THE CIVIL WAR IN LEBANON part II

(This is the second part of an edited ICDP report on Lebanon. The first part appeared in the November issue of the Newsletter.)

The PLO has acted with restraint, sagacity and tactful diplomacy. They have supported Karami and have prevented his resignation at times of tension, while continuing to insist that this is a conflict between Lebanese. This can be seen in the circumstances leading to the setting up of the two committees, one Lebanese and one Palestinian, on October 16, charged with overseeing the strict application of agreements concluded up to then on the status, rights, and obligations of the Palestinian Resistance in Lebanon. Two days earlier they sent a memorandum to the National Committee for a Dialogue (twenty senior citizens appointed to restore security and to bring forward proposals for political, economic and social reforms). In this way they repeated their opposition to any proposals for the naturalization, assimilation or integration of Palestinians anywhere except in Palestine, their fatherland; but they also repeated their commitment to respect and preserve the security and sovereignty of the Lebanese state. Kataib, of course, was not impressed and claimed that the PLO was not able to control all the elements within it. Karami and a number of leading Muslims replied that Kataib had no right to interfere in the internal affairs of the Resistance which had set an example of good citizenship and a lucidity which the Lebanese should envy.

The Syrians intervened again towards the end of September, after heavy fighting in Beirut and a great deal of destruction there. Mr. Khaddam came back to Beirut and attended the first meeting of the National Committee for a Dialogue. On this occasion, however, he accused Egypt of some complicity for the disorders which he described as one of the consequences of the Interim Agreement between Egypt and Israel which served the unacknowledged aims of the partners to that Agreement, since it diverted the Palestinian Resistance and the other Arab peoples from their campaign against the Agreement.

SOLUTIONS TO THE CONFLICT

So, the fighting has flared up and down since the first confrontation in Sidon in February, when the local fishermen demonstrated against the Government and the firm of Proteine directed by Camille Chamoun, at present Minister of the Interior and a former President. The army intervened and 11 of the demonstrators were killed, including their former Deputy, Marouf Sa'ad. Graffiti on the walls of Sidon identified their enemy: 'Gemayel = Itshak Rubin = CIA'

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IN SOLIDARITY

The Resist Staff
The fighting spread to Beirut in April when 27 were killed crossing the Christian quarter of Ain El Rumeannah. It died down again after Karam's government was announced on July 1 and got a massive vote of confidence in the Assembly on July 15. But it escalated again in September, significantly after the conclusion of the Interim Agreement, when fierce fighting broke out between the Moslems in Tripoli and the Phalangists forces based in Zghorta, where one of the militia was led by Frangieh's son, Tony. In October, it escalated again, spreading through the affluent commercial quarter of Hamra and finally to the even more affluent hotel area on the front around the Holiday Inn, Phoenicia and St. George hotels.

Here the aim of the Moslems, apparently, was to prevent the unloading of an arms shipment destined for the Phalangists. There is a curious history of these arms. They have been reported to have been provided, at 50% of their actual cost, through banks in Vienna, West Germany and Rome, and then through the kind offices of the Lebanese ambassador in Vienna -- whom the incompetent Foreign Minister of Lebanon, Philip Takla, has failed to dislodge or even discipline.

Though another cease-fire followed, there was a new and dangerous crisis when the arms shipment was unloaded in Junieh Bay, up the coast north of Beirut, due to the refusal of the army to intervene effectively, when ordered to do so by Karam. According to reports from Beirut, the Navy inspected the ship and reported nothing suspicious, only 'cattle.' When Karam ordered a further search, the Bay had been surrounded by Tony Frangieh's militia -- a further embarrassment for his father, the President. The cease-fire, however, has continued, more or less, in spite of a rash of kidnappings. Now, the French and Couve de Murville have been accepted as mediators, but not the Syrians, as the Moslems proposed.

A number of solutions had been suggested and discussed, these include:

1) Partition. This is obviously the aim of some of the Phalangists, but is opposed by many Maronites and all the Moslem left. It is hardly a feasible solution since the Christian and Moslem communities are too intermixed, both in the countryside and in Beirut. Two separate states would inevitably be dominated by Syria to the North and East, and by Israel to the South, and Beirut would never regain its position as the key commercial and financial center of the Arab world. For this reason, many Maronites oppose partition. Only the extremist Phalangists favor it.

2) A Manoite Coup d'Etat. Their attempt to establish a military government in May was a dismal failure, and any new attempt would face the united opposition of the Moslem Left, the PLO, Syria, and the more moderate Maronites.

