

view of international realities and aims. Political terms like the balance of forces have been replaced by the balance of interests. The world is no longer viewed as consisting of two opposing poles, but as one world which suffers a series of contradictions, regional conflicts and other problems. In the midst of these new perceptions and priorities, the specific concerns of national liberation movements and some newly independent countries were relegated to a secondary position, while top priority is assigned to resolving contradictions between the Soviet Union and the US and other capitalist countries, mainly in Western Europe.

In this context, the four principles which have historically constituted Soviet Middle East policy (as exemplified in the Brezhnev plan above) have been modified to some degree, though not totally changed. The only constant is continued recognition of the Israeli state and its right to exist.

Concerning Palestinian national rights, the right of return is seldom mentioned in current Soviet political parlance. Gorbachev made no mention of it in his book *Perestroika*; neither did Shevardnadze name it in his speech in Cairo last year, which spelled out current Soviet Middle East policy. The right of return is of paramount importance to the Palestinian people. It is primary among their national rights, as was stipulated by the PLO in 1974, because it concerns half of the Palestinian population - specifically those who were uprooted and dispersed as a result of the establishment of the State of Israel. In the absence of implementation of the Palestinian right of return, the status quo allows only for the Israeli Law of Return which grants automatic rights to Jews from all over the world to come and settle in the land and homes of these displaced Palestinians. The Israeli Law of Return represents the essence of Zionist racist discrimination practiced against the Palestinians who are denied their basic right to live in their own country.

The Soviet conception of the means for reaching a peaceful settlement in the Middle East has also changed. Principled insistence on the convening of a fully empowered international conference, as outlined above, appears to be giving way to emphasis

on bilateral negotiations between the PLO and Israel, as a prelude to such a conference.

Over the past few years, Israeli-Soviet relations have witnessed marked improvement; there were cultural and trade agreements in 1989; and a milestone was reached when Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Arens met with his Soviet counterpart, Schevardnadze, late last year. The meeting resulted in permission being given to the Israeli Consul Tsefi Magen and the rest of his staff to operate out of the old Israeli embassy building in Moscow; they can conduct diplomatic activity, including contacts with the Middle East section of the Soviet Foreign Ministry, in the same manner as the embassies of other Middle East countries.

Moreover, the conditions set by the Soviet Union for resuming diplomatic ties with Israel have been watered down. The Soviets are no longer demanding Israeli withdrawal from the 1967 occupied territories or acceptance of the convening of an international peace conference, as pre-conditions for resuming diplomatic relations. Instead, they have stipulated the rather vague concept of «making progress in the peace process.»

Restoring ties with Israel

In the wake of the 1967 Israeli aggression, all the Eastern European countries, with the exception of Rumania, broke off diplomatic relations with Israel in protest of the Israeli occupation of Arab land. However, starting in September 1989, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Poland have renewed diplomatic relations with Israel. The German Democratic Republic, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia have expressed interest in doing so. The German Democratic Republic has agreed to meet the Israeli conditions for the resumption of relations between the two states which include GDR accepting moral responsibility for the Nazi crimes against Jews and making reparations accordingly. Thus, the GDR reneged on its own history, for it represents, politically and concretely, the anti-fascist resistance in Germany during Hitler's rule. The Israeli ambassador to West Germany, Benjamin Nativ, demanded an increase in the reparation payments the Bonn govern-

ment has been paying, in the case of German reunification.

This new position on the part of the Eastern European countries and the Soviet Union is a clear departure and retreat from their previous stands. Israel has made no reciprocal concessions either to these countries, or in relation to the peace process. On the contrary, Israeli repression is mounting against the Palestinian people in the occupied territories. In view of the declared position of the Eastern European countries on reaching a peaceful settlement in the Middle East, their rapprochement with Israel at this particular time appears illogical, especially when viewed in the context of increasing isolation of Israel on the international level. The EEC, for example, has on more than one occasion decided on economic measures against Israel in protest of its human rights violations, and to push for a peaceful solution to the Middle East conflict.

In the light of these developments, Israel in concert with the Bush Administration has intensified the campaign to reverse the UN General Assembly resolution (no. 3379) equating Zionism with racism. According to US sources, the Eastern European countries who voted for this resolution in 1975, will not vote against the reversal.

Resurrection of Zionist activities

The previously clandestine Zionist activities in the Eastern European countries, and especially in the USSR, have now become overt in the midst of perestroika and glasnost. The reactionary, national chauvinist and colonialist ideology of Zionism has historically made it the enemy of socialism. Since Zionism thrives and depends on anti-Semitism in order to fulfill its dream of gathering all Jews in Palestine, the Zionists vigorously opposed the Leninist solution to the Jewish question in the context of resolving the question of the nationalities in the Soviet Union. So began the covert Zionist campaign against socialism, in concert with the imperialist countries' anti-communism.

The recent emergence of public Zionist activities in the Soviet Union has provided a new opportunity to organize the Jewish community on two fronts: getting as many Jews as possible to emigrate and settle in Israel,