

A Revolting Zionist Atrocity

In last October's *Workers Vanguard* we headlined our account of the Israelis' "punitive" response to the Arab terrorism at the Munich Olympics as "murderous nationalism." On 21 February, acting on orders, the Israeli Air Force shot down a Libyan commercial transport which had wandered over the Israeli-occupied Sinai Peninsula. As proved by both Egyptian- and Israeli-supplied evidence, the disoriented French pilot of the Boeing 727 thought he was being accompanied by Egyptian MIG fighters. When finally he had turned around and was but one minute away from crossing the Suez Canal on the way to his Cairo destination, the Israeli jets shot the plane down, killing outright more than 100 of the 113 passengers and crew.

Atrocity

If, inconceivably, the state of Israel had promptly condemned this terrible deed and sought out for trial those at the highest level responsible for the order to commit this mass murder, and those responsible for the military directives upon which it was based, then one would conclude that it was but a tragic aberration.

To be sure it is only in the whole pattern of military conduct that there is an approximate empirical reflection of the real social and political character and aims of a belligerent power. Thus, for example, U-boat commanders have on occasion come to the aid of their torpedoed victims, and a U.S. helicopter gunner did train his machine guns on the U.S. infantry as it massacred peasants at My Lai. (He is the only known American hero in Vietnam—those others who might have and should have performed similarly were presumably instead in jail as conscientious objectors, over the Canadian border as draft dodgers, in Sweden as deserters, or just plain spaced-out on heroin.)

How *did* the Israelis respond? Besides denying all responsibility and/or justifying their action, they told lies about the dead pilot. Until the tapes of his pathetic last radio communication came to light (it is a good thing foreign newsmen had noted in the wreckage of the plane the "black box" containing the tapes), the Israelis accused him of willful refusal to heed directives from the fighter planes. After the tapes conclusively proved that no such directives had been received, the Israelis declared that the pilot was not certified to fly a Boeing 727—were they hoping that everyone would forget the plane had been *shot down*? (Furious Air France officials laid that one to rest by exhibiting the documents of their pilot's certification.)

The pilot only made one real mistake, and it wasn't getting lost: he was a European, and probably did not conceive of the savagery which would be unleashed upon him and his human cargo if by any chance he had wandered over Israeli-occupied territory in a *Libyan* aircraft.

The *New York Times* of 25 February reported, "How, many Israelis asked, could anyone have guaranteed that it was not a hijacked plane headed for a kamikaze crash into an Israeli city?" What is interesting is not solely that the plane when destroyed was but one minute from leaving Israeli-controlled air space altogether (that was the reason why the fighters "had to" shoot it down—it was getting away without doing any damage and they would shortly lose their excuse). In addition, the Israeli rationale conceals a profound racist-chauvinist premise: any "threat," no matter how slight, to "us" of course justifies any amount of killing of "them." (How, some Nazi might have asked with equal "justifica-

tion," could anyone have guaranteed that some of those Jews were not secretly plotting a suicide bomb attack on Hitler's life?)

Revolting

It was also reported on American radio that the Israeli "man in the street" sees clear-cut anti-Semitism in the international revulsion and outcry over this "incident," because for example Nixon killed thousands in Vietnam and got away with it, while Israel triggers all this indignation when it kills only 100. Let us give the Israeli "man in the street" another comparison. After the Nazis invaded Russia, they set up special extermination units to comb the occupied areas exterminating Jews. Many East Europeans, particularly Ukrainians and Lithuanians, served in these units. These local fascists pursued their duties with so much zeal that they sickened even some individuals among the German leaders. On behalf of Western imperialism, the Israeli rulers have hired themselves out and are playing a role toward the Arabs possessing similarities to that which East European anti-Semites played toward the Jews on the Hitlerites' behalf.

Nixon of course recognizes the value of the Israelis' services. While refusing to comment on the shooting down itself, he said he was "saddened" by the airliner "tragedy." By way of comparison, he described the Arab terrorism at Munich as "this appalling, senseless deed" and expressed "shock and horror at... the murderous act."

The Israelis have overlooked one possible "defense" of their deed. Shooting down the Libyan airliner has indeed led to a proportionately much greater outcry than when U.S. troops butcher Vietnamese villagers or when the Israelis themselves smash Arab refugee camps together with their inhabitants. But unfortunately for the Israelis, this atrocity triggers a class bias. Aircraft passengers are petty-bourgeois and bourgeois; the inhabitants of villages and refugee camps are but peasants—and every racist swine knows that an airline passenger (or an Israeli athlete) is ever so much more "human" than some peasant.

Zionism

While the Zionist bourgeois rulers experience some embarrassment, which they look upon as transient, their crimes—committed in the name of Israeli and world Jewry—are calculated to fuse together the Israeli social classes, suppressing internal class struggle and thus hopefully eternally continuing their rule, through ever more widespread guilt and fear of revenge compounding the earlier and continuing crime of the destruction of the Palestinian Arabs as a people. The petty-bourgeois nationalists, Zionist and Arab—and behind them the ruling bourgeois beneficiaries of these ideological mobilizations—offer no way out of an endless mutual escalation of atrocities based upon infinite self-righteousness, and conditioned by the relationship, in the present period, that the Zionists are the oppressor and the Arab nationalists are among the oppressed.

Only the working class—Arab and Hebrew-speaking alike—can transcend this spiral of guilt, fear and revenge through the intersection of the class struggle with the creation of the proletarian vanguard party whose revolutionary Marxist program does indeed uniquely express the most general and historic interests of the working people. For in the real economic and social conditions of life, it is truly only the workers of all lands who have the material basis to unite. ■