

‘Israel’

Nom de Guerre for US Military Base

Zionist determination to simultaneously maintain its high level of military preparedness, domestic social benefits, rising real wages and private consumption, has produced a situation which the Zionist leaders had hoped to avoid, i.e., the gradual narrowing of their economic, military and therefore political margins. The economic downturn of the Zionist entity, and how it precipitated intensified US involvement in the rectification process, was dealt with in *Democratic Palestine* no. 17. This article will focus on the military aspect of the issue.

May 1986 marked the first anniversary of the launching of the Israeli economic stabilization plan. There has been much jubilation about the fall in inflation from the January-May 1985 monthly average of 11.3% to 1.5% in December 1985,¹ and the decrease of the foreign debt: «For the first time since 1973, Israel's foreign debt dropped.»² However, these economic feats cannot simply be attributed to the miraculous effects of an austerity plan, which the US pressured the Israelis into implementing in the first place. The immense efforts of US think-tanks had more than a little to do with the Israeli economic recovery - not to mention the substantial quantities of financial aid disbursed under the strictest supervision.

With this task achieved, the situation is ready for focusing on other equally important matters: «The day of reckoning for Israel's economy is at hand; that day for its military policy cannot be more than a few years off.»³

The development of imperialism has inevitably brought about the increasing orientation of industry towards arms production. ‘Israel’ presents an extreme case of this phenomenon. The dominance of its military industry has become so great that a staggering proportion of the economy is devoted to war. The Israeli defense industry is the second largest single source of employment, involving 25% of the labor force.⁴ In his book *A Changing Israel*, Peter Grose describes the situation as «a state within an industry - rather than vice versa.» For the US, it is important to develop the economic muscle based in the militarized Israeli industry, since its survival is imperative for safeguarding imperialism's interests in the region.

Until the early 1980s, US financial aid preserved an artificial prosperity in a country whose economy was beginning to give way to a multifaceted crisis. However, the traditional methods of bailing ‘Israel’ out were no longer considered efficient because their effect would not be lasting. Thus alternative methods of aid had to be adopted, such as increasing US purchase of Israeli-made goods, especially weaponry and hightech systems for US military units, as well as integrating ‘Israel’ more closely in the imperialist military complex, by focusing on hightech equipment. This would provide a means of bolstering the Israeli economy while circumventing the normal US budgetary process, thus serving to diffuse some of the domestic discontent with Reagan's «profligate defense program.»⁵ It would moreover ensure that measures to strengthen the Israeli economy do not weaken its military establishment or undermine its ability to function as a strike force in the Middle East. It would also help manage the Israeli debt burden and monetary reserves, so that the recovery plan is not capsized by financial disturbances.

A new era has begun for ‘Israel’, sponsored by its most faithful guardian, whereby an economic and military overhaul is seen by the imperialist forces as the best way to impose a political situation suited to serve their interests.

Under the terms of the 1984 memorandum of agreement between the US and ‘Israel’, obstacles to reciprocal defense trade have been removed. The agreement allows the US Defense Department to waive customs duties on items being

sold to the US armed services. The five-year plan also provides for operational and technical exchange leading towards understanding of military requirements and their technological solutions. The go-ahead for significant purchases of Israeli-made military equipment has already been given by the Pentagon. «Israel can only survive over the long run by competing in the international arms market.»⁶

STRATEGIC COLLABORATION

The strategic cooperation agreement signed between the US and ‘Israel’ in November 1983 is a revival of the agreement between Reagan and Menachem Begin in September 1981. (The latter was temporarily suspended by the US due to Israeli annexation of the Golan Heights. The period after 1983 has witnessed the most active manifestation of this strategic alliance ever. Well-placed, senior officials of both governments have repeatedly asserted how relations were at «an all time high» or «iron-clad». Reagan, in a speech on March 13, 1984, to the Young Leadership Conference of the United Jewish Appeal, called the strategic alliance «The first such formal arrangement between the US and Israel.» Proponents of the ‘Israel first’ school of thought were on the loose in the bourgeois media. Despite all the behind-the-scenes squabbling over how to resolve the Israeli economic woes, there was never any dispute about the necessity of maintaining the military superiority of ‘Israel’. «There has been no basic disagreement between Washington and (Israel) on the military side...»⁷ «Even as we... work with Israel on its economic program, we... went ahead with a major increase in our security assistance for Israel.»⁸ Thus, in the span of two years, Reagan's Administration has accelerated the process of fortifying its own position in the Middle East. «As various crises have rocked the Middle East... steps have been taken to improve the U.S. ability to fight in that region... The Reagan Administration has accelerated the pace of these improvements!»⁹

The strategic cooperation between the US and ‘Israel’ is a broad program which encompasses, among many other things, the following:

1. Coordination of objectives, strategies and tactics.
2. Prepositioning of US military equipment, ammunition and fuel in ‘Israel’ for possible use in a regional crisis.
3. Medical support; arrangements for US use of Israeli hospitals in an emergency. (‘Israel’ and the US have conducted joint medical exercises where US helicopters took ‘wounded’ US Navy personnel from a Sixth Fleet vessel to the Hadassah hospital. Facilities for US ‘folding hospitals’ which can accommodate up to 4,000 beds are provided by ‘Israel’. This triples the medical capacity of the US forces in the Middle East.)
4. The use of Haifa as a port facility for the US Sixth Fleet. (US Congressman Jack Kemp went so far as to state: «I view (Israel) in... the same framework as a naval base.»¹⁰)
5. Tactical airfields: US Air Force use of Israeli runways and