

and social rights in Lebanon, as well as their right to fight the Zionist enemy from Lebanese soil.

As a result of these obstacles to a "surgical strike" on Syria, the US and Zionist leaderships have adopted a stick and carrot approach. The stick predominates, and the substance of the carrot being offered to Syria has yet to be specified. Today, however, it is more than ever characteristic of both US and Israeli policy to try to enforce their own plans, verbally inviting others to join, but without offering any concessions to the other side.

## SPECIAL ISRAELI CONSIDERATIONS

Israeli domestic politics have a bearing on any decision to strike Syria. This is especially true in view of the situation in the national unity government whereby Likud leader Shamir will take over the premiership from Prime Minister Peres of Labor in the autumn. It is common knowledge that Peres is anxious to make a separate "peace" with King Hussein of Jordan, and might call new elections to get a Knesset majority to pursue this path and retain Labor's leadership.

According to *Middle East Policy Survey* of January 10th, sources close to Peres consider a breakthrough in the "peace" process as his best hope of retaining the premiership. For this reason, he interpreted the first Assad-Hussein meeting optimistically (from the Israeli viewpoint), emphasizing that no communique has been issued. This optimism was not, however, widely shared by other Israeli officials. "Last week in London, Prime Minister Peres... said American go-betweens had assured him that King Hussein of Jordan was ready to proceed with negotiations, even if Syria and Mr. Arafat withhold their approval" (*New York Times*, January 26th). "Israeli sources say Shimon Peres, in a secret meeting in London some weeks ago, pleaded with the king to meet him openly..." If talks with Jordan do not materialize, Peres will have no issue for calling elections. Shamir's becoming prime minister would stop the "land for peace" efforts begun by Labor. "Some Arab diplomats suggest Syrian President Assad could step into the void with a drastic plan" (*Boston Globe*, February 28th).

Peres is working hard to stave off this possibility. For this reason, he dispatched minister without portfolio Weizman to Washington in mid-May to encourage Schultz to make a Middle East tour that would push forward the imperialist-Zionist settlement plans. Schultz, however, would not commit himself. The US is not ready to put its prestige on the line at this point, having concentrated on its terrorist campaign to hit Libya, Syria, etc. In view of uncertainty for his political plans, Peres has surely considered a quick strike on Syria to remove it as an obstacle to a separate deal with Jordan, now that chances were enhanced for easily excluding the PLO by the king's freeze on cooperation with Arafat. In addition, if it were possible, Peres would use a military victory as a plus in the anticipated election campaign. Likud, for different reasons, would support such a military adventure, in hopes that it would create a whole new situation, reducing any pressure on 'Israel' to give territorial concessions. Other factors play a role as well. For example, if the austerity measures of the current government begin to hit military expenditures, sectors of the Israeli armed forces would pressure for a pre-emptive strike to restore their own prestige and funding. Thus, the bellicosity of statements against Syria increased markedly in March. Shamir accused Assad of striving for superiority "under the guise of talk about strategic balance" (Israeli Radio, March 2nd). Peres called Assad "the most extreme and most serious of Israel's enemies" (*Jerusalem Post*, March 12th). Rabin accused Syria of "encouraging and aiding terrorism in general" and said 'Israel' would have to change its tactics to confront the rise of "terrorist activity" in South Lebanon (*Jerusalem Post*, March 11th).

## THE COVERT WAR

In view of the many obstacles to a direct military strike on Syria, a covert war of attrition is probable, especially with the Reagan Doctrine for encouraging counter-revolutionaries against 'third world' governments that do not do imperialist bidding.

In line with this, the CIA has been beefed up considerably, having gained 3,000 additional personnel in the recent period

(*Washington Post*, March 31st). Director William Casey has become a major policy-maker, behind-the-scenes and publicly, whereas in the past CIA directors rarely made public speeches. In early April, Casey addressed the main component of the US Zionist lobby, the American Israeli Public Affairs Committee, emphasizing Soviet military support to Libya and Syria as a danger which is squeezing 'Israel' and moderate Arab states. He also spoke openly about CIA-Mossad cooperation in the "war on terror"

The US and 'Israel' have utilized the "counterterrorist" campaign to strengthen their own intelligence cooperation and make it more overt. "The other day, Pentagon officials were quoted as saying 'military intelligence support' had been offered to Israel for retaliation for Middle East terror" (*New York Times*, January 7th). During his May visit to 'Israel', US Attorney General Edwin Meese, said that "there was readiness for full cooperation in the fields of prevention, in the fields of current activity and in the field of determining policy" (*International Herald Tribune*, May 13th). During his visit to Washington, Rabin made it clear that 'Israel' expects international action against Syria (*Guardian*, May 10th). Imperialist measures against Syria have, in fact, been more closely coordinated since the Tokyo Summit, especially between the US, Britain and West Germany. Britain, for example, expelled three Syrian diplomats in May, although they had agreed to waive diplomatic immunity to be questioned about the Heathrow bomb. The Syrian embassy in London specified that the interview be conducted in the embassy, but the British government rejected this and instead expelled the diplomats.

## THE LONG-TERM STAKES

The so-called war on terror is in reality the current phase of the imperialist-Zionist attempts to impose their joint hegemony on the entire region. As the 1982 invasion of Lebanon marked the first phase of the military campaign to impose Camp David, so the aggression on Libya and the threats to Syria headline the current phase. The ultimate aim of this military and political crusade stems from economic and strategic interests - control over Arab resources, manpower and markets. It is therefore that Peres proposed a massive aid program for the Middle East, patterned on the Marshall Plan whereby the US rebuilt capitalism in western Europe after World War II.

During his spring visit to Washington, Peres argued that such a plan would avert impending bankruptcy in "moderate" Arab countries (Egypt and Jordan in particular) and thus avoid the instability that might be expected to follow in the region. "Israel wants to see the formation of a peace front composed of all states in the Middle East that, by abjuring force, embrace negotiations as the sole means to resolve their conflicts... Egypt, Israel and Jordan are the natural initial associates in such a peace coalition..." (*Los Angeles Times*, April 3rd).

Reagan picked up on the idea for presentation at the Tokyo Summit, not wanting the US to foot the whole \$20-30 billion cost of such an endeavor. A senior US official explained the US motivation: "We are looking for an economic framework because the political framework is broken up..." (*Wall Street Journal*, April 22nd). "Schultz is strongly committed to the idea of using economic incentives to regain the initiative in the Middle East and to convince moderate Arabs that the US still has broad interests in the region that go beyond fighting terrorism".

In reality, "counterterrorism" and economic incentives are two sides of the same plan to enforce the imperialist settlement. This presupposes undermining the nationalist regimes, especially Libya and Syria, that possess significant economic or military power-either toppling them or luring them, under duress, into accepting the imperialist plans. (One US official advertised for the "Marshall Plan" as a way of offering aid to Syria!) Thus, the recent attack on Libya and the threats against Syria are not passing phenomena, but part of the US's long-term war to ensure its exploitation and control of the strategic Middle East region. Success of the "Marshall Plan" in the Middle East would increase the exploitation of the Arab masses and rule out restoration of the Palestinian people's rights. Countering the imperialist-Zionist plans is thus a major task for the Arab national liberation movement, as well as the Palestinian revolution, in the current phase and the future. ●