and bitterness were growing like wildfire among Negroes all over the country.” In addition and related to the outrage brewing over the intensifying national oppression, there was also quite a bit of nationalist antiwar sentiment among the masses of Black people on the grounds that World War 2 was a “white person’s war.” All of this threatened to cause serious problems for the U.S. imperialists as they prepared to go to war.

In response to this, A. Philip Randolph, together with other Black bourgeois forces, organized a movement for a march on Washington in 1941 around demands for an end to discrimination in defense industry hiring and in the military itself. As Black historian Vincent Harding pointed out, the purpose of the march was twofold — to channel the protest of the Black masses into “non-radical” forms of struggle and to enable the Black bourgeoisie to use its influence

among the masses as leverage in their dealings with the federal government. The march on Washington was cancelled one week before it was supposed to happen due to a deal worked out between Randolph and President Roosevelt, in which Roosevelt signed an executive order formally ending discrimination in employment in defense industries and setting up the Federal Employment Practices Commission to police the situation.

One really owes a debt of gratitude to Mr. Marable and *The Guardian* for making this comparison to the 1941 march which so beautifully concentrates the slogan Jobs and War, or maybe War and Jobs (if one is counting on the U.S. to win the next big one). We think there is much truth to this comparison and it makes it harder for *The Guardian* to accuse us of being sectarian when we point out that all the *peace* mongering at the 1983 march is a means to prepare a section of the masses for *war*. Ironically, *The Guardian*, intending to do the opposite, has made the point themselves! With the ranks of “another warmonger for peace” swelling daily (and even Ronald Reagan getting into the act at the United Nations) it is hardly surprising to find the likes of Andrew Young talking about a broad coalition based on “disarmament.” And it certainly shouldn’t surprise anyone to find that the literature put out by the march coalition calls on “the American people to follow the leadership of the growing number of religious leaders and other leaders of conscience, who are seeking ways to resolve world conflicts through non-violent means...” Like Jesse Jackson, for instance, who has demonstrated his ability to talk peace while riding in an army tank and making a bid for commander-in-chief of the U.S. armed forces.

In sum, this march and this program reminds us of Lenin’s point that “never do governments stand in such need of agreement with all the parties of the ruling classes, or of the ‘peaceful’ submission of the oppressed classes to that rule, as in the time of war.” This program ad-

vanced by the leaders of this march and advertised on the left as “broad” and “progressive,” ad nauseam, is precisely designed to accomplish that mission of submission. Frankly it’s really no different than anything the Democrats come up with at election time. And while we might be tempted to label it a bad-dreamer’s program to “move imperialism to the left,” it is in fact a program to move the masses of people under the imperialist banner for war.

Role of the CP

The pro-Soviet CPUSA found considerable room within the framework of “turning the country around and bringing the real America home” for maneuvering to increase their influence and advance their strategy of “historic compromise” — a strategy which combines gradualism with putschism, whereby they seek to position themselves for an alliance with a section of the U.S. bourgeoisie which, in a drastically altered world situation, would see it in their own national interest to pursue a course more favorable to the global interests of the Soviet bloc. Thus, the apparent contradiction of the pro-Soviet CP supporting this march and the program of the Black bourgeoisie which is fundamentally pro-American should be viewed not merely as fuddy-duddy reformism but as a part of this strategy. What they especially like about such a program is that it is fundamentally *pro-imperialist* and they are banking on big world events to decide the issue of *which* imperialism, U.S. or Soviet, such a line will serve.

The politics of this demonstration, especially the emphasis on anti-Reaganism, were quite agreeable to them and they declared in the July-August issue of their journal *Political Affairs* that the preparation mobilization and organization for the August 27th demonstration was of “first priority in our work.” Summing up the 1984 elections as “turn-around elections,” the CP views the formation of a broad “anti-Reagan front” as a good opening for increasing their in-

fluence among certain sections of the people, particularly those class forces mobilized for this march. In the same issue of *Political Affairs* cited above, the CP states: "The fact that many involved in this movement, say, like Harriman, McNamara, George Kennan, etc., will never support an anti-monopoly people's front, does not mean that they cannot be part of an all-people's movement against Reagan's foreign policy. In any case, to prevent a nuclear holocaust is the only foundation for the building of any movement for social advance. The profound lessons drawn from this struggle will heighten the consciousness of the masses in the fight for higher and higher goals. The concept of an all-people's front to defeat Reagan is a temporary tactic corresponding to the present moment."

