

## Demonstration and Rally in Winnipeg Against the War and Occupation of Iraq



**View of march against U.S. occupation of Iraq. For report see page 3.**

### Editorial

## Getting to the Bottom of the Air India Disaster

The acquittal last week of two of the suspects in the bombing of Air India Flight 182 on June 23, 1985 leaves serious questions about who was behind this act of terrorism and what were their aims. It also leaves the families of the victims with no answers. From the beginning, the bombing was attributed to Sikh separatists as revenge for the 1984 storming of the Sikh Golden Temple by the Indian army and the murder of a Sikh religious leader.

Air India Flight 182 came apart in the air off the coast of Ireland and crashed into the sea, killing 329 people. Less than an hour later, a bomb blew up in Narita Airport in Japan, killing two baggage handlers. Evidence showed that both bombs were supposed to explode in Air India cargo holds while the planes

were on the ground. However, Flight 182 was late in leaving Toronto and the bomb in Narita exploded before it could be loaded onto an Air India plane. The unexpected loss of lives made it impossible for any group to claim responsibility for the attack.

The main suspect in the bombings was Talwinder Singh Parmar, the leader of the Babbar Khalsa, one of the main Sikh separatist groups. Both CSIS and the RCMP claimed at the time that the act had likely been planned by Indian intelligence forces as a method of destroying the Khalistan movement for an independent Sikh homeland. The RCMP openly accused Mr. Parmar of being an agent of the Indian government, while CSIS apparently held the same

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# The “Cedar” Revolution and U.S. Policy in the Middle East

No sooner had tens of thousands of Lebanese demonstrators gathered in Beirut’s Martyr’s Square to protest the murder of former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri and demand Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon than the spin doctors of the Bush administration began to claim credit.

Scott McClellan, the White House spokesperson, told a news conference the Bush administration would “hold Syria’s feet to the fire” if they did not immediately withdraw troops from Lebanon, while Secretary of State Condoleeza Rice, speaking to reporters in London, said the administration would provide support to Lebanon so it could hold free and fair elections. “Events in Lebanon are moving in a very important direction,” Rice said. “The Lebanese people are starting to express their aspirations for democracy. This is something that we support very much.”

Both Rice and McClellan described the protests as a “cedar revolution” and linked them to the elections held in January in occupied Palestinian and Iraq. They claimed this is all evidence of a growing wave of democratization in the Middle East – a wave brought about by the policies of the Bush administration. Even the term “cedar revolution” was made in America. It was coined on February 28 by the Undersecretary of State Paula Dobriansky, who told reporters: “In Lebanon, we see growing momentum for a Cedar Revolution that is unifying the citizens of that nation to the cause of true democracy and freedom from foreign influence. Hopeful signs span the globe and there should be no doubt that the years ahead will be great ones for the cause of freedom.”

However, sadly for the Bush administration, they all spoke too soon. Within hours of Rice’s comments in London, the largest demonstration in Lebanese history was taking place with over half a million demonstrators spilling out of Martyr’s Square. This demonstration was organized by Hezbollah, and

while protestors waved Lebanese flags, they also chanted anti-American slogans and called for a Lebanon free of U.S. and Israeli interference.

Characterized by a frankly unprepared Western media as a pro-Syrian demonstration, in fact, this was something much more complex. Hezbollah’s leader, Hasan Nasrallah, gave the main speech and began by reminding the hundreds of thousands gathered that they were standing in the middle of a city that had been reduced to rubble by Israeli bombing in 1982. He said Lebanon could never again allow Israeli interference or dominance; and he spoke directly to George Bush, saying nobody but the Lebanese people would determine their own future. He also drew a link with Iraq, but said sham democracy and sham independence were not for Lebanon. Nasrallah gave his support to the Syrian plan for the withdrawal of its troops from Lebanon, but rejected any attempts to speed up the withdrawal.

Hezbollah emerged as a guerilla resistance group in southern Lebanon following Israeli invasions in 1972, 1978 and 1982. During the chaos of the Lebanese civil war, Hezbollah won over the hearts of the majority Shiite population with its work both to provide food, shelter and education and its armed struggle against Israel. More than any other armed group in the region, however, Hezbollah has been able to transform itself into a political movement, and today it is the largest political party in Lebanon.

The demonstration in Beirut, which left White House spokesperson Scott McClellan speechless, was a declaration of political strength by an organization both the U.S. and Israel have tried to dismiss as a terrorist group. Nasrallah’s speech at the demonstration was a clear warning to the Bush administration as well to keep its hands off Lebanon.

## **Israel: Legal vs. Illegal Outposts**

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has announced that as part of his plan to pull settlements out of the Gaza Strip he will also tackle the question of illegal outposts in both Gaza and the West Bank. The outposts are, in effect, mini-settlements, places within the occupied Palestinian territories where Israelis have set up a few houses or motor homes (in some cases just a tent or a shack) as a means of staking a claim to the land. Most often, the outposts are strategically located between two larger settlements, and have acted as a means to give continuity to the settlements while depriving the Palestinians of the space. While settlements have legal status under Israeli law, the outposts do not.