3) A Left Revolution. This can be ruled out, because no one on the left is asking for it, or working toward that goal; they are seeking reform.

4) Reform. This is supported by the great majority of Moslems and even by many of the Christians who want to preserve and rebuild their commercial and financial empires. They realize that to be effective, reform would have to involve the laicization of the regime. The business community wants, above all, effective government and understands that this may involve concessions to the Left, especially in terms of social reform and a rise in the standard of living for the 'have-nots.' This is not to say, of course, that in the process they would stop trying to protect their own influence and privileges, giving away as little as business people ever give away.

There are two ways to reform the state. The first would involve a new partition of power between the two faiths together with a reform of the parliamentary system, making it more efficient. These proposals are basically conservative, and the proposers want good government to serve their own interests. The United Front of the Left, on the other hand, wants to establish a new regime in which all the religious rules and laws would be abolished. They want a House of Representatives, a Parliament, elected by proportional representation, and an executive responsible to the legislative branch. They want the army de-politicized and restricted to a national defense force, and they propose an elected constituent assembly to work out the basis of such a new regime.

George Hawi, Secretary of the Communist Party, insists that the Communists are ready to accept compromise. One example would be to reserve the Presidency, for a time, to the Maronites, and the Senate could include representatives of the various churches, and the election of a lay chamber, like the British bishops who are members of the House of Lords.

The National Committee for a Dialogue is supposed to be examining proposals for changes, but every time there is a recrudescence of the fighting, their task is delayed and becomes more difficult. What more can be done by de Murville is difficult to predict; he can hardly be described as a radical, but at least he is not a Catholic, but a Protestant, which may help.

Many of the more moderate Christians want an end to the fighting and destruction, and they want at least some reforms which would enable them to re-establish their commercial dealings before it is too late. At the moment, most of the Arab countries want to maintain Beirut as the financial center of the Arab world. There is as yet no alternative in any other Arab country. Many of these countries are temporarily operating out of Athens or Rome.
UNION W.A.G.E.

(An earlier article on Union WAGE was printed in the May, 1973 issue of the Newsletter.)

Union WAGE - Union Women's Alliance to Gain Equality - is an organization of working women, employed, unemployed, retired and on welfare, dedicated to combating discrimination on the job, in unions and in society, and fighting for equal rights, equal pay and equal opportunities. The organization was founded in 1971 by trade union women who felt that other women's organizations were not addressing themselves to the needs of working women.

From its inception, one major focus of the organization has been the struggle to raise the minimum wage and to save California's protective laws by extending them to men. These benefits include such basic rights as overtime after 8 hours, rest periods, meal periods, uniforms supplied by the employer, couches and seats, elevators above 4 floors, ventilation, heat, and drinking water and toilets in the fields. WAGE members correctly anticipated that the passage of equal rights legislation (particularly the ERA) would result in employers taking these rights away from women on the ground that they discriminated against men. The alternative, extending them to men, would cost employers a great deal of money!

As 88% of women workers are unorganized, the protective laws have been their only safeguard against extreme exploitation and oppressive working conditions. Although loss of these benefits would affect unorganized workers first (and these are primarily women and Third World workers), such a deterioration of working conditions ultimately affects unionized workers as well, who begin to find themselves fighting to save provisions in their contracts. This has happened in Washington state, where a similar situation exists, and unions are now finding themselves fighting to save the 8-hour day.

In January 1974, a bill went into effect in California empowering the Industrial Welfare Commission (the IWC, a body appointed by the Governor which determines minimum wages and protective laws), to extend these laws to men. About one month later, the IWC proposed new work orders which did not extend benefits, but instead took away most of the protective provisions traditionally a part of the work orders covering women and minors. WAGE, which had already been active in testifying and demonstrating at IWC hearings, called this "equalizing downwards," and joined with other women's groups and labor organizations to protest the proposals, scheduled to go into effect June 1st. On May 31st we obtained an injunction holding up the new orders.

In January 1975, a court decision held that the proposals were invalid, mainly on technical grounds, which meant the IWC would have to appoint new wage boards, make new proposals and again hold public hearings.

These wage boards have just been appointed and include a few WAGE members and other labor people. Public hearings will probably be held in June 1976. The Commission has the power to determine vitally important working conditions, yet with one exception all past hearings have been held during the day. WAGE is encouraging unions, community organizations and individuals to demand night hearings so that working people can testify about the conditions which directly affect them. We are in the process of mobilizing our own members to participate in building a statewide coalition to agitate for a higher minimum wage and the extension of protective laws to all workers, including men and those sectors of the female workforce, such as public employees, who are not yet covered.

