

Star Wars Block Disarmament

They speak of defense but prepare for attack; they advertise a space shield but forge a space sword. Washington is staking all on force and does not try to conceal it. It hopes to gain a prevailing force that would subordinate the world to America. There, diplomacy and negotiations are literally subordinate to missiles and bombers.

With these words Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev aptly described US imperialism's aggressive strategy. His words also explain why no progress was made in the Geneva disarmament talks which ended April 23rd.

In line with its consistent practice of peaceful coexistence, the Soviet Union had clearly stated aims at Geneva: Chief among them was preventing the militarization of space, as well as general arms reduction, especially of nuclear weapons. In contrast, the US wanted the Geneva talks as a forum for pressuring the Soviet Union, while at the same time appearing to be for peace. The Reagan Administration hoped that brandishing the «Strategic Defense Initiative» for space weaponry would scare the Soviets into compromising their defense capacities. This would give the US a free hand to use its nuclear might to threaten not only the Soviet Union but progressive forces around the world. However, this aim floundered on Soviet determination to protect the gains of socialism and counter imperialism's global aggression. In the face of US insistence on embarking on Star Wars, Comrade Gorbachev made it clear that the needed countermeasures would be taken.

The other, related aim of the Reagan Administration was rallying the American public and its European allies around its military drive. Without scruples, the Reagan Administration used the Geneva talks for pushing its inflated military budget proposals. The US Congress complied, approving funding for MX missiles in the name of «national unity» in the face of the Soviets. In the words of a prominent Senator, «The MX may not be a perfect weapon system, but it will make the job easier for US arms negotiators.» As the Geneva talks

were concluding, the Pentagon published a paper, falsely claiming that the Soviet Union is already advancing in space weapons, and showing how the US could test space weapons without violating the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (sic). This is the start of a notorious campaign to push Reagan's proposal for spending \$30 billion on Star Wars research over the next five years, as the first installment of overall research costs, estimated at \$100 billion; afterwards the systems will be built and deployed for additional billions. Through its space shuttles, the US has already embarked on relevant research; the



Comrade Gorbachev's assuming leadership confirmed the Soviet Union's consistent policy and strength.

claim of Soviet space weapons research is an obvious cover-up for de facto US initiation of weapons in space.

The US fared less well in rallying its allies to Star Wars. Though the defense ministers of the NATO countries welcomed the invitation to join space weaponry research, prominent European politicians have expressed serious doubts, and some allies have declined. It is interesting to note that 'Israel' was among those invited to participate. Prime Minister Peres is positive on the idea, and the major Israeli technological institute supports participation. In view of existing nuclear and other military

cooperation, Israeli participation could provide the link for indirectly including apartheid South Africa in imperialism's latest deadly project. In any case, the Reagan Administration can be expected to mount a massive arm-twisting maneuver to rally its allies around Star Wars before the Geneva talks resume in early June. This in itself sets the agenda for the peace movement in the immediate future, and many are already in action.

Though the Geneva talks signify no breakthrough in disarmament due to US blockage, they do contain lessons which can add to the experience of the peace movement. The importance which Reagan attaches to space weapon research should be clue to all. Introducing even the idea of weapons in space is a qualitative upping of the ante in imperialism's nuclear blackmail. Reagan's claim that a space system could constitute a defense, rendering nuclear weapons obsolete, is only for selling the project to the public. Even US experts have warned that such a system could serve several major offensive purposes, including enabling a nuclear first strike. Star Wars is the advanced step in US imperialism's renewed quest to achieve unchallenged nuclear superiority. George Keyworth, Reagan's science adviser, said outright that the new 'defense' system aimed to make «the Soviet (weapons) fleet...obsolete» (as quoted in *Frontline*, April 1st).

This spiraling of the arms race means that protest cannot be limited to a single type of weapon, but must be grounded in principle understanding as to the source of the militaristic drive and its logical consequences. The Geneva arms talks, like events in Nicaragua, El Salvador, Lebanon, Palestine and South Africa, show that it is US imperialism constantly fueling aggression, supporting reactionary forces against the people and imperiling world peace. Moreover, the outrageous costs of Star Wars give anti-imperialists the chance to emphasize the class and racist base of the US war drive. It is working people and oppressed minorities who are forced to pay disproportionately for Reagan's war machine, to be directed against their brothers and sisters around the globe.