

WEAKNESS ON THE NATIONALIST SIDE

Lack of solidarity and cooperation in the Arab nationalist camp contributed to the summit's passing such resolutions. The weakness in the nationalist camp makes it incapable of deterring the US-Israeli offensive against all nationalist forces, and the reactionary regime's increasingly unified strategy and tactics. It is this weakness that paved the way for the increasing prominence and success of King Hussein and President Mubarak on the political scene.

If the present nationalist divisiveness continues, the Camp David regime can be expected to return to the Arab League at the next summit, where the resolutions will certainly be even more dangerous, as the official Arab policies degenerate further.

Unfortunately, all these negative signs have yet to prove to the rightist trend in the PLO leadership the dangers of the current political moves on the

Arab level, or the dangers of their own policies to the Palestinian cause. Instead of mobilizing the PLO to expose the reactionary nature of the summit resolutions, the Palestinian rightists joined the Arab reactionaries in lauding these resolutions and calling the summit «historic»!

It is more than ever essential that the Palestinian revolutionary democratic forces join efforts to secure united Palestinian political stands based on the resolutions of the April unification session of the PNC, particularly the resolution concerning relations with the Egyptian regime. Thus, the PLO would be equipped to play a central role in unifying the ranks of all the Arab nationalist and progressive forces and regimes, including the normalization of PLO-Syrian relations and of Palestinian-Lebanese-Syria relations - all necessary for confronting the upsurge in the imperialist-Zionist-Arab reactionary plans.

resolution for a mandatory arms embargo against Iran - an effort which is equally directed against the Soviet Union that wants to stick to the more even-handed resolution already adopted. With the September 20th Iranian attack on a Saudi ship and the next day on the British-flagged one, Mrs. Thatcher found her excuse for joining Reagan's new tactics, and closed the Iranian Military Procurement Office in London. In an extension of Iraq's economic war on Iran, the US slapped a ban on Iranian imports, after the rather embarrassing disclosure that in July, it was the world's third largest buyer of Iranian oil. France is also boycotting Iranian oil.

More dramatically, US forces staged three major military attacks on Iranian vessels and installations in September and October, while also firing on three fishing boats on November 3rd, killing one person. On September 21st, US forces captured the *Iran Ajr*, killing five Iranians in the process. On October 8th, US helicopters destroyed three Iranian speedboats. On October 19th, US destroyers demolished three Iranian oil platforms in international waters, after Iran, for the first time, attacked a US-flagged tanker in Kuwaiti waters and a US-owned ship flying the Liberian flag. Especially the US's last attack made a mockery of its claims to be protecting Gulf oil and waterways. In fact, the Reagan administration deliberately chose the military option as opposed to having Kuwait take the Iranian aggression to the UN, but Kuwait had to bear the brunt of Iranian retaliation - the October 22nd attack on a Kuwaiti oil terminal.

The US-Iranian confrontation can be expected to continue, as evidenced by then US Secretary of Defense Weinberger's statement that the US and its allies may send more forces to the Gulf, and stay until the war ends (*International Herald Tribune*, October 24-25, 1987). This was an obvious counter to the Soviet proposal for a UN force to replace foreign war fleets in the Gulf, and there is no sign of change in the US's Gulf policy after Weinberger's resignation.

TESTING GROUND

With the US invasion of the Gulf on the side of Arab reaction, the Iranian leadership eyed the chance to polish its anti-imperialist credentials. Yet with operations that more resemble agit-

The Gulf War

Direct US Intervention

The persistence of the Iraq-Iran war has given the Reagan Administration a golden opportunity to test its aggressive plans, forces and weapons in the Gulf. Inevitably, and as intended, the US's reflagging of Kuwaiti tankers led it into acts of war against Iran.

In July, the UN Security Council adopted resolution 598, calling for an immediate ceasefire in the Gulf war; mutual Iraqi-Iranian withdrawal within their respective borders; and the establishment of an impartial body to allocate blame for the war's start. However, hostilities have continued apace. After some procrastination, the Iranian leadership signalled its de facto rejection of the resolution. Iraq in turn escalated its bombing attacks in late September. The tanker war has worsened, showing that the US reflagging operation was actually a declaration of expanded war. The Washington-based Center for Defense Information reported that in September, there were 31 attacks on shipping in the Gulf, 16 by Iraq and 15 by Iran. This compares to an average of seven such attacks a month throughout the war. Iraqi air attacks are generally

much more destructive than the Iranian attacks which commonly use speed-boats.

The most salient feature of the recent stage of the war is direct Iranian-US confrontation. In the wake of the Irangate scandal, the Reagan Administration finally surmised that bolstering the Iraqi regime was the key to cementing US-dominated, reactionary control in the region. To this end, an aggressive campaign of disinformation and actual attacks has been mounted against the Islamic Republic, similar to the one previously launched against Libya. Brandishing proof that the Iranians were mining Gulf waters, after the September 21st seajacking of the *Iran Ajr* boat, the Reagan Administration embarked on a new attempt to sabotage the international consensus reached in July. It began pushing for a new Security Council