

Eddy, and Peter Gilman, authors of *The Plumbat Affair: The Explosive Barrel*, the seacraft «Scheerberg» left port from Belgium, destined for Venice, Italy, with a cargo of 560 barrels of saturated uranium. Fifteen days after departure, the «Scheerberg» ported in Iskenderun, Turkey, but under a new name. It then continued its journey to Sicily, Italy, where its crew and captain disappeared. In addition, the «Scheerberg» ported in Sicily without its uranium cargo on board. The incident caused extreme confusion among the intelligence agencies of Europe. It was not until 1973 that these agencies came to the conclusion that the nuclear grade uranium was stolen by 'Israel', when Dan Art, an agent for Mossad, confessed to purchasing the «Scheerberg» so as to perform such operations for the Mossad.

The results of the investigation were not published until May, 1977, when Paul Lennontal, a nuclear energy expert for the United States Senate, stated in front of the Conference for a Non-Nuclear Future in Salzburg, that the 200 tons of uranium had in fact been stolen by 'Israel', and that this quantity was enough to produce 42 atomic bombs and still allow the Israeli Dimona nuclear reactor to operate at full capacity for 40 years.

Nuclear missiles

Political observers of Middle East affairs have noticed that since the creation of 'Israel' in 1948, its cooperation with France to develop conventional medium-range missiles went side by side with its own nuclear technology development.

The Institute for Strategic Studies has stated that 'Israel' has now fully developed two types of medium-range missiles. The first is the MD600, with a range of 450 kilometers, equipped on stationary or mobile launchers; it can carry either conventional or nuclear warheads. The second type is the MD620, which has a range of 1000 kilometers, and can be equipped with nuclear warheads. 'Israel' now has built 40 missiles of this type. In addition, *Foreign Report* has uncovered that 'Israel' is now developing a type of cruise missile, with a range of 3000 kilometers, also capable of carrying nuclear warheads.

Before going into the political consequences of the Israeli strategical nuclear program, it should be noted that 'Israel' is not a signatory to the Nuclear

The Krytrons Case

Another Israeli transaction related to nuclear weaponry power came to light in mid-May this year. The Israeli embassy in Washington D.C. admitted that a «certain quantity» of Krytron switches had been transferred to 'Israel' over the years 1979-1983. The Krytrons are detonators, timing devices that can be used for triggering nuclear bombs. It was later known that 800 Krytrons had been bought by Israeli businessman Arnon Milchen, who allegedly worked for Milco International, from the US company, EG&G Incorporated.

General Director of the Israeli Defense Ministry, Menachem Miron, has said that 'Israel' is ready to send back these detonators if the US so requests. Speaking to Israeli broadcast-

ing on May 16th, he said that 'Israel' had not yet received such a demand. He clarified that 'Israel' would return the 800 Krytron detonators, valued at \$ 50-60 per unit, on condition that the US pay for them, for 'Israel' had imported them. Miron further stated that 'Israel' had no connection with the investigation which began two days before in the US, where a US businessman, Richard Smith, is accused of exporting the detonators.

In a telephone interview with Associated Press, Israeli Defense Ministry spokesman, Nashman Shai, made an interesting revelation: He said that some of the Krytron units now in 'Israel' had been employed in extensive research, and it could be difficult to return them as they were worn out.

Non-Proliferation Treaty, thus avoiding any obligatory investigations of its use of nuclear materials or of its nuclear facilities.

Israeli role in US strategy

Possession of nuclear weapons gives 'Israel' military superiority over the Arab countries, particularly the nationalist and progressive states. The tacit US support and encouragement given to the Israel nuclear program cannot be understood outside of the context of US strategical interests in the region and the world. 'Israel' is a partner of the US-Zionist-South African alliance. The United States aims, through this tripartite alliance, to achieve hegemony in the Middle East and Africa. Thus, Israeli possession of nuclear weapons is not incidental, nor a result of its own unique brilliance. The same applies to South Africa. The United States' understanding of the contemporary political world and its realities, particularly after its defeat in Vietnam, forces it to resort to such indirect methods of domination and exploitation. Israeli nuclear blackmail allows for the continued exploitation of the natural and human resources of the region by US imperialism and itself, in addition to further strengthening its existence as a colonial-settler state in Palestine.

Another aspect of Israeli nuclear capabilities is international. 'Israel', as a possessor of nuclear weapons, poses itself as another military front, in the ranks of imperialism, against the socialist community, mainly the Soviet Union. Its new cruise-type nuclear mis-

sile, with 3000 kilometer range, can easily reach the territory of the Soviet Union and other socialist countries. Imperialism's attempts to militarily isolate and besiege the socialist countries do not end in Afghanistan.

The Middle East is the most explosive region in the world, given the complexity of interacting factors and forces, the history of colonialism and exploitation, its conflicts, first and foremost the Arab-Zionist conflict and the Palestinian issue, and the political, economic and military importance attached to it by imperialism. These factors, coupled with the Israeli and imperialist nuclear strategy, make it the prime candidate as the potential area for the first nuclear war in the history of mankind. Zionism's development of nuclear weapons precludes the achievement of a just, comprehensive peace based on military balance, the solution proposed by liberal sophists, or on any basis for that matter.

The danger is real. The red line has already been drawn; Menachem Begin stated that any perceived threat to the existence of 'Israel' would force it to use its nuclear missiles. This spring 'Israel' stationed nuclear-tipped Jericho missiles in the Naqab (South Palestine) and the Golan Heights. Altogether, the regional and international conditions demand that Israeli nuclear potential be squarely confronted by all democratic, peace-loving and anti-nuclear forces. The Israeli nuclear capacity is an essential component of imperialism's nuclear strategy, and should be confronted as such in the context of anti-war and anti-nuclear struggle.