

## Hounding of Jackson Tests the Rainbow

The test of a movement often comes when one of its prominent leaders makes a mistake.

Such a test is now before the emerging Rainbow Coalition in the wake of Jesse Jackson's remarks—made in a private conversation last January—referring to Jews as "Hymies." Jackson was further compromised when he hesitated for two weeks before admitting he made the remark and apologizing. The comment was particularly damaging because Jackson is the one major presidential candidate who has made opposition to racism, national chauvinism and bigotry a centerpiece of his platform and program.

Following the *Washington Post's* "exposure" of the incident, the bourgeois establishment, the Zionist movement and the media have been having a field day. Their more sophisticated figures have adopted a posture of smug self-righteousness, while the conveniently outraged zealots have taken it upon themselves to harass Jackson campaign offices around the country and suggest that he withdraw from the presidential campaign. A hostile press corps refuses to talk about any other question while editorial writers and columnists are working overtime to keep the issue alive in the public mind.

### UNDERLYING DYNAMICS

As Jackson said at a New Hampshire synagogue late last month, "However innocent and unintended," his statement "was wrong." Beyond agreeing with this self-criticism, the challenge before the left and progressive movement is to sort through the overall situation and determine how to respond—in other words, to address the question politically. When this is done, one thing clearly stands out: the nationwide furor has little to do with Jackson's use of one derogatory phrase and everything to do with the social force Jackson represents and the politics for which he stands. Specifically, it is because Jackson is a forceful Black leader who has galvanized the political enthusiasm of the Black community, and because he has taken positions in favor of Palestinian rights in the Middle East and for effective measures to achieve racial equality in the U.S.

Because of this, what is required of the left at this juncture is an aggressive reaffirmation of this progressive program and a ruthless exposure of the forces out to discredit the Jackson bid. Those progressives who have chosen instead to defend the "purity" of the Rainbow Coalition by

falling all over themselves to denounce Jackson as loudly as the *New York Times* have simply replaced serious politics with petty moralism and surrendered a vital portion of the ideological battlefield to the bourgeoisie.

### HOUNDED

The real dynamics which underlie the present controversy can be most vividly illustrated by examining the motion of the main political actors in this drama even before Jackson's recent remark. From the moment Jackson announced his candidacy, a campaign to undermine and isolate him was launched by the forces who presently hold sway within the U.S.

### Jackson's stand on the Middle East is the principal reason for this attack.

Jewish community. The neo-fascist Jewish Defense League (JDL) played the point role with its formation of Jews Against Jackson, whose avowed purpose was to disrupt Jackson's campaign. The more respectable Jewish establishment verbally distanced itself a bit from the JDL's crude tactics. But with access to the front page of the *New York Times* (far preferable to paid advertisements buried on the inside), they could accomplish the same purpose with subtler means. The played-up "exposé" of Jackson's (perfectly legal) acceptance of contributions from Arab organizations, alongside the comments that such steps would "destroy Black-Jewish relations" was the unmistakable signal that painting Jackson as an anti-Semite was going to be a permanent feature of this election campaign. (See "The Arab-Baiting of Jesse Jackson," *Frontline*, Feb. 20, 1984.)

But anti-Semitism was not the real issue. The main organized forces in the Jewish community were threatened not by

Jackson's beliefs about Jews, but by his views about Israel and about race relations in the U.S.

Middle East policy was the crux of the matter. Jackson's position calling for a national homeland for the Palestinian people, and criticizing the U.S. "special relationship" to Israel was an open challenge to the pro-Zionist assumptions that thoroughly dominate the American Jewish community and U.S. government policy at this time. And this challenge was not simply a symbolic gesture: it was beginning to have real teeth. Jackson's social base is in the one sector of the U.S. population where support for the Palestinian cause outweighs support for Israel (the Black community), and his trip to Syria catapulted his criticism of U.S. policy right to the center of national debate.