It is also significant to note that apparently there was struggle among the forces leading this march over the question of uniting with revisionist forces and that the CP had some success. A Joint Statement of the Central Committee of the CPUSA and the National Committee of the Young Communist League USA states that: "The march overcame and rejected anti-communism with which the administration and its agents among the people tried to divide and divert the broad all-people's front of struggle, represented in the mobilization, isolate the more advanced elements, and delimit the political horizons of the masses in the struggle for the kind of society in which the Dream can be made real." The CP itself marched in an open contingent of several hundred (appropriately under the big gray balloons used to signify "multi-issue groups"). Also significant was the fact that the morning rally before the march featured speakers from the pro-Soviet ANC of South Africa and the FDR of El Salvador. Apparently, even while Jesse Jackson is off at the Berlin Wall talking about Soviet tyranny, at least some of the bourgeois forces leading this march think they might need a little Soviet clout to pursue their dream.

Anti-Reaganism

Overall, however, and given the current alignment of forces in the world, the political party of the hour was the U.S. imperialists' own "party of the people" — the Democrats. Anti-Reaganism was the unifying theme and the most discussed. This prompted the *New York Times* to note that: "Although it is too early to say what the coalitions on the left may do for the divided Democratic Party and its candidates, their efforts are almost all focused in that direction." This was seconded by Andrew Young who said, "There's no question that Ronald Reagan was the organizing factor that pulled this coalition together." And the echo resounded in every "left" paper from the CP to the Trotskyites to Amiri Baraka's *Unity* where Baraka declared: "His attacks on the workers movement, women, oppressed nationalities, the environment, the arts and relentlessly on the African-American people should have identified him as the maximum enemy of the multinational majority in this country. But because of the weakness of the movement, the weakness of the Democratic Party and Reagan's acting skills, it is not even 'even money' that he can get beaten in 1984. He still has a very good chance of getting re-elected! This is the fundamental reason why the August 27 return to Washington must be supported. . . ." It is tempting here to say that if Ronald Reagan won the next election due to the fact that a significant section of Black masses put into practice the slogan "the Black masses, who have fought to get the right to vote, must now have the political sophistication and awareness not to exercise it!" that would be progress! It would mean an advanced section had begun preparing to be something other than pawns in a tired old and very deadly imperialist game. Noting that like the AFL-CIO Solidarity Day demonstration in 1981, the organizers of the march were attempting to channel discontent into the confines of the Democratic Party, *The Guardian* says "never-

theless, mass actions have a decidedly different impact on the people in the crowd" and then, in typical *Guardian* fashion, they go on to quote "an activist with the El Salvador Initiative Campaign" who said "The Democratic Party would like not to discuss jobs, peace and freedom. This helps legitimize our issues and pressure the Democrats to address them."

Now, just what is being legitimized here is remarkably clear and it points out the fact that after all is said and done Ronald Reagan turns out to be a very versatile character for U.S. imperialism. In the 1980 elections, Ronald Reagan was particularly useful to advance one aspect of overall U.S. war preparations by facilitating the consolidation of their most loyal and reactionary social base, typified by the neanderthal politics and ideology of the Moral Majority. The election of Ronald Reagan served not only to rally this social base, to rouse them with new vigor into the political arena, but also to puff them up and give new respectability to loud and blatant pro-U.S. chauvinism, open warmongering, and "nuke 'em all" anti-Sovietism. Now Ronald Reagan is proving quite useful in another respect — as an all-purpose "target" and rallying cry to consolidate and mobilize another very necessary side — a loyal opposition, without which no good imperialist war can be waged. Within this context, there are also disputes among the various class forces of how best to develop such a loyal opposition and how to best advance their own interests within this overall framework. And this sort of conflict was reflected at the Washington march, for example in the dispute among various Black bourgeois forces as to the desirability of a Black political candidate. But overall, the main aspect, as indicated by the very terms in which these differences are debated, is unity on the necessity of mobilizing their social base among the petty bourgeoisie and workers in the trade unions and dragging as many of the dispossessed as they can into the elections.

