



US—Israeli 'peace' conference

International Peace Conference?

Major capitals in the Middle East have, for some time now, been witnessing very active movements, dealing with the revived deliberations about an international peace conference on the Middle East. Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres' visit to Cairo in late February, the EEC's declaration about an international conference, and the generally positive response of the Arab regimes, have all helped the forceful comeback of talk about the conference. This comeback has occurred despite the fact that the stands of the various parties involved on the conference have not changed in contents. Nor is it clear whether such a conference can be convened this year, or the next for that matter.

BACKGROUND

It couldn't have come at a better time from the point of view of the enemy alliance. The situation on the Arab and Palestinian level presents a tempting offer for the imperialist powers to now come up with the idea of an international conference on the Middle East. The capitulationist trend that spread in the region after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, paved the way for Arab reaction and the imperialist-Zionist alliance to attempt to impose

the imperialist plans on the region.

The imperialist-Zionist alliance drew hope that they had a chance to impose their plans due to a series of developments, chiefly: the PLO's division, the Amman accord, the Cairo declaration of the rightist PLO leadership, the Peres-Hassan II meeting, the Peres-Mubarak summits in Alexandria and Cairo, the Iraq-Iran war, the war of the camps in Lebanon, and Egypt's official return to the Islamic conference and its restoration of relations with many Arab regimes.

The convening of an international conference, which would lay out an acceptable basis for a peaceful settlement of the Middle East conflict, is not a new idea. Neither is it an Israeli idea as Peres attempts to project. The idea is an old one, dating back to after the 1967 war. The US and 'Israel' have consistently rejected the whole idea for obvious reasons: the Israeli insistence on direct, bilateral negotiations, and the US desire to impose its hegemony on the region.

Before the 1973 war, all doors leading to an international conference were blocked, which led Egypt and Syria to enter that war. Afterwards, the talk about an international conference was revived. Under the pressure of the military consequences of the war, the

Geneva conference was held. Henry Kissinger, then US national security advisor, succeeded in transforming the conference into an «international umbrella» - exactly what Peres wants today - in which direct, bilateral negotiations between Egypt and 'Israel' ultimately resulted in the Camp David accords.

After the achievement of the first and second disengagement agreements between Egypt and 'Israel', Kissinger's step-by-step diplomacy stopped. For the third time, talk about an international conference was revived and even developed. It halted, however, with Sadat's visit to occupied Jerusalem in 1977, which replaced the idea of an international conference with direct negotiations. This resulted in the infamous Camp David accords. The US and its Zionist ally considered that what was achieved with Sadat was a precedent which could be repeated and spread.

CURRENT PROSPECTS

Formally, there are only small rocks that obstruct the road to an international conference. The US administration which used to consistently veto the idea of such a conference, had now withdrawn its reservations, supported by Western Europe. In the Israeli