

don't compete with us in the Caribbean... or in other areas which (sic) we can sell directly. Let us do it. Sell the ammunition and the equipment using an accredited representative, Israel will be your accredited representative" (*Ha'aretz*, Israeli daily).

The Memorandum of Understanding on Strategic Cooperation, signed by the US and 'Israel' in 1981, formalized US-Israeli military coordination. Concerted US support to the 1982 invasion of Lebanon and the continuing Israeli occupation of Lebanese, Palestinian and Syrian land, has shown that the formal suspension of this memorandum had no meaning, for after all, it had only put down in writing the close working relationship that has long existed. The Zionist role in Latin America shows that 'Israel' can be counted on to safeguard imperialism's strategic interests and objectives when international and domestic outcry against human rights violations makes US initiatives vis-a-vis certain regimes more difficult. The strategic cooperation memorandum gives the possibilities of joint military ventures "outside the Mediterranean zone". These were code words for more Israeli involvement in Latin America and also Africa. Article 3.2.D. of the memorandum paves the way for third countries receiving US foreign military sales credits to use these for purchasing defense items and services from 'Israel'. This privilege accorded to the Zionist entity is unprecedented in the history of US foreign policy, and not even given to the NATO allies.

In the context of the greater global role which it has assumed and as part of boosting its economy, the Zionist state has diversified and upgraded the type of weaponry which it manufactures and markets. In the early seventies, 'Israel' made mostly light weapons and munitions, but today it has expanded into heavy arms such as the Merkava tanks and the proposed Lavie fighter jets. This is closely related to the ever increasing militarization of the Israeli economy, for such heavy production tends to employ a greater number of industrial workers than did the concentration on light arms industry. In 1982, about 40,000 Israelis were employed in the arms industry. This constituted about 14% of the industrial labor force. In 1981, the Israeli arms industry accounted for 40% of total Israeli exports.

The importance of the arms industry for the Israeli economy also has social effects, just as it does in the United States. A large proportion of the labor force needs this employment and thus identifies with militarism, blinded to the dangers engendered by such a monstrous arms industry. The population is also susceptible to chauvinist and racist demagoguery, whether spouted by Reagan or Begin or now Shamir, which aims to justify using this weaponry against civilians, whether in Palestine, Lebanon, El Salvador, Guatemala, etc.

One may ask how 'Israel', as a small state with great economic problems and one of the highest inflation rates in the world, can produce and export such a huge quantity of these destructive products. The answer lies in the nature of the Zionist state and its organic link with imperialism, especially the US. Just as the Zionist entity is an artificial state, that would never have been established or survived without enormous outside aid, so is the Israeli arms industry a baby of imperialism. Imperialism financed the Zionist state first to be used as the beachhead for expanding imperialist control in the Middle East. Today, its zone of military tasks is truly global. Facts and figures indicate the importance which US imperialism attaches to 'Israel' as a surrogate implementer of its strategy. In the last 10 years, US aid to 'Israel' (military and economic) has been over \$22.5 billion, according to the US General Accounting Office's preliminary study released August 27, 1982. The study states that US aid to 'Israel' has averaged more than \$2.5 billion annually for a decade. This flood of assistance is often given as grants or in the form of

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long-term, interest-free loans, which are often never repaid, but covered by the next aid package. This assistance played a key role in allowing 'Israel' to develop its own arms industry and become one of the world's leading arms merchants.

Imperialism's ultimate repayment comes through 'Israel' carrying out assignments which the US finds inconvenient to execute itself. Indeed, 'Israel' can do what the US cannot at certain times, due to the restraints imposed by public pressure or Congressional hesitation. Moreover, due to its aggressive nature, the Zionist state has cultivated a reputation for battle-tested weapons. A slogan which appeared in newspapers all over the world boasts that 'Israel' "makes bombs that do what they are supposed to do". In Zionist terminology, battle - tested means that the vacuum and phosphorous bombs in question have been used on civilians in Beirut apartment buildings, or on non-conventional armies, i.e., popular movements, like the PLO forces in Lebanon. The invasion of Lebanon was a test of world opinion regarding the use of highly insidious anti-personnel weapons, such as cluster bombs and napalm, in urban warfare. Furthermore, the Israelis have stated that "more ingenious adjustments were made (on the weapons used in Lebanon), but those adaptations remain a military secret" (*Los Angeles Times*, July 10, 1983). In any case, they are not a secret to the Pentagon any longer, nor to a series of Latin American dictatorships, whose record for mass killing and torture against their own people qualifies them as future users of such weaponry. Though democratic forces the world over have protested the use of such weapons in the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, and have spoken out against human rights violations in Latin America, this protest must grow much more forceful if we are to avoid new battle-testing on the peoples of the Middle East, Latin America and Africa. ●