(continued on page 6)
U.S. FOREIGN "AID"

PROJECT YOUR LIGHT, MY COUNTRY! HOLD HIGH YOUR STRONG STALK OF HOPE IN THE MIDST OF THE BLIND AND FEARFUL AIR.

— Neruda

THE PEOPLES OF THE DEVELOPING NATIONS HAVE HAD ENOUGH OF THE U.S. "AID" THAT BENEFITS ONLY MULTINATIONAL CORPORATIONS, AND THE GOVERNMENTS WHICH SERVE AS THEIR INSTRUMENTS OF FEAR, EXPLOITATION AND REPRESSON. NOW, ONCE AGAIN, IT IS TIME TO RESIST.
Although WAGE sees the fight for legislative protection as necessary, we believe that women workers must organize into unions for their own protection, and organize within unions to change the male-dominated and bureaucratic leadership. Helping women workers to organize has always been a major thrust of the organization. Here the problem is not only the employers, but an indifferent and sometimes openly hostile labor movement. In our area the lack of interest in organizing women workers is so pronounced that a number of major organizing drives (for the Bank of America, Mastercharge and Blue Cross), failed miserably due in large part to the incompetence of the organizers. Since women constitute almost half of the workforce, and almost 200,000 women clerical workers are concentrated in the financial district of San Francisco, they would dominate the labor movement in this city if they were organized. We wonder, in view of so many inept organizing drives, whether the labor bureaucracy really wants to organize women.

The indifference if not open hostility of many labor unions, combined with the anti-democratic practices of a large number of unions, where members have little if any say in the functioning of their union, has precipitated the formation of independent unions in many areas of the country. Workers in small offices, for example, have had union representatives tell them that they are too small, it would cost the union too much to organize them. Other workers have found that jurisdictional agreements have limited the unions that they can apply to for membership. Still others find the condescension and elitism of the organizers so bad that many workers would vote for no union rather than be represented by such arrogant, insensitive labor bureaucrats.

If workers cannot go to the traditional labor movement for advice and help in organizing, where do they go? WAGE receives many calls and letters asking for advice and support. The emergence of independent unions has raised many questions within our organization. Some of our members are opposed to organizing outside the traditional labor unions, believing that the correct approach is to struggle from within by building strong rank and file caucuses. Other members point out that international unions have put strong rank and file locals into trusteeship, taking all control out of the members' hands when they become too militant.

Because women who are organizing have been coming to WAGE for assistance, and many are considering independent organization, the WAGE Executive Board decided last August that a conference on working women was urgently needed. We initiated a call for a West Coast conference on organizing women workers. The conference which was co-sponsored by the San Francisco Women's Union and the Berkeley-Oakland Women's Union, and endorsed by many unions and individuals, was held November 8 and 9, 1975, in San Francisco. It drew over 500 persons from all areas of California, as well as Washington and Vancouver, Canada....members of rank and file caucuses, independent unions, women's organizations, and individuals interested in organizing. The program dealt with specific experiences of independent unions, as well as rank and file struggles against the leadership of traditional unions. A coalition for protective legislation from the state of Washington reported on their struggle to save protective laws in that state. The coalition, made up of organizations as diverse as the Childcare Coalition, Black Panther Party,
Seattle Women's Commission, NOW, the Washington Democratic Council and the United Construction Workers of America, had just succeeded in winning night hearings. The report stimulated a great deal of interest in building a similar coalition in California.

In addition to the panels, the conference ran a series of workshops aimed at giving women concrete organizing skills.

The enthusiastic response to the Conference surpassed our most optimistic expectations. One sister in southern California wrote: "Besides finding the two days informatively concrete it was a boost to be with so many working women directly focused on improving the lives of women."

In the month following the conference, we have been swamped with requests for more skills-training classes or workshops, for help with specific organizing efforts, and for more and deeper analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of organizing independently. In addition, other groups and individuals are looking to WAGE to spearhead the formation of a statewide coalition to press for a higher minimum wage and the extension of protective laws to all workers.

Our tasks for the coming period are clear; our difficulty lies in finding the resources to perform them, because an organization made up of working women has the very real problem that most of its members have a limited amount of time and money to devote to the work of WAGE. Women who work full time, have families, and are active in organizing drives, rank and file caucuses and/or their unions, can devote only a minimum amount of time to WAGE. Members who are not employed at present, or who are working in non-union jobs where organizing is not yet a reality, have more time but limited experience and little or no wages. One of the jobs of WAGE then, is to figure out how best to utilize the experience and time of our members. In spite of these problems, WAGE has been able to play a leading role in the campaign to extend protective laws and raise the minimum wage, to organize the Conference, extend support to specific organizing drives, run organizing classes, testify at public hearings, publish a bi-monthly newspaper, and publish pamphlets, including LABOR HEROINES - Ten Women Who Led the Struggle, WORKING WOMEN AND THEIR ORGANIZATIONS - 150 Years of Struggle, WOMEN IN THE LABOR MOVEMENT, and, this fall, ORGANIZE! A Working Women's Handbook.

The Union WAGE newspaper has a paid circulation of 1500, with one half our readers outside California. The paper, which has been published bi-monthly since 1971, covers a wide range of topics of interest to working women, with particular emphasis on specific struggles on the job, in unions, and in society.

Beginning with our January-February issue, the paper will also carry a page of reports on the activities of the Central Executive Board and local chapters. In November, 1974, WAGE held a constitutional convention where the decision was made to develop chapters, allowing for expansion of the organization. We presently have three chapters, two in the Bay area and one in San Jose. As a result of the organizing conference, we have been contacted by two women in California interested in organizing chapters in their areas. We anticipate that the next year will see the growth of WAGE through building new chapters, each of which will be autonomous in structure, but linked to the central organization by sharing common purposes and goals.
Kissinger and the US are probably in agreement with the moderate Christians that some reform is necessary, though Kissinger is certainly not unhappy to see the PLO and Syria embarrassed by what is going on. But US interests in the Near East are considerable, and civil wars are inevitably threats to commercial dealings and to the hegemony of US capitalism. In a recent statement, Washington came out in opposition to any partition of Lebanon.

There is little doubt about who is responsible in Lebanon, for the continuation of the civil war: the extremist Maronites in Kataib, and allied groups who are prepared to perpetuate their privileges at all costs, and thereby pull the temple down on their heads.

And finally, it should be kept in mind that there is one country which is profiting from the civil war, and would undoubtedly like to see it continue: Israel.

Viet Nam:
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GRANTS

MENOMINEE LEGAL DEFENSE/OFFENSE COMMITTEE

A group that started up to assist those charged by the US government in the Abbey occupation last winter, the MLD/OC is also organizing to protect the Menominee people from other governmental intrusions. Grant was given to cover needed and expensive telephone service. Box 431, Keshena, WI 54135.

NATIONAL COMMITTEE TO SUPPORT THE MARION BROTHERS

An organization seeking radical prison reform, with specific focus on the execrable Federal penitentiary in Marion, Illinois, where prisoners are coerced into undergoing the longest-lasting behavior-modification program in any prison. Grant was awarded to cover cost of publishing a pamphlet: "The Marion Brothers: An Argument for the Rights of Prisoners." 6199 Waterman St., St. Louis, MO 63112.

LIBERATION MAGAZINE

Liberation is one of the longest-lived, and respected journals, on the left; to help insure that the magazine continues, money was given to initiate a massive fund-raising program which Liberation has planned. 339 Lafayette St., N.Y., N.Y. 10012.

MOTHER JONES PRESS

The Mother Jones Press is a collective which does printing for feminist and other radical groups in Western New England. A grant was given to help in the purchase of some new equipment. 19 Hawley St., Northampton, MA 01060.

PEOPLE'S RESOURCE CENTER

This group does community organizing work in Long Island, providing a library of movement materials, free legal counseling, a food co-op, and an emergency information and referral service. They now want to begin a service to help welfare and other poor people find adequate housing in the area, and a grant was given to get the project started. 251 Main St., Huntington, N.Y. 11743.

NATIONAL HARD TIMES CONFERENCE

A coalition of radical groups is holding a conference in Chicago on January 31-February 1 to plan collective actions against the continuing unemployment, inflation, and cutbacks in federal aid programs; all of which, as always, hurt only the poor and minority peoples. Grant was given to help cover the expenses of organizing and running the conference. 156 5th Ave., N.Y., N.Y. 10003.

GI PROJECT ALLIANCE

GIPA is an alliance between the Long Beach Movement for a Democratic Military and the Center for Servicemen's Rights in San Diego. A grant was given to help them continue to publish their monthly Bulletin, widely distributed among GI's on the West Coast. Box 8056, San Diego, CA 92102.