

The politics of the anti-NATO protests

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The anti-NATO protests in Chicago on Sunday and Monday, which authorities sought to suppress with police intimidation and violence, were organized under the banner of “Say No to the War and Poverty Agenda” of the US-dominated military alliance and the G8 governments.

The most striking and politically revealing feature, however, was the absence of any serious criticism of the Obama administration, one of the most warmongering in US history, by the organizers. If the president was referred to at all from the platforms of the various rallies, it was to suggest that protests and appeals could persuade his administration to avoid or end wars and redirect resources to meet social needs.

This lie has been peddled for years by liberals and Democratic Party hangers-on, including the *Nation* magazine and pseudo-left groups like the International Socialist Organization (ISO), which played a leading role in the Chicago protests.

Active in the Coalition Against NATO/G8 War & Poverty Agenda were the ISO, the Communist Party, the ANSWER Coalition, Code Pink and other groups that operate in the orbit of the Democratic Party. Many of them were involved in organizing demonstrations during the Republican Bush administration, through which they sought to divert anti-war sentiment behind the election first of John Kerry and congressional Democrats, and then of Obama.

Since Obama’s election, these groups have refused to organize any significant protests against the Democratic president, who has not only continued, but escalated the wars of aggression of the Bush years, and is now preparing to carry out even bloodier crimes against the people of Syria and Iran.

Featured prominently in the anti-NATO protest was the Reverend Jesse Jackson, who is avidly campaigning for Obama’s reelection. During Sunday’s rally, Jackson led protesters in the demagogic chant, “We

need a peace machine, not a war machine,” neglecting to mention that his candidate oversees the operations of the US war machine as well as the slashing of vital social programs, jobs and wages.

In comments after the protest, Jackson defended the police attacks ordered by Chicago’s Democratic mayor and former Obama chief of staff Rahm Emanuel. In comments to WGN television in Chicago Monday morning, Jackson praised the conduct of the Chicago Police Department, while criticizing alleged “acts of violence” by demonstrators. He said nothing about the young protesters who are being framed up on terrorism charges by Chicago authorities, working in conjunction with the White House.

The support of this political charlatan was sought and hailed by the protest leaders. Cited in an article titled “Rev. Jackson’s endorsement of NATO protest strengthens bond between anti-poverty, anti-war groups,” the ISO’s Eric Ruder, a leading organizer of the protest, gushed over Jackson, saying his participation was a “historic reenactment” of the alliance of anti-war protesters and the 1960s-era civil rights movement.

This is filthy, reactionary nonsense. The promotion of Jackson, a multi-millionaire who has made a career as a political fireman for the ruling class, was sufficient in itself to demonstrate that the principal political aim of the organizers was to cover up Obama’s crimes and promote his reelection. Such is the “opposition” of the various middle-class pseudo-left groups to imperialist war.

Virtually all of them are currently backing the pro-imperialist forces funded and armed by the US and the Gulf sheiks in the colonial-style war for regime-change in Syria, just as they did last year in Libya.

The remnants of the Occupy Wall Street protests also participated in the Chicago protests, involving themselves in impotent exercises such as “die-ins” at

the headquarters of defense contractor Boeing. The positive impulses of mass opposition to social inequality and hostility to capitalism that initially animated the Occupy movement have been thoroughly swamped by the efforts of the ISO and other groups to ban any discussion of socialist politics and corral the protests behind Obama and the Democratic Party and their agents in the trade union bureaucracy.

The Coalition Against NATO/G8 War & Poverty Agenda hailed the endorsement of various unions, including the Service Employees International Union, which has officially endorsed Obama, and National Nurses United, the United Electrical Workers and the Chicago Teachers Union, all of which are backing Obama's reelection.

The experience of the last three-and-a-half years has demonstrated that the working class cannot stop war, attacks on democratic rights or the destruction of jobs, living standards and social programs through the two-party system. Both the Democrats and Republicans are tools of the corporate and financial elite and the military-intelligence apparatus.

There is deep anti-war sentiment among workers and youth that can find no political expression within the existing political system. A struggle to end war, austerity and social inequality requires the independent mobilization of the working class against the source of these social evils—capitalism—and a fight for socialism.



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