Whether a Black candidate or just a plain white Democrat is the vehicle, they need to get busy. As Jesse Jackson put it, in an article which appeared in the newspaper of the Nation of Islam, *The Final Call*, "A bargainer without a base is a beggar." Jesse Jackson "preached" to the rally, "We must not focus so much on the strength of Goliath, but the courage and power of little David. The regressive Reagan regime won because David did not use all of his political rocks and did not pick up his slingshot. David has unused rocks just lying around. In 1980 Reagan won with a reverse coalition of the rich and the unregistered. Rocks just lying around. Reagan won in Massachusetts by 2500 votes. There were 64,000 unregistered Blacks. Rocks just lying around." Whether or not one interprets little David to be a reference to Jackson's own candidacy or as a more collective reference to the Black bourgeoisie overall, the main point is the same. The fact that the Black masses have to be dragged out to vote is not so much an indication of an advanced level of political consciousness and revolutionary mood these days, as it is an indication that they have been left out of the bourgeois political process. That the bourgeoisie is compelled to drag them into political life is only a further indication of the sharpening up of the contradictions in the world and events, far more earth-shaking than the 1984 elections, which the masses will be dragged into in the not so distant future.

There are, unfortunately, more than a few people, who see much of what is wrong with political events such as the August 27 march, who are still tempted to "be realistic" and to try to find some revolutionary justification for submerging themselves in "the action." To them we must recommend a good hard look at what the action is and just where it is going. As the RCP leaflet passed out at that march put it, "There are those who 'want in' the imperialist system; the 1983

commemorative march on Washington and the criminal program it represents is tailor-made for them." Should a revolutionary really want to tail such ambitions? It is correct, of course, to want to relate to significant political events such as these, but the question is *how*. And the revolutionary answer is by exposing the real essence of the program of the march — and bringing forward the revolutionary programme in opposition.

As for realism, again we must ask first and foremost, realism for what? A realistic program for imperialist war and national oppression or a realistic program for revolution and an end to oppression. We must get beneath the superficial. Yes, today there is motion by the Black bourgeoisie and by the imperialists to get the Black masses (or some of them) into political life. But why? Once that question is asked and scientifically answered, then it becomes clear that there are other, even more profound, events stirring. The same forces that are producing the need to get Black people mobilized under the reformist and social-chauvinist banner of the sort raised by this march are also producing the basis for real, revolutionary events in the future. Not only has U.S. imperialism produced a Black bourgeoisie (and a petty bourgeoisie which — with

important contradictions — provides a base for their line); it also has produced a proletariat and is today driving vast sections of people — including Black people — deeper into oppression. The imperialists want and need to mobilize people as part of a base for war and worldwide reaction; but at the same time they are driven to further oppress them and ultimately drag them to the frontlines. Is it realism to overlook all this, or to dismiss it as irrelevant for revolutionary strategy? Hardly.

Even to win over, or at least neutralize, large sections of the petty bourgeoisie among Black people it is necessary *not* to tail them. Instead it is necessary to expose the program under which many of them are today being mobilized, to carry out all-around revolutionary work among all sections of the people, but especially among the lower sections of the proletariat — and on *that* basis, as events in the world unfold, to lay a real and solid basis for winning support for revolution from these middle strata.

The 1980s will bring profound revolutionary opportunities around the world, including possibly here in the U.S. It would be a shame — and worse — to throw them away for the sake of marching behind a circus led by clowns. □

Acts 9:3: And As He Journeyed, He Came Near Damascus:
And Suddenly There Shined
Round About Him A Light From Heaven . . .

Or Jesse Brings Home the Bacon*

In the euphoric aftermath of Lt. Robert Goodman's release from Syria, one White House official told the press, "Everybody got something out of this, and it doesn't cost anybody anything." Candidate Jesse Jackson, of course, scored important political points through the successful outcome of his Syrian "mission of mercy." The Syrian leadership scored as well; if it gained no tangible concessions from the U.S. in exchange for Goodman's release, it nonetheless got a rare opportunity to "take the high road" (in Jackson's words) in the international (imperialist) community through its "humanitarian gesture." Ronald Reagan, who along with Jackson and his entourage, was said to have spent a lot of time in prayer in order to secure Goodman's release, also basked in the glow of the lieutenant's return; at the very least he had been relieved of a political burden, and had really lost nothing in the process. And Lt. Goodman, a bombardier-navigator for the Naval air force, is now able to get back to his job, and perhaps may yet return to play a personal role in the further prosecution of U.S.-Israeli "cluster-bomb

diplomacy" in Lebanon.

What the Palestinian and Lebanese masses "got out of this" was vividly demonstrated the day after Goodman's release, when Israel launched its most savage air strike in seventeen months over Lebanese territory. As shall be shown later, this air raid was very much wound up with the prospects of any "improved atmospherics" between Syria, Israel, and the United States — no less so than Jackson's "peace" mission.

