

time. On another level, this claim is part of Reagan's misinformation campaign - the same directed against Nicaragua, Cuba, Vietnam and other countries striving to protect and develop the independence and social progress achieved by their people. The aim of this campaign is to keep all states that do not harmonize with US policies in a state of weakness. In reality, the two countries in the world which have military institutions far outweighing their defense needs are the US and 'Israel'. This superiority is precisely designed and expanded in order to impose their policies on a global and regional basis without meeting serious obstacles, to control and exploit peoples and resources far beyond their own borders.

The US administration's campaign against Libya is an old story. At the start of his first term in 1981, Reagan branded Libya an «outlaw nation». Later the same year, US F-14s downed two Libyan planes over the Gulf of Sidra (part of Libya's territorial waters which the US administration insists is international waters). The next year, the US banned the import of Libyan oil. These measures, however, did not make much of an impact, especially since US allies in western Europe and Japan did not follow suit. Thus, the Reagan Administration seized on the December 27th attacks on the El Al (Israeli airlines) counters at Rome and Vienna airports. It hoped to blame these on Libya and thereby deal a decisive blow to President Qaddafi with full international backing, and preferably by collective action, drawing at least its NATO allies into the game.

Gunboat diplomacy

To this end, the US brought in the new year by amassing its war fleet in the Mediterranean off Libya's coast. On January 3rd, the largest US aircraft carrier, the Coral Sea, and its battle group left Naples port and sailed into the Mediterranean in the direction of Libya. Electronic warfare planes were dispatched to the Mediterranean. Five Navy EA-6B Prowlers were sent to the NATO base on Sicily, to intercept communications and jam the radars used to direct Libya's anti-aircraft system. Another aircraft battle group, stationed in Norfolk, Virginia, was ordered to be ready to deploy in the Mediterranean. The Pentagon drew up a new list of potential targets in Libya. Contingency exercises were conducted by the Pentagon, CIA and at US military facilities, to

test logistics for a planned military attack, for example: how the US could keep two aircraft carriers off the Libyan coast for an extended period. The Joint Chiefs of Staff considered sending B-52 bombers from the US, but rejected this in favor of Navy carrier planes and long-range fighter bombers stationed in Britain (*International Herald Tribune*, January 6, 1986). In mid-January, the aircraft carrier Saratoga was ordered out of the Indian Ocean to join the Coral Sea.

At this writing, the military attack on Libya has not materialized. Meanwhile, the Reagan Administration has imposed a total economic boycott, frozen Libya's assets in the US and ordered all US citizens to leave Libya, while pressuring its European allies to implement similar measures. However, the military option still cannot be ruled out. On January 16th, Secretary of State Shultz confirmed that the US must still consider military action. According to *Newsweek* magazine, January 20th, «The sanctions Ronald Reagan imposed on Libya last week are just the opening of a carefully graduated campaign...to isolate Muammar Kaddafi, strengthen the dictator's opponents within Libya - and clear the way for a US military strike...The plan focuses more sharply than before on exploiting dissension within Libya's military...Reagan strategists believe they must strike within the next six to nine months or else miss the tide...» This appears to be an updated version of the CIA plan to topple President Qaddafi, that was revealed in 1984.

The national security adviser of Israeli Prime Minister Peres, Brigadier General Gideon Machanaimi, gave another idea of the form the US-Israeli attack may actually take. Noting that military retaliation was not advisable, he

pointed to assassination of leaders as «the successful way to combat terrorism.»

Whether or not the Reagan Administration and 'Israel' embark on a new military adventure or not, the war scenario enacted serves a number of purposes besides Reagan's cherished aim of terrorizing Qaddafi. Chief among these is covering up for the Israeli aggression which is an integral component of the US-sponsored 'peace' process. Equally important is furthering the US military network in the Middle East and Mediterranean areas.

The source of terror

The deeper cause of the attacks at the Rome and Vienna airports is the fact that the Middle East conflict, and the Palestinian issue in particular, remain unresolved. Responsible for this situation are the US and 'Israel' to whom solving the conflict means imposing their joint hegemony in the area. This rules out self-determination and statehood for the Palestinian people, and ultimately genuine independence for any Arab country. That is why the many concessions offered by the Palestinian right wing have been met with more violence - the iron fist in occupied Palestine, collective punishment against the citizens of South Lebanon, the Israeli bombing of the PLO headquarters in Tunis, etc.

Reagan's campaign against 'terrorism' is simply an attempt to shift the blame. The best proof of this is that 'Israel' is the only state in the world to have expressed unqualified support to the US campaign, while at the same time manipulating it to special Israeli purposes. Peres claimed that Abu Nidal's group, held responsible for the Rome and Vienna attacks, is the «offspring of the PLO», attempting to justify Israeli refusal to deal with the PLO.

