

The Shuttles of Murphy and Co.

The visits of US, Italian, French and Australian officials to the Middle East, like the European tours of Jordan's King Hussein and Israeli Foreign Minister Peres, all converge on a single point: imposing the US 'peaceful' settlement at the expense of the Palestinian people's rights and revolution. Most concretely, these shuttles have functioned as a forum for covert Israeli-Jordanian negotiations.

Recently, some reactionary Arab leaders 'discovered' that the US's credibility «is starting to deteriorate» as a result of its sale of weapons to Iran via 'Israel'. Of course, this 'discovery' -that the US has no credibility at all -was made long ago by progressive forces all over the world. However, Arab reaction naturally stopped short of saying how the US's credibility is deteriorating, and instead returned to business as usual.

In early January, the US sent its envoy, Assistant Secretary of State Richard W. Murphy, to the Middle East to 'clarify' and polish its image in the Arab world, that is, for Arab reaction. State Department officials acknowledged that Murphy's Mideast trip aimed at repolishing America's image. As was scheduled and announced, Murphy's shuttle was to include Jordan, 'Israel' and Egypt.

ARAB REACTION AND US CREDIBILITY

Murphy's first stop was in Jordan where he met with King Hussein and other high-ranking Jordanian officials. Upon arrival, Murphy said that the aim of his trip was to «discuss prospects for peace» in the area and bilateral relations. In a clearly insulting and forget-about-it tone, Murphy said, «The US does not see value in an international conference» to discuss the Middle East problem, thus reiterating the US stand and echoing the Israeli one as well. Both states reject an international conference as a substitute for the direct negotiations they insist upon. A few days before Murphy's visit, Israeli prime Minister Shamir had stated that 'Israel' would not accept the principle of an international conference, would refuse exchanging the West Bank and

Gaza Strip for peace, and would not sacrifice «one gram of its rights.»

Murphy's visit had also been preceded by active moves on the part of Arab reaction. Egypt's President Mubarak had visited Jordan to coordinate moves with King Hussein before Murphy's visit, the Islamic Conference and Peres' pending visit to Cairo. It is worth noting the Mubarak's political adviser, Osama Al Baz, came back from Tunis only hours before Murphy's visit to Cairo, having met with the rightist PLO leadership.



Richard W. Murphy

Murphy's next stop was 'Israel' where he met Shamir and Peres. Two days later, Murphy returned to Jordan to inform King Hussein of the results of his talks with the Israeli leaders.

Murphy's third (now fourth) stop was Egypt where he met Mubarak and other Egyptian officials. Murphy described the talks as «very fruitful.» Then, in a surprise move, Murphy visited Saudi Arabia which was not on

his shuttle schedule, and met with King Fahd and other high-level Saudi officials.

At the end of his visit, Murphy called on all parties concerned, except the Palestinians naturally, to pursue «quiet diplomacy» in the region. This «quiet» diplomacy aims mainly at bringing Jordan and 'Israel' closer together through «quiet» negotiations that would make «quiet» normalization a *de facto*, before signing a formal treaty. In the end, all this aims at a «quiet», or rather capitulationist, settlement between 'Israel' and Jordan, without any Palestinian national role. Naturally, such a «quiet» procedure requires the «quietening» of all objecting voices. Thus, Murphy's visit coincided with an intense arrest campaign in Jordan, the continuation of the Israeli iron fist policy in occupied Palestine, and stepped-up aggression against Palestinians in Lebanon.

Murphy will resume his shuttling in February, after the visits of Mubarak and Shamir to Washington. This visit was intended to achieve several aims. One was repolishing the US's image in the eyes of Arab reaction. One can gage the results in King Hussein's interview with *Expresso* magazine while visiting Italy. Hussein said, «Washington has to promote an initiative between the Arabs and Israel if it wants to keep its credibility.» Notice the word *keep* coming from the same person who, when 'Irangate' first emerged, said that «Washington's credibility is deteriorating.» Hussein's statement also relates to Murphy's second goal which was exploring the prospects for pushing forward the US 'solution' in the region. According to Peres, Murphy's mission met positive responses in both Jordan and 'Israel'. Another, related aim of Murphy's visit was pushing for Egypt's official return to the Arab League, or at least improvement in its relations with other Arab countries. This was obviously accomplished at the ensuing Islamic Conference. Last, but not least, Murphy came to discuss Egypt's debt problem.