For U.S. imperialism more broadly, Jackson's mission yielded a particular payoff on the home front. In the face of growing popular restiveness over Reagan administration policy in Lebanon, Goodman's release was the first "good news" from there in some time, and Jackson jumped at the opportunity to play patriotic cheerleader. Among the many accolades he has given himself in the past few days is the claim that his mission helped restore "national unity." That this carries some truth in large part accounts for the gracious "magnanimity" with which his political opponents have received him (including, of course, Reagan himself). For even as Jackson has advanced criticisms of administration *policy* over Lebanon and the Middle East, he was doing some aggressive consensus building for U.S. imperialism's essential and underlying national *interests* there, for which the nation's fathers can only be grateful.

* This article, which illustrates Jesse Jackson's foreign policy in practice, has been slightly edited from the original version printed in the *Revolutionary Worker* at the time of Jackson's trip to Syria, prior to the withdrawal of U.S. (and Allied) forces from Lebanon.

And as regards policy, a major focus of Jackson's critique has been on the position of "our boys" in Lebanon, a chauvinist fixation which places him securely within the rearguard of the American political spectrum. That he is actively seeking to drag the Black and other oppressed masses to this position can be seen by his treatment of the Lt. Goodman issue. As can be seen from the Vietnam era, the POW issue has traditionally played an especially virulent role in enforcing and unleashing the worst kind of narrowness and national chauvinism. Jackson milked this appeal for all its worth, even as he added his own particular wrinkle to the theme. By suggesting that Goodman was the victim of a racist "oversight" by the Reagan administration, Jackson actively worked to obfuscate the actual role of Goodman and those who share his "job description." Regardless of race, creed, or national origin, an American bombardier plays a special role in today's world — to which the people of Indochina, and now Lebanon, can readily testify.

The return of Jackson with Lt. Goodman did produce some memorable nonsense in the nation's capital. Addressing a rally at the Shiloh Baptist Church, pastored by Congressman Walter Fauntroy, the Rev. Robert Meyers told the faithful, "I believe Jesse is a prophet and that God is leading our nation." At the same affair, Syrian Ambassador Rafiq Jouejati introduced Jackson to the audience as "that humble man," in a fit of emotional abandonment. Certainly never one to sell himself short, Jackson compared his mission to other moments of "great foreign policy . . . Eisenhower going to Korea, or Nixon going to China; Carter to Camp David." (The examples certainly say much about the content of Jackson's aspirations — a "new agenda" indeed!) "God Bless America!", exclaimed the returning Lt. Goodman, who later told reporters that he had spent some of his time watching old John Wayne movies on Syrian television during his captivity. More pointedly obscene was Reagan's characterization that "This

young Naval officer was flying a mission of peace." Goodman's plane, of course, was downed during the December 4th U.S. air strike over Syrian positions in Lebanon's Shouf Mountain area, part of a military mission in which, as the Pentagon acknowledged on December 6th, cluster bombs were employed. And Jackson's repeated claim that his trip might lead to ending the "cycle of pain" between the U.S. and Syria could have only sparked the bitterest of laughter in many parts of Lebanon. For even while the ceremonies were being held on the White House lawn January 5th, between Jackson, Reagan, Goodman and his family, the Israelis were launching air strikes over eastern Lebanon's Bekaa Valley.

The Israeli air raid left a reported 100 dead and 400 wounded in and around the city of Baalbek. As usual, Israel claimed that the attacks were against "terrorist bases." In fact, the reports show that a wide range of civilian targets were hit, including a school in the Wavell Palestinian refugee camp nearby where an estimated 150 children were injured. The calculated barbarity of the attacks, clearly designed to inflict the greatest possible civilian casualties, is shown by the fact that as rescue efforts were underway after the first round of Israeli bombing and strafing, the jets returned for a second round, adding greatly to the overall casualties. With typical arrogance, an Israeli commentary maintained that the operation was successfully limited to "terrorist" targets; the overwhelming evidence to the contrary was dismissed by the allegation that a large number of "terrorists in civilian clothing" were also hit.

Superficially, it might appear that the Israeli air strike ran contrary to the accomplishments, such as they were, of the Jackson mission. In the midst of talk of "improved atmospherics" between the U.S. and Syria (the "highlight" of which was Reagan's promise to write a personal letter to Syrian president Assad) and alongside the report circulating (at the time) of a new "security accord" between contending Lebanese factions hav-

ing met Syrian approval, the Israeli attack seemed an incongruous "signal."

