

Zionist Aggression on Lebanon

In late January, US officials declared readiness to undertake air strikes in Lebanon in the event hostages were killed. While such statements clearly aim to divert public attention away from the 'Irangate/contras' fiasco, they must also be taken seriously in view of the Reagan Administration's record of aggression in the Middle East and elsewhere. In reality, this threat may be the result of the mid-January visit to Lebanon of April Glasby, chief of the State Department's Lebanon, Syria and Jordan desk. The reported motivation of her trip was US concern about the increase of Palestinian armed presence in Lebanon.

Already the US Sixth Fleet, led by the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier Nimitz, had been moved closer to Lebanon's shores after having staged the biggest military maneuvers in the Mediterranean for over a year. Then, on February 2nd, Israeli radio quoted Prime Minister Shamir as saying that 'Israel' would consider helping the US in a military operation in Lebanon if asked. These imperialist-Zionist threats give an even more serious dimension to the ongoing Israeli aggression against Lebanon, which is the main subject of this article.

Despite the recurring camp wars and friction in the nationalist ranks, ongoing events reaffirm that the basic contradiction ruling developments in Lebanon is that between the US-supported Israeli occupiers and the patriotic masses. This is seen in the escalation of Israeli air raids, the naval blockade of the Lebanese coast and ongoing terror attacks against southern villages. From the other side, it is seen in the continuing attacks of the Lebanese National Resistance Front against the occupiers and their lackeys, Lahd's South Lebanese Army (SLA).

AIR—AND—SEA WAR

Even before the turn of the year, the Zionist leadership had ordered an escalation of overt aggression against Lebanon. In 1986, the Israeli forces

staged a total of 19 bombing raids on Lebanese territory, 18 of them aimed against Palestinian targets. According to Lebanon's UN representative, these air raids caused 35 deaths, 130 injuries and extensive material damage. To this must be added the scores of people in South Lebanon who have been killed or injured by the shelling and thuggery of the Israeli-SLA forces.

All this is a continuation of the historical Zionist policy of aggression against Lebanon. At the same time, it has specific reasons, related to current developments in Lebanon. In particular, the Zionists are disturbed by the reassertation of the Palestinian revolution's strength as seen in the heroic defense of the camps against Amal's attacks. The Israelis are also plagued by the continuing attacks of Palestinian and Lebanese patriots against their forces and proxies in South Lebanon.

For a time, the Israelis gloated over the camp war, hoping that the Amal movement would succeed in disarming the Palestinians and at the same time devoid itself of any nationalist role. An article in the *International Herald Tribune* of November 1-2, 1986, quoted a senior Israeli military source as saying, «The security zone is quiet, because the Lebanese and Palestinians are all involved in killing each other.» At first this relieved the pressure on the Israelis caused by the upsurge of attacks on the 'security zone' in August-September last year. However, the author of the article quoted above, Thomas L. Friedman, reporting from Jerusalem, noted: «On the other hand, Israeli officials say they were deeply concerned by the relatively poor showing that the Shiite Amal militia has made on the battlefield against the Palestinians.»

On the background of this concern, six of the 19 Israeli air raids in 1986 were staged against Palestinian positions in November alone, as the Palestinians successfully staged the Maghdousheh operation to defend the refugee camps. Israeli pursuance of the

Palestinians reached to North Lebanon on December 11, 1986, with an air strike against Nahr Al Bared refugee camp, that killed some 15 people and wounded 22, mostly civilians and including Lebanese citizens. Some of the civilian deaths were caused by a delayed action rocket that cruelly exploded after the initial attack. In January, Israeli fighter bombers struck three times in Lebanon. On January 9th, Palestinian positions east of Sidon were bombed, killing three and wounding seven. The same area was targeted on January 12th, resulting in three deaths and thirteen injuries. On the next day, an Israeli air strike hit areas in the Bekaa Valley. On January 19th, Israeli gunboats shelled Palestinian positions east of Saida, wounding four.

Meanwhile, the Israeli forces imposed a naval blockade on the Lebanese coast, from the North to Tyre, intercepting ships going and coming. Numerous Cypriot ferries were turned back before docking in Lebanon. A Lebanese cargo ship was diverted to 'Israel'. The captain and crew were held for an extended period without explanation. Above official Cypriot protests, Israeli Chief of Staff General Moshe Levi arrogantly declared, «We told ship captains we would stop their line if they don't stop transporting terrorists...»

FOCUS ON THE SOUTH— RESURGENCE OF RESISTANCE

A series of daring anti-occupation operations, starting in the last days of 1986, jolted the SLA and their Israeli backers. On January 7th, Israeli radio reported that 13 SLA militiamen had been killed in a week. The real count is probably much higher as is confirmed by examining the single operations. Eight SLA men were killed and 17 injured on one day alone, when Lebanese patriots attacked SLA posts at Barachit and Beit Yahoun, north of Bint Jbail, in the central part of the occupied