

U.S.A.:

“No Business As Usual”

April 29th, 1985 was No Business As Usual Day in the U.S. It was an important outpouring of mass resistance to the major powers' drive towards world war, an effort to seize the initiative now to heighten the struggle of the masses to prevent it. In cities and towns across the U.S., thousands of people from varying classes and strata with differing political views united to take up the Call To Act To Prevent World War 3.

This Call said, in part: “Crisis follows crisis in a spiral that cannot go on without resulting in the gravest of consequences. Such an extraordinary situation requires an extraordinary response....Only the independent action of millions stepping onto the stage of history to resist can realistically speak to the enormity that looms before us....

“They won't listen to reason,
They won't be bound by votes
The governments must be stopped
From launching World War 3,
No matter what it takes!”

There were mass street actions as well as events on over 25 college campuses. “Ground zero” actions in major cities gathered together hundreds at hubs of social life and activity to disrupt business as usual in innumerable creative ways. Hundreds of people sat in in front of the gates of Atlanta's Fort McPherson, a major military base also known as the Pentagon of the South. “Five Minutes” crews (as in Reagan's “joke,” “We begin bombing in five

minutes”) enacted the realities of nuclear war on the streets of Chicago, New York City, Washington, Houston and others. These actions were marked by the participation and often predominance of teenaged youth.

Feminists in a number of cities called for their own actions at “right to life” (anti-abortion movement) centres and armed forces recruiting offices. An internationalist peace camp was set up for the day in downtown Cleveland.

In San Francisco, the day began with an attempted quarantine of Treasure Island, a naval headquarters located in the middle of a major bridge connecting the cities in the area. Although short of complete success, the action snarled traffic for over an hour as cars stalled and tires and stuffed radiation suits were dumped in the roadway. It ended with a major disruption of the downtown area as demonstrators took to the streets, stopping traffic, “dying-in,” calling for “mass evacuations” of stores, buses and cable cars, and generally leading the police on a chase through the streets for hours.

Beyond the street actions were the numerous means found by a broad range of people—including religious people, teachers and professors, artists, ecologists, anti-nuke activists, feminists and nationalists from among the oppressed nationalities in the U.S.—to express the political thrust of the Call To Act and to make April 29 a day of No Business As Usual. This was of great

significance in the context of the necessity for the proletariat and the advanced masses to broadly influence the political programme and direction the middle forces in society take up, so as to create the most favourable conditions for mounting a revolutionary struggle that can prevent world war.

While small, there were some important actions on the part of proletarians who joined the mass street actions, hung banners, did graffiti (some raising the slogan “World Revolution, Not World War”) and called for “mass inductions” and marches on armed forces recruiting stations. In this aspect, as well as in other aspects of building a united front action on NBAU Day, the Revolutionary Communist Party, U.S.A. played an important role.

This past year has seen the unleashing of an unprecedented wave of patriotism, ugly chauvinism and reaction in the U.S. Integral to this ideological preparation have been the efforts of the bourgeoisie to manufacture, hype up and strictly enforce (particularly through its media) an *overall* image of social peace and prosperity, of a U.S. standing tall and united, monolithic and invincible. It is an act of desperate theatre which underlines the acute necessity they have for the masses to submit to their rule as well as their essential weakness and vulnerability going into war.

It is not yet the case that there is open or widespread rebellion in the U.S. But the cracks in the facade are beginning to appear. Developing



among certain sections of the masses, particularly the youth and women, there is an element of active refusal, of determined opposition to the U.S. imperialists' political programme for the 1980s. The recent upsurge of sit-ins, building takeovers and strikes on college campuses across the U.S. in opposition to apartheid in South Africa indicated the explosiveness of the situation. The more the ruling class actually succeeds in creating the image of America as strong, smiling and philistine—and ready to unleash unlimited violence for the sake of empire—the more disgusted some elements become and the more they begin revolting.

April 29 was a major rupture from the "dissent as usual" protest which seeks to define and confine resistance within the limits of what the bourgeoisie finds acceptable and often even necessary in order to channel mass anger and upheaval in directions which never fundamentally challenge their rule. In fact such "business as usual" protests can be used as yet another excuse to fight and die to save the empire—"for the right to dissent." The objective line of demarcation between those who propose independent historical action *against* the governments and those who would appeal to and "reason" with the governments to change their policies was underlined by another set of major demonstrations April 20th "lobbying" (pressuring) Congress.

As the menace of world war looms large, it is a major advance of great potential significance that thousands of people are taking action aimed squarely at the U.S. ruling class, and that the various political programmes of the day are manifesting themselves as distinct actions involving sections of the people.

Looked at in their totality, the April 29 actions not only sharply raised and forced many to confront the real and pressing threat of world war and the urgent necessity to act, they also concentrated the strategic confidence of the masses, especially the youth, to meet the governments head on and defeat them, "no matter what it takes." □