In fact, the Israeli air raid — which must be looked upon as yet another manifestation of the U.S.-Israeli "strategic cooperation" agreement and overall "get tough" military posture in Lebanon — was entirely congruous with these things. Significantly, the Israeli attack, while directed at targets within Syrian-controlled territory, was not directed at specifically Syrian military installations. Directed as it was at a Palestinian refugee camp, and at the town of Baalbek — which has served somewhat as a political nerve center for Lebanese Shi'ite radicalism — the Israelis were making a political point to the Syrians. The attacks demonstrated that Israeli air power would continue to be brought to bear on those parts of Lebanon which remain under Syrian control, unless the Syrian's themselves take a more active role in "policing" and restraining those forces under its territorial control and political influence. This the Syrian regime has shown itself more than capable of — as witness its bloody suppression of the Palestinian and Lebanese nationalist forces in the past. Certainly, any forthcoming gestures along these lines (should the Syrians elect to play ball) would be appreciated as further "humanitarian gestures" by Assad and company.

More generally, the coincidence between the Jackson visit and the Israeli attack was entirely consistent with the broader pattern of U.S.-Israeli strategy. As Syria moved to a position of increasing political centrality to any conceivable Lebanese settlement, the U.S. and Israel combined military escalation, threats, and provocations with a tenuous but active diplomacy. While U.S.-Israeli policy has undergone a series of adjustments, and entailed a wildly varied mixture of "signals" and maneuvers, this basic approach has remained a constant, as has the Syrian approach of controlled brinkmanship. Despite the rhetoric of the Syrian state media — that Damascus has become the new Arab "Hanoi" for exam-

ple — the actual objectives and orientation of Syria's rulers is much more limited. As contrary as their position has been to U.S.-Israeli objectives in Lebanon, the Syrian bourgeoisie has no interest in radically upending dominant imperialist relations in the region, but in carving out a larger role for itself within this general framework. Specifically, the interests and orientation of Syria's rulers are such that, if they could obtain satisfactory terms in a Lebanon agreement, they would provide strict security guarantees for the Israeli state on its northern border as the *quid pro quo*. Were such a situation to arise, the Syrians would throttle the very forces in Lebanon which they are today encouraging. It is only on such a basis that the "improved atmospherics" between the U.S. and Syria could possibly develop, and such would be the terms of any conceivable "peace."

Make no mistake, we are not likely to witness the rapid development of an American-Syrian romance. Conflict over Lebanon and over the Middle East more generally is likely to remain the principal aspect of this relationship, and even were a limited accord to take hold in Lebanon, this would undoubtedly set the stage upon which a new round of contention — political and military — would unfold.

In this context we can return to the role of Jesse Jackson. Jackson has a long-standing reputation as being more "pro-Arab" than is often considered politic within the American bourgeois political mainstream. Yet as he has become more "presidential," as he has been compelled to supplant his past theoretical flourishes concerning "human rights" with worked out positions that reflect a more presidential tone and timbre, he has more explicitly located his "pro-Arab" concerns within the overall context of securing and cementing the widest possible "strategic consensus" within the Middle East. His stated concerns regarding Syria are mainly that the U.S. is pursuing a course which is pushing Syria closer to the Soviet Union. His major admonition to Israel is that it divert its expansionist drive away from

