

arena, the Labor Party is with an international conference and the Likud is against. Theoretically, the Israeli obstacle could be removed by breaking the present partnership between Labor and Likud in the national unity government, leading to new elections with a Labor victory.

Yet facts indicate that things will not go according to this hypothesis, because what has prevented the convening of an international conference is the US-Israeli position on the nature and results of the conference. To date, the joint US-Israeli position on the conference, which is sought to be convened this year, has not changed.

The current Israeli-US-EEC political and informational campaigns for an international conference have precise tactical aims to benefit the interests of these parties.

By promoting the idea of an international conference, the Labor partner in the Israeli government aims to safeguard the process of warming up the cold peace with Egypt. This warming up started when Peres was prime minister, but is now threatened by neglect with Shamir as prime minister. The communique issued by Peres and the Egyptian foreign minister, after the former's visit to Cairo in February, stressed the two parties' mutual desire to «improve bilateral relations.» Peres' promotion of a conference also aims at projecting 'Israel' as a peace-lover, and to encourage the Jordanian regime in particular to take further steps in normalizing relations with 'Israel', leading to direct negotiations. When asked about his enthusiasm for an international conference, Peres said that «if we object to the convening of such a conference in the present time, our position would jeopardize the peace process in a sensitive period and would project us in front of the world as a rejectionist front.» What Peres meant by «sensitive period» was the active efforts being made by 'Israel', Jordan, Egypt, the US and some imperialist European countries to pave the way for the Jordanian regime and some Palestinians to join the Camp David process.

For the US, it is of great importance that all such maneuvers continue so that all look up to Washington and its role in the region, especially after the Camp David process has failed to go beyond the Egyptian front, and all previous plans to expand Camp David have failed. Added to this is the

deterioration of the US's credibility after Irangate and the exposure of the plan to overthrow the Libyan government, in addition to the internal problems facing the Reagan Administration. All these factors have combined to threaten the US role in the Middle East settlement process, leading the Reagan Administration to accept the idea of an international conference which it opposed not so long ago. Accordingly, the Reagan Administration sought to convince Shamir, who visited Washington in February, to accept the idea. The US also encouraged Peres to visit Cairo and discuss the concept of an international conference with the Egyptian regime, and gave the green light for the EEC to accept the convening of such a conference.

The EEC has its own motives for issuing a declaration calling for convening a conference, to safeguard its interests in the Arab world, and give the impression that the EEC's positions are not necessarily exactly the same as those of the US.

The Egyptian regime's active participation in the maneuvering around an international conference aims at achieving its own interests. The regime seeks to reassure the US and 'Israel' that it is a dependable partner and middleman that can attract other Arab regimes to the imperialist-Zionist settlement. At the same time, it seeks to reassure Arab reaction that it is playing a constructive role aimed at solving the

Foreign Ministers Meguid of Egypt and Peres of 'Israel' call for international conference.



region's problems and insuring stability. Thus, the regime is cultivating an Arab decision to restore Egypt's seat in the Arab League, as it was restored in the Islamic Conference three years ago.

## OBSTACLES

The convening of an international conference on the Middle East necessitates the resolving of many contradictions and objections among the regional and international parties involved. The first of these differences concerns the nature and goals of the conference. As a matter of fact, the conference now being deliberated is actually two conferences.

The first was suggested by the Soviet Union years ago and supported by Arab regimes and the majority of countries of the world, while being decisively rejected by 'Israel', the US and some of its allies. Such a conference would be held under UN auspices with all concerned parties, including the PLO, participating. This conference would arrive at a just and lasting solution to the Middle East conflict, ultimately recognizing and fulfilling the Palestinian people's rights to return, exercise self-determination and establish an independent state.

The second conference is the one recently called for by the Israeli Labor Party and accepted by the US, the EEC and some reactionary Arab regimes, like Egypt and Jordan. Both these regimes have agreed with 'Israel' and the US on ten points for the convening of the conference:

1. The conference is not a substitute for direct negotiations, but a complement.
2. The conference has no authority to impose a solution.
3. The conference has no right to invalidate any agreement reached between the parties elsewhere.
4. The conference will set up bilateral committees on a geographic basis when the period of direct negotiations is reached; negotiations in one committee do not depend on those in other committees.
5. The conference procedures should be agreed upon before it is convened.
6. The conference would be held on the basis of UN Security Council resolutions 242 and 338.
7. The participants would be agreed upon before the convening of the conference.
8. The Palestinian representation should be agreed on before the conven-