Western diplomacy supports Israel's war of aggression

Chris Marsden, Barry Grey
19 July 2006

On Tuesday, the seventh day of Israel's air war on Lebanon, with some 250 civilians killed and much of the country's infrastructure destroyed, President George Bush issued yet another threat against Syria.

Declaring that Syria was "trying to get back into Lebanon," he warned against any attempt to invite Syrian forces back into the devastated country little more than a year after Syrian troops were forced to leave as a result of a campaign orchestrated by the United States and France.

Bush's statement was typical of the cynical and thuggish declarations coming from both Washington and Tel Aviv—all of which go unchallenged by the European powers and the Western media.

Bush charged Syria with meddling in the affairs of a country that is being reduced to rubble by bombs, missiles, ships and warplanes supplied by the US to its closest Middle East ally. And as he painted Hezbollah, Syria and Iran as the aggressors, he continued to oppose any cessation of Israel's bombing of civilian targets throughout a defenceless Lebanon—a violation of international law that defines its perpetrators as war criminals.

Bush's comments crowned a day of much vaunted diplomatic initiatives by the major powers and their cat's paw, the United Nations, to resolve the Lebanese conflict along lines dictated by the United States and Israel. For its part, Israel made clear that it would accept nothing that cut across its current drive to destroy Hezbollah and transform Lebanon into a tool of Israeli policy, or its ability to launch future attacks against any and all forces or states that resist its imperialist designs.

The "international peacekeeping force" proposed jointly by British Prime Minister Tony Blair and United Nations General Secretary Kofi Annan is advanced in order to police such a victor's peace. Its stated mission is to oversee the removal of any Hezbollah presence from the southern areas bordering Israel.

At the same time, the international force proposed by Annan and Blair would directly serve the interests of the major imperialist powers. It would provide Washington with an opportunity to establish a permanent military presence, working directly with the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF). White House national security spokesman Frederick Jones said, "We're open to the possibility of that force being necessary." Other US spokesmen, however, discounted the proposal.

The European powers welcomed the proposal, seeing it as a potential means of mitigating Washington's dominant position in the Middle East. Russian President Vladimir Putin was among the first to pledge support for the force, along with the European Union. French Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin backed a deployment, while French President Jacques Chirac said he believed "some means of coercion" might be needed to enforce the UN resolution calling for the disarming of Hezbollah.

But even such a UN-run police force is deemed by Israeli Prime Minister Edhud Olmert to be an unacceptable limitation on Israel's freedom of action. Military violence is the preferred method of both the American and Israeli ruling elites.

Israel will, moreover, be satisfied only with the complete subjugation of Lebanon and its reduction to an impotent client regime. As the Israeli daily *Haaretz* pointed out, the creation of a security zone in the south is considered insufficient by the Israeli Defence Forces as it would "not... prevent Hezbollah from deploying long-range rockets and missiles further north in Lebanon."

Bush and Olmert insist that no ceasefire is possible

© World Socialist Web Site

until Israel has achieved its basic military objectives. In her discussions with UN representatives, Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni insisted on the same conditions.

On this question Tel Aviv is knocking on an open door. UN special envoy Terje Roed-Larsen said, after meeting with Livni in Jerusalem, "I think both parties agreed that it is necessary to have a political framework in order to reach, eventually, a cease-fire."

The resolution issued by leaders of the Group of Eight at their summit in St Petersburg Sunday fully accepted Israel's presentation of the conflict, blaming the outbreak of hostilities in Lebanon on Hezbollah and in Gaza on Hamas. It stopped short only of specifically identifying Syria and Iran, though this was the clear implication of the resolution and the specific intention of Washington and London.

Russian President Putin has since let it be known that this omission was a concession to Moscow. Yesterday Bush remedied this failing with his accusations against Syria.

Israel welcomed the G8 resolution as a legitimization of its attack on Lebanon. Livni stated, "Israel concurs with the position of the international community, which places responsibility for the conflict on extremist elements. Israel and the international community share a common problem—the presence of extremist terrorists."

As far as the Olmert government is concerned, the realization of a Greater Israel, including the permanent annexation of most of the West Bank and the Golan Heights, demands the crushing of all resistance by the Palestinians and the Lebanese. Of necessity, it requires military action against Syria and ultimately Iran. Since the fall of the Baathist regime in Iraq, Iran is Israel's only serious contender as a regional power.

The Bush administration has accused Damascus and Tehran of masterminding the actions of Hezbollah and Hamas at a time when it is pushing for international sanctions against Iran and meeting resistance from Russia and China. It sees Israeli aggression against Gaza and Lebanon as a means of furthering its own geo-strategic agenda in the Middle East.

An editorial in the July 18 *Jerusalem Post*, which supports the most hawkish elements within the Olmert government, stressed the unity of purpose between Israel and the US. It was entitled "Bush's Brilliant Thought."

After hailing the G8 resolution for "mentioning Hizbullah and Hamas by name and Iran and Syria by implication," it praised Bush and Blair for being "more explicit" in identifying "the 'root cause' of the problem, namely Iran and Syria."

It drew attention, in particular, to Bush's statement, "[T]here seems to be a consensus growing that in order for us to have the peace we want... we must deal with... two nation states that are very much involved with stopping the advance of peace, and that would be Iran, and that would be Syria."

The *Post* commented, "It has been the case for decades, but it is finally dawning on the world, that there are not two conflicts—the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Islamist-Western conflict—but one. As John Gibson, a commentator for Fox News, put it, 'When the Iranians get nukes this ruckus we're witnessing today will look like a walk in the park... It seems like a war between Israel and some terror groups. It's really a war by Iran on us.'"

The editorial concluded: "As of Sunday, [Israel Defence Forces] sources stated that Israel had eliminated about 25 percent of Hizbullah's missile capacity. Defense Minister Amir Peretz has said that Israel requires another week or two to finish the job...

"If Israel succeeds in destroying Hizbullah, it will have done the world, not only ourselves, a great favour. Bush and Blair, and perhaps other leaders, seem to understand this, and that the broader task of free nations is to confront Hizbullah's sponsors in Damascus and Teheran."

Even as Israeli bombs and missiles continue to rain on Beirut and other cities and towns in Lebanon, the US is working for a new resolution in the UN Security Council that will provide a legal fig leaf not only for intensified attacks on Hezbollah, but also for future military actions against Syria and Iran.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site