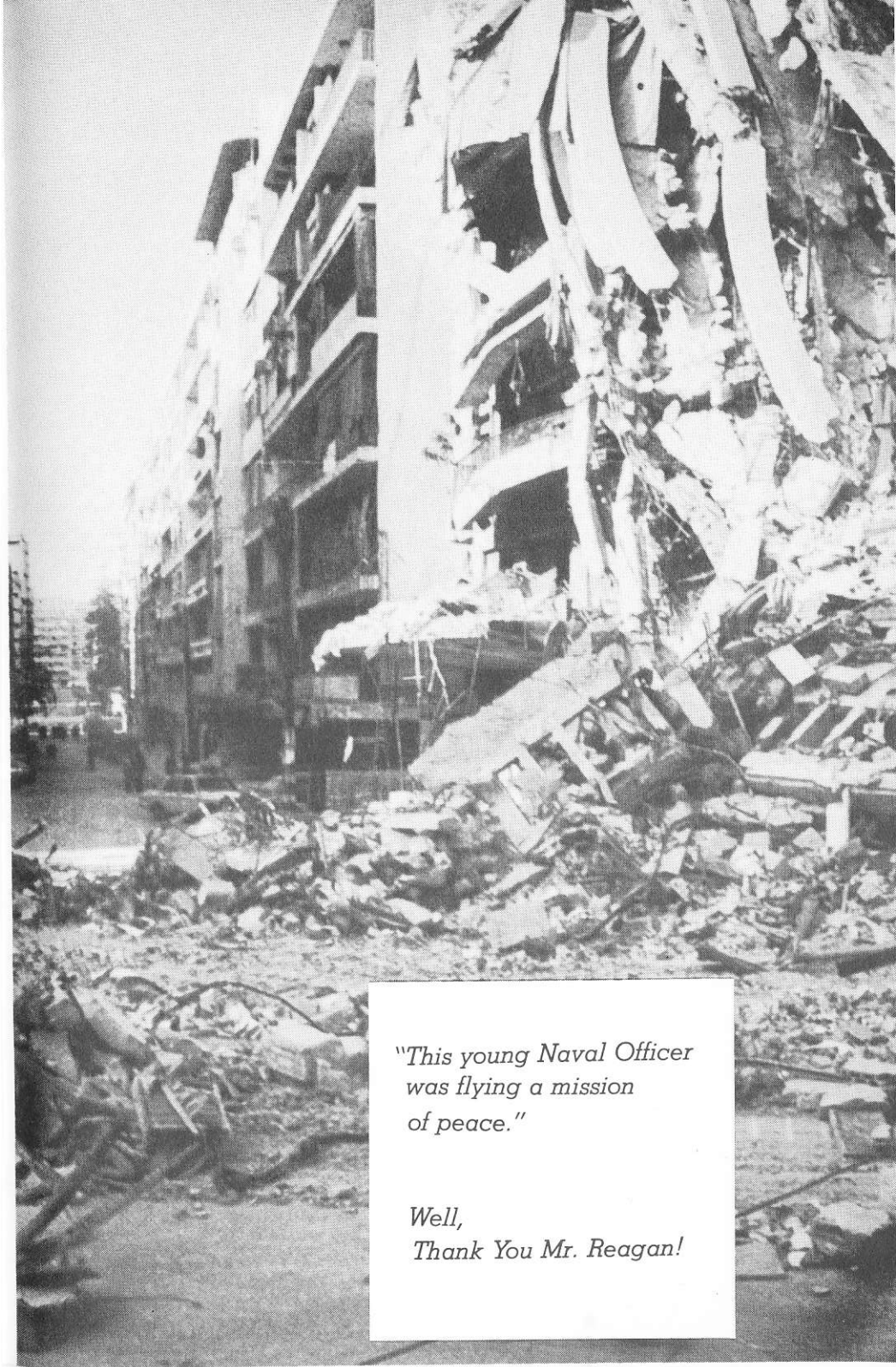
the specific policies of outright annexation and "settlement" — of the West Bank and other occupied Arab territories — and seek a settlement with the pro-American Middle East states that would enable it to "become the capital of commerce in the Middle East...exporting talent and businesses and training."

There is nothing in Jackson's program that sets him apart from ex-Presidents Jimmy Carter and Gerald Ford, who (especially once out of office) have counseled similar approaches to the Palestinian question and the Middle East situation, nor from the legion of retired ambassadors, geopolitical strategists and the like who advance these notions. All this reflects the contradictory pulls in the political, military, and economic interests of the U.S., and the West more generally, in the Middle East. And even as the U.S.-Israeli strategic alliance has burgeoned over the past decade, such "loyal opposition" forces play an important role in stressing the overall identity of interests between the Arab states and the U.S., in keeping active the notion that a more "enlightened" U.S. policy in the

region may be forthcoming, and in other ways keeping such interbloc contradictions strictly "within the family."

It's worth pointing out that Andrew Young, who has done yeoman duty for the U.S. in this kind of capacity for some time (not only in the Middle East, but as regards southern Africa and the Caribbean), was very supportive of the Jackson mission. Young, of course, is critical of Jackson's presidential bid, opposing it on tactical grounds while sharing the same basic strategy vis-à-vis the Democratic Party. But with the Syrian trip, Young saw Jackson's role as being very much in the national interest, telling syndicated columnist Gary Wills that Jackson was playing a "prophetic role" which would "actually help (U.S. Mideast emissary Donald) Rumsfeld."

Whatever utility Jackson's "mission of mercy" may have proved to Rumsfeld, the overall effect was surely to bolster Jackson's standing as a certified national asset. Who says Jackson's not a front-runner? Certainly not U.S. imperialism, for whom Jesse is fronting very well these days. □



*"This young Naval Officer
was flying a mission
of peace."*

*Well,
Thank You Mr. Reagan!*