

Zionism's Global Role

THE ISRAELI ROLE IN UNITED STATES GLOBAL STRATEGY

by Steve Goldfield, Ph. D.

The Israeli economy is a militarized economy, more so by far than any other in the world. It relies on the export of arms and military services for more of its exports than any other country in the world.

U.S. military and economic aid have enabled the Israelis to build up this military economy and U.S. interests determine who gets these arms. U.S. aid also shields the Israeli population, including the working class, from the consequences of militarization: unemployment, inflation over 130 percent, and loss of purchasing power.

Israeli military exports are an important component of U.S. strategy in Asia, Africa and Latin America, going to the regimes which the United States wishes to support but feels politically constrained to arm because of world or American public opinion. The Israelis are a key element in U.S. strategy to circumvent Congressional and public opinion in the United States.

Israel's international role, not sympathy for victims of the Holocaust or simply its regional role, explains why it receives more U.S. aid than any other country. Important as the Israeli role in its own region is for U.S. interests, this Israeli international activity is equal in importance and explains why the Israelis are permitted by the United States government to do almost anything they want in their own region without risking loss of U.S. support.

Consider any third-world area that has been a trouble spot in the past ten years and you will discover Israeli officers and weapons implicated in the conflict, supporting American interests and helping in what they call «the defense of the West». The symbols of this involvement are familiar: the Uzi submachine gun and the Galil assault rifle, and Israeli officers named Uzi and Galil and Golan. They can be found in Iran, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Namibia, Taiwan, Indonesia, the Philippines, Chile, and Bolivia to name a few.

In South Africa, for example, Israel is actively involved in defending what Washington sees as a «strategic outpost» with the complicity and encouragement of the United States. In this case, Israel's help is particularly important because although the United States is committed to the survival of the South African regime, Washington feels that the overt support it can give to South Africa is severely limited by world public opinion.

Throughout the third-world, Israel has suc-

ceeded where other Western powers have failed in using force to blunt the edge of native radicalism. And they do it with what Washington sees as aplomb, enthusiasm, and grace. The Reagan administration cannot send military advisers to Zaire, Guatemala, South Africa, or Haiti. Nor would many of America's European allies willingly aid repressive regimes like, say the Chilean junta. What others regard as «dirty work», Israelis regard as defensible duty and even in some cases, an exalted calling.¹

This somewhat agitational but scrupulously accurate statement appeared in the pages of the *New York Times*, in January of 1983. Its author, Benjamin Beit Hallahmi, teaches psychology at the University of Haifa. Beit Hallahmi went on to point out that «there is virtually no Israeli opposition to this global adventurism...no 'human rights lobby'».

While western media have recently focused some attention on massive Israeli arms shipments to dictatorships in Central America, little analysis of the full Israeli role as a junior partner of the United States has appeared. Here we present a review of the Israeli economy and armaments industry, a summary of Israeli global military activities, and an assessment of the contribution of U.S. aid to Israeli industrial potential, and then weigh the overall significance of Israeli service to the United States government.

Israeli Arms Production

The two largest Israeli military producers, Israel Aircraft Industries and Israeli Military Industries (also known as Ta'as), are both owned by the government and are the two largest Israeli industrial firms and the largest exporters.² In fact, according to the British *Financial Times* of December 18, 1981, 300,000 workers, or 25 percent of the Israeli labor force, work in military-related jobs.³ Although this figure includes the army, which numbers about 165,000⁴, it is still a staggering proportion of an economy devoted to war. Of Israeli industrial workers, about 14 percent produce weapons.⁵

The military sector is the single largest part of Israeli economic life. In the seventies according to *Ha'aretz*, it absorbed nearly 37 percent of the budget and 16 percent of the total economic resources, four and five times the rates of military expenditures in NATO and the Warsaw Pact countries.⁶ Military expenditures account for almost 30 percent of the gross annual product; the 1981 military budget amounted to \$7.34 billion.⁷