With the massacres at the Sabra and Shatilla refugee camps now a part of U.S. national consciousness, and the Israeli policy of population removal and fascist repression on the West Bank an ongoing embarrassment, it is not surprising that Israel's defenders would not care to meet Jackson's challenge head on. So the standard slanders of Zionist ideology were brought out once again: anyone criticizing Israeli policy or showing sympathy for the Palestinians is a latent anti-Semite; anyone having anything to do with the Arabs is an obvious anti-Semite; anyone calling for a cutback in military aid to Israel is a dangerous anti-Semite.

While Jackson's stand on the Middle East was undoubtedly the main motivation for the attack on him, it was not the only one. The main political and ideological leadership of the Jewish community has also been extremely concerned about Jackson's advocacy of meaningful measures to break down racial discrimination in the U.S., in particular his support for affirmative action, with quotas if necessary, to ensure equality for racial minorities. The main Jewish organizations, spearheaded by the Anti-Discrimination League of B'nai B'rith, regard such measures as "reverse discrimination," and have moved right to the center

of the forces defending "white rights" in the legal and political battles of the present period. (See "August 27 and the Jewish Community," *Frontline*, Sept. 19, 1983.) They have been particularly useful to the dominant circles of the U.S. bourgeoisie in this regard, because they can do so under the cover of defending the rights of another minority grouping, the Jews, and thus obscure the essential racism of the "reverse discrimination" line.

### BIGOTRY VS. STRUCTURAL OPPRESSION

An underlying assumption of the attack on Jackson—indeed, its ideological heart—is the view that his use of terminology derogatory to Jewish people is the moral and political equivalent of the bias against Jackson's Black constituency and, by extension, the Arab peoples whose interest Jackson has chosen to champion. And those on the left who have lost their bearings in the present circumstances have, objectively, bought into this view.

But nothing could be further from the truth. Individual prejudice and bigotry is just that—prejudice and bigotry—and it is the responsibility of any progressive movement to criticize every expression of it. But ideological residues of racial, ethnic and religious prejudice cannot be equated with structural, systematic discrimination that locks particular peoples into the oppressed role in an oppressor-oppressed social relationship. And no matter how much anyone wants to obscure it, the fact of the matter is that in the Middle East it is the Palestinian people, not the Jewish people, who are denied their land and subjected to forms of repression and discrimination that are literally reaching the point of genocide. And in the U.S., while Jews face some remnant anti-Semitism mainly in the ideological realm, it is Blacks and other non-whites who are relegated to second class status by the very economic and political logic of U.S. capitalism.

The whole point of the Jesse Jackson candidacy is that its goal is to alter these fundamental social relations, and the whole point of the present attack on Jesse Jackson is that the U.S. bourgeoisie, the Zionist movement and the main organized forces among U.S. Jewry want to preserve them. If the Rainbow Coalition which is emerging around Jackson's candidacy can grasp this point and bring it to the fore in the current debate, it will emerge stronger from this unfortunate incident. □

## letters...

We encourage our readers to submit letters to *Frontline*. Please keep them brief. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity, and will withhold names upon request.

### INFANTILE CWP

In your article on the Klan/Nazi trials in Greensboro you show an incredible amount of restraint toward the CWP (Communist Workers Party). While I agree that the trial raises very significant issues, there are many activists in the left and progressive movements (and I assume among your readership) who are not familiar with the background to the murders, and thus the dangers of CWP's mix of infantile leftism with incredible amateurishness.

From the moment that the CWP (known as Worker's Viewpoint Organization before Nov. 3, 1979), voiced its "Death to the Klan" slogan in North Carolina's Klan country, they were in over their heads. As a group that hardly distinguishes between the cops and the Klan, they should have known (and common sense would have told them) that if their challenge was taken seriously, they would for certain be out maneuvered and out gunned by a militarily superior adversary. Not only

that, but they would endanger the few individuals out of the masses who might momentarily be attracted to their hopelessly thin display of bravado.

