

delegation that would include persons expelled from the occupied territories, i.e., PLOers.) Again, Shamir bolstered his own leadership, as well as the prevailing government line of de facto blocking peace, while making a pretense of cooperation with US diplomatic efforts.

The day after the Likud session, the Israeli government survived 10 no-confidence motions in the Knesset, six of them protesting Shamir's own statement about the need for «Greater Israel» to absorb new Soviet Jewish immigrants. Also the flurry around Sharon's resignation gave Shamir a chance to send signals to the US: Look! I'm besieged on all sides. Be patient so I can ready the Israeli political scene for peace.

Moreover, in early January, the Israeli interior ministry slapped a travel ban on a number of prominent Palestinians who were thought to be planning to travel to Cairo to discuss a Palestinian delegation to peace talks. Later in the month, one of them, Faisal Husseini, thought to be a candidate for the delegation, was arrested (later released).

All this serves to confirm that the real aims of the Shamir plan were as follows: (1) foiling the Palestinian peace offensive, by throwing the ball back in the PLO's court and making it appear as the party rejecting peace, especially in view of the broad international support and attention accorded to the PLO after the 19th PNC; (2) buying time for new attempts to terminate the uprising; and (3) creating an alternative Palestinian leadership that would comply with Zionist plans.

Baker agrees to talk about talks

The Bush Administration endorsed Shamir's plan as the centerpiece for Middle East diplomacy, based on the historical US policy of unconditional support to Israel, and a decision not to forward an initiative of its own. At the same time, the US administration was aware that the plan needed embellishment in order to lure Palestinians into the game of quelling the intifada politically and thus resolving Israel's dilemma; the US also recognized the advantages of having the PLO's con-

sent to this process. To this end, Baker proposed 5 points in October 1989, with the idea of convening a US-Egyptian-Israeli meeting to discuss ways of convening a Palestinian-Israeli meeting. Baker's points were accepted by the Egyptian government which set about trying to obtain the PLO's consent as well.

However, in the face of outright Israeli rejection, the US accepted amendments to its points in December. Most important of the assumptions on which Israel predicated its acceptance were: (1) restricting participation in elections to Arabs from the occupied territories, i.e., Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, but not Jerusalem; (2) limiting the agenda of talks to the election plan; and (3) allowing Israel to participate in the selection of a Palestinian delegation. Thus, the US accepted Israeli veto power over the Palestinian delegation, while American officials promised not to force the Israelis to talk to the PLO.

To date, Israel has not definitely accepted the amended US formula for talking to Palestinians. Still, US officials have exerted no pressure on Israel, not even to comply with ideas which they deem advantageous to Israel in the long run.

US compliance with Israel has been exhibited in a number of other fields as well. In its first year in office, the Bush Administration used its veto in the UN Security Council three times to save Israel from international censure. In December, Vice-President Quayle announced the administration's aim of revoking the 1975 UN resolution which equates Zionism with racism. Moreover, despite Bush's many declarations about limiting nuclear proliferation, the administration has taken no action concerning the reports of Israeli-South African cooperation that enabled the apartheid regime to develop nuclear missiles. This inaction is not because the reports are undocumented - they are based on US Defense Department and CIA information, among other sources.

Most importantly, by denying entrance to Soviet Jewish emigrants, the US has given Israel an enormous demographic boost which can only

serve to harden Israeli ideas that the Zionist state can remain large and strong despite being besieged by the intifada.

The intifada and peace

The US's kid glove treatment of Israel and callous indifference to peace prospects stands in sharp contrast to the current reality in occupied Palestine. The Palestinians of the occupied territories are continuing their daily struggle, asserting the necessity of fulfilling Palestinian rights, as the basis of a just peace. The demand for peace was dramatically emphasized by a series of internationally sponsored events in the last days of 1989, with the title- 1990: Time for Peace, arranged by the NGOs, Israeli peace forces and a Palestinian committee. Among the activities was a human chain around the Old City of Jerusalem, in which 20,000 participated. Even more would have come if not for the occupation army refusing entry to Jerusalem for Palestinians coming from the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The hostile stance of the Israeli government was also exhibited when the police attacked the demonstrators. At least 60 were injured, including members of international delegations. One of them, a progressive Italian woman, lost her eye when the police's water cannons shattered glass in a nearby building. At least 50 people were arrested, 16 of them Palestinians.

Israeli brutality against the masses of the intifada continues unabated. In mid-January, the occupation army opened yet another detention center in the Gaza Strip. In early February, the occupation authorities began sealing Palestinian homes on the pretext that a family member had thrown a stone, in a new spiral of collective punishment. Previously sealing and demolition were reserved for houses where someone was accused of throwing firebombs or a more serious act. Now it can hit literally each and every family. Such innovations in the war on the intifada are another confirmation that the last thought on the mind of the Shamir government policymakers is finding ways to deal with the Palestinians in the interests of peace.