

'Israel' in Latin America

This study was presented at a symposium in Cuba, arranged by the International Secretariat for Solidarity with the Arab People and their Central Cause, Palestine.

The importance of the Israeli military role in Latin America can be traced back to imperialism's defeat in Vietnam, which for a time diminished the US's capacity to intervene directly against popular struggles in the three continents. US imperialism was forced to devise new plans for implementing its policies effectively but more quietly, without having to face the public dissent which prevailed during its involvement in Southeast Asia. To this purpose, the US needed a reliable surrogate, a force with advanced military experience and whose interests paralleled its own. The natural candidate was the Zionist state.

In Latin America, 'Israel' immediately picked up the slack by increasing the supply of military equipment and advisors sent to reactionary states to a veritable flood by the early eighties. Starting in the mid-seventies, a squadron of Dagger aircraft and Gabriel rockets were sold to Argentina; 150 Shafir missiles to Chile; Super-mysteres and Kfir C2 combat jets to Honduras - all regimes condemned by the world community for gross violation of human rights. The Zionist state engaged in training the internal security forces of El Salvador and Panama. From 1976, 'Israel' was responsible for supplying almost all the military needs of the Guatemala dictatorship until January this year, when the Reagan Administration resumed direct military aid to Rios Montt's regime. In Mexico, 'Israel' has established a licensed assembly plant for Arava aircraft, planes suitable for counterinsurgency. High-tech military equipment poured into the hands of many reactionary governments.

It is no coincidence that the Israeli military role in Latin America escalated parallel to the ascendance of the military juntas, and became even more apparent with the resurgence of the liberation struggle in the area, heralded by the Nicaraguan revolution. The main function of Israeli military aid to Latin American has, of course, been counterinsurgency. Moreover, today Israeli arms serve to heighten tension in the area in line with US imperialism's increasingly aggressive policy and renewed willingness to intervene directly. Israeli involvement in the US's "backyard" clearly shows Zionism's organic link and common interests with imperialism. 'Israel' is directly participating in the efforts to embolden Latin American dictators, as was echoed in the remark of General Gustavo Alvarez of Honduras that his country needs a preemptive strike against Nicaragua the way 'Israel' did against the PLO. The Israeli government has proven before the international community that it is totally faithful to the imperialist cause and has no qualms about supporting regimes in Latin America which have murdered hundreds of thousands of their own citizens in recent years.

'Israel' in Central America

In this paper, we will allow ourselves to concentrate on Central America, for it is there that the Israeli role became most visible starting in the mid-seventies - dramatically exposed by the victory of the Sandinista revolution.

In fact, the Carter Administration's so-called human rights policy can hardly be understood in isolation from the role of 'Israel' as an imperialist surrogate. Faced with public criticism of the US role in maintaining the brutal Somoza dictatorship, Congress cut off military aid to Nicaragua. Thus, US imperialism tried to save face, but in Nicaragua, as

in other Latin American countries, the US could not have pretended to implement a policy based on human rights criteria, if not for the fact that 'Israel' moved in to shoulder the task of arming the exposed dictatorships. After the victory of the Sandinista revolution, it was revealed that 98% of Somoza's military equipment had come from the Zionist state.

Today, the US and 'Israel' continue to conspire against the Nicaraguan people by attempting to topple their revolutionary government. An article in *Washington Post* earlier this year revealed a new instance of US-Israeli cooperation to this effect. The two are working on a multimillion dollar settlement plan in Costa Rica, along the border with Nicaragua. This plan calls for settling and supporting up to 1,000 families on land along the border. The US agency AID, notorious for links with CIA projects, has agreed to finance the project with at least \$10 million in the first year alone. 'Israel' provides technical expertise, based on its experience with settlements in occupied Palestine, especially the West Bank, where private enterprise plays an increasingly prominent role in colonization. The Israeli firm, TAHAL, is providing engineers who have been involved in the project from the start.

It is interesting to note that this settlement project was begun at the same time as the US started the large-scale military maneuvers - Big Pine - along the Honduran-Nicaraguan border. This is one indication that the settlement project in Costa Rica has a place in the US military plans for the area. The aim is to create strategic pinchers that would physically isolate Nicaragua, and serve as bases for the counterrevolutionaries' sabotage. The settlement project is hard to justify otherwise, for Costa Rica has no serious overpopulation problem that necessitates resettling people in border areas. A US administration official acknowledged that AID would never have given an economically risky project the go-ahead, if it weren't for the political implications. US ambassador to Costa Rica, McNeil, also acknowledged this fact, saying in a confidential cable: "It is essential that the land purchase be expeditiously and quietly carried out to... avoid land invasion by leftist rebels which would nullify the project's geopolitical objectives".

This is not the first time the Zionists engage in settlement building in the Western Hemisphere. In Guatemala, in addition to having sent over 300 advisers, 'Israel' has promoted the regime's counterinsurgency efforts by providing the expertise for so-called development projects. This entailed the physical elimination and transfer of the Indian inhabitants of certain areas, and the establishment of kibbutz-like colonies in an effort to deprive the guerrilla movement of their mass base.

In a recent chapter of the US - Zionist conspiracy against the people of Latin America and the Middle East, the Zionist state, at US request, sent massive shipments of PLO weapons captured in Lebanon, to Costa Rica, to arm the CIA sponsored contras for their attacks on Nicaragua.

Renewed focus on El Salvador

From 1972 to 1977, the Zionist state supplied the regime in El Salvador with 81% of its weaponry. In this period, 'Israel' also began sending military advisors to the country. The recent