However, not to be deterred from fomenting the confrontation implied by their slogan, the CWP, in the weeks before Nov. 3 poked, prodded and provoked the Klan and Nazis on radio and in print. The icing on the cake was their "glorious victory" over the Klan in China Grove, N.C. just days before the Nov. 3 massacre when this self-proclaimed "vanguard" busted up a sparsely attended Klan-sponsored showing of "Birth of a Nation" with baseball bats and similar primitive weapons.

The provocateurs within the Klan and Nazis (Butkovich, Dawson, and probably others) were having a field day whipping up the fascist troops for some heavy action. I wouldn't be surprised if they got even more than they bargained for: five activists, identified as leading cadre of the CWP, killed; a four-fold increase in Klan activity in North Carolina after the first set of Klan/Nazi defendants was let go scot-free in 1980.

I could go on and talk about the Nov. 17 funeral march where the CWP honored their dead by parading through the streets of Greensboro with unloaded rifles, or their sectarian approach to building the protest against the murders and acquittals, but I think my point is clear: "Death to the Klan" is not only an infantile slogan that promotes sim-

plistic illusions about the complex political process of defeating the Klan and fascism, in certain situations it can be deadly. The organization that promoted the slogan (and to this day has never renounced it) should not be let off the hook for its political immaturity. In this case the amateurish CWP was a serious danger to itself and its miniscule following. —Ted Grounds, *New York, N.Y.*

### PELTIER CASE

As a subscriber, I'm grateful for each issue of *Frontline*: most recently your coverage of Central America and the U.S. electoral arena has displayed valuable critical analysis. Also, *Frontline* has been surprisingly good on culture: please continue high quality articles such as the interview with Alejandro Murguía on the poetry in "Volcán."

*Frontline* covers the high ground of foreign and domestic national issues with illuminating clarity. However, I feel that grassroots issues such as the racist aspect of L.A.'s Malathion spraying could be better tied to larger trends in national and international affairs.

And, the victims among us of such programs as COINTELPRO should not be forgotten. Let me bring up an important case: Leonard Peltier, an American Indian Movement activist, has been imprisoned since 1975 for "aiding and abetting" in the deaths of two FBI agents on Indian

lands in the Dakotas, during the period when the Wounded Knee occupation brought worldwide attention to the oppression of Native Americans and the exploitation of their reservations for nuclear-age energy resources.

Since Peltier's original trial documents have come to light through the Freedom of Information Act which prove that the FBI fabricated and falsified evidence, coerced testimony and committed perjury to convict Peltier. In August 1983, 50 members of Congress were moved to request a district court to grant Peltier a new trial. People should support the motion for a retrial with

letters and telegrams. Messages should be sent to Judge Donald Ross, Judge Gerald Heaney and Judge John Gibson at the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals, 1114 Market St., St. Louis, Missouri, 63101. Senators and congressmen should also be contacted. Inquiries or messages of support can be directed to Leonard Peltier, #89637-132, P.O. Box 1000, Marion, Illinois, 62959.

I think it would be something of a further injustice for Peltier, like so many grassroots activists, to be denied attention this year simply because he is no Mondale.—*Sesshu Foster, Los Angeles, Cal.*

## FRONTLINE

P.O. Box 2729, Oakland, CA 94602

Phones: Editorial Dept. (415) 535-0145, Business Dept. (415) 535-0114

Editors: Max Elbaum and Irwin Silber  
Managing Editor: Ellen Kaiser

Staff: Rose Appleman, Tom Angotti, Frances M. Beal, Phyllis Bennis, Donald Black, Catherine Candee, Neal Casey, Suellen Drabowski, John Jackson, Anne Marks, Sharlita Marm, Shirley Nagai, Tim Patterson, Mickey Quinn, Bruce Rice, Judith Tyler, Victor Uno, Morris Wright, Ethan Young.

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*Frontline* is published in order to popularize a Marxist-Leninist perspective within U.S. political life. Its editorial policy is based on the assessment that the interests of the U.S. working class lie in peace, equality and socialism; further that the key to building a united working class movement that can achieve these goals is unbending opposition to war and racism. Building a United Front Against War and Racism, then, is central to *Frontline's* political perspective.

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