Sharon recently commissioned a study on the outposts from Israeli attorney Talia Sasson. Her report found that there are around 105 outposts in Israel, although she said the exact number was difficult to determine due to reluctance of government officials to provide her with the information she needed to make a complete assessment. Since March 2001, when Sharon came to power, Sasson found that at least 24 outposts had been created. Many of the outposts were set up with government approval, Sasson concluded, while others are in the process of receiving government approval. She based her conclusion on the fact that the majority of outposts she examined were fully serviced with electricity, provided by the Israeli Electric Corporation, and water, from the Mekorot Water Company (both state run) and that the individuals who lived in the outposts were protected by Israeli soldiers.

Sasson's report has been widely interpreted by the Israeli media as the prelude to Sharon declaring the outposts set up since his election illegal, while he is widely expected to elevate the status of the remaining 80-odd outposts by turning them into full-fledged settlements, all located within the West Bank. Most of the outposts created under Sharon's rule have been in the Gaza Strip.

Sharon has been closely linked with the establishment of the outposts. In a recent interview published in an Israeli newspaper, one of the managing directors of a Gaza settlers' council said the establishment of the

outposts was well co-ordinated. "For many years the government deemed it desirable and possible to create settlement contiguity and not leave holes between settlements," he said. "The outposts served as a means to this end. They were set up on the basis of meticulous planning to seize strategic points." He also said all the outposts established since March 2001 were coordinated with Sharon. "Someone would sit with Sharon and tell him: 'This point is strategic and important.' Sharon would get back to him a few days later and say 'you're right, this is an important point. It must be seized.' The ministers knew about them. Even Ben Eliezer, as Sharon's defence minister, toed the line and instructed his people to cooperate. This is how the process of approving and licensing most outposts took place. At a certain stage Sharon turned his back and made an about-face. At that stage, the ministries stopped cooperating, but on the ground there were already 100 outposts, some of them approved, some in the process of being approved. Everything was coordinated. We are not lawbreakers."

## **Demonstration and Rally in Winnipeg Against the War and Occupation of Iraq**

On March 19, the second anniversary of the U.S. led invasion of Iraq, over 400 people in Winnipeg joined the hundreds of thousands of others around the world who were protesting against the war and occupation of Iraq. They marched through the streets of the city denouncing the occupation, calling on the U.S. to withdraw and supporting the right of the Iraqi people to determine their own future. Many passers-by honked their horns or shouted support for the demonstration as it passed by.

After the march people gathered at a downtown church to hear from several speakers who have spent time in Iraq during and after the invasion. Following opening remarks by Dr. Ghassan Joundi of the

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view privately. There is also extensive evidence that the Israeli Mossad secret service was working with elements within the Khalistan movement in order to destabilize the Indian government and pressure it into dropping its official support for the Palestine Liberation Organization. The U.S. CIA and the Pakistani intelligence service also supported the Khalistan movement for their own reasons. Although Parmar was never charged in connection with the Air India disaster, one of his associates in B.C. admitted that he had provided Parmar and another man with materials to build a bomb. Parmar was reportedly killed in 1992 by Indian forces while he was conducting a raid from Pakistan.

There have been constant rumours that, at the highest levels, CSIS was actively involved in covering up for those responsible for the attack. These suspicions were further fueled during the course of the most recent trial when it was revealed that CSIS had destroyed crucial wiretap evidence. It also emerged that CSIS had an informant inside the organization planning the bombing and advised him to get out days before the attack took place because something big was about to happen. CSIS agents also had Parmar and his associates under surveillance while they detonated a test bomb in rural B.C. In other words, there is significant evidence that CSIS knew that some kind of terrorist attack was about to take place, but did nothing to stop it. Neither CSIS nor the Canadian government has ever explained why it took no measures to prevent a potential terrorist attack when it was in possession of such information.

Deputy Prime Minister Anne McLellan, who served as Canada's Minister of Justice during much of the most recent trial, was quick to dismiss demands for an official inquiry into the Air India disaster. She claimed that all of the internal problems of CSIS have been sorted out and that a public inquiry would serve no purpose. However, the families of the victims are not satisfied with this response. They still want to know who was behind this terrorist act and why the Canadian security forces have failed so spectacularly in bringing the criminals to justice. Since the justice system has also failed to provide these answers, they consider it the duty of the Canadian government to convene an inquiry.

### ***Against U.S. Occupation...from page 3***

Manitoba Islamic Association, Lisa Martens and David Pankratz spoke about the realities of war and occupation they saw during their time in the country working with the Mennonite Central Committee. Martens was in Baghdad during the U.S. assault on the city and Pankratz arrived in the country after President Bush had declared "major combat over". Dr. Assil Khelil, an Iraqi woman who visited Iraq after the recent election, also presented her impressions of life under occupation.

The speakers all described the realities of the occupation for the Iraqi people. They spoke of the humiliation and brutality people are subject to on a daily basis at the hands of the occupiers as well as the destruction of the country and the blatant corruption of the occupying regime. They stressed the profound anti-American sentiment that has developed amongst the people and their broad-based resistance in response to their treatment by the occupiers and the enormous destruction of their country. They all agreed that in order for the country to recover it is absolutely essential that Iraq be back in the hands of the Iraqi people who are quite capable of and want to rebuild the country themselves, free of foreign interference. The presentations were followed by lively discussion. The Winnipeg Labour Choir, singer Pat Krawec and the 1919 Insurrectionary Orchestra also performed during the afternoon.

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