
ISRAEL'S UNRESTRAINED EXPORT OF WEAPONS ENDANGERS OUR FUTURE
By Avraham Rozenkier

In an era of galloping inflation, Israeli arms sales are also on the rise. In fact, weapons exports are virtually the only export which has constantly grown.

A recent study conducted at the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies at Tel Aviv University revealed that Israel's annual arms sales reached \$2.5 billion in 1982--more than total industrial exports for that year! By any standard this is an outrageous sum for such a small country.

Moreover, if this trend continues arms sales will become an independent factor in Israeli diplomacy. According to the university study: "If in the past we first arranged diplomatic relations and only afterwards began assistance plans, often including arms sales, today we sell arms first and only afterwards attempt to arrange diplomatic relations." The re-establishment of diplomatic relations with Zaire is a prime example of this dangerous process.

It seems, then, that we are facing a situation in which Israel's economic base is becoming overly dependent on the sale and export of military wares. And because this is an unstable, ever-changing market, its expansion on the one hand, and the lack of governmental or parliamentary supervision on the other, endangers our delicate economic balance.

More troubling, however, are the political and moral consequences of arms sales to the highest bidder and often to the darkest dictators. We see, for example, that supplying Israeli weapons to the Nicaraguan rebels began in the wake of Ariel Sharon's visit to Honduras in December 1982, when he was still serving as defense minister. The American Congress had refused to accede to the administration's request for additional funds to finance the Nicaraguan underground, so the Reagan administration pressured Israel into assuming its role as the Contras' benefactor. In addition, the involvement of Israeli agents in Guatemala and El Salvador contradicts the principles of justice and freedom upon which the State of Israel is grounded.

Mapam Opposes

Israel ranks "only" seventh in the world in arms sales, according to international sources, far behind the U.S., the Soviet Union, France, England, Italy and Brazil. Still, there is little doubt that supplying arms to military dictatorships which use these weapons to oppress their citizens and to battle liberation movements fighting for their country's freedom awakens political and moral problems of a serious nature.

Mapam has always opposed the sale of Israeli armaments to governments which employ torture and murder their political opponents. Such a policy contradicts all the values of Judaism and Zionism. It is not surprising, then, that Mapam has condemned the support given by Israel to the Contras, who are striving to destabilize the Sandinista government.

There is no justification for pursuing short-term profits--economic or diplomatic--which imperil future diplomatic ties. The long-term blindness which characterizes Likud policy in Central America negates Israel's own interests. The Central American military dictatorships are not eternal, but the people of the region will long remember the key role which Israeli arms have played in prolonging the lives of these dictatorships and deepening the suffering of the oppressed.

Mapam is struggling against this short-sighted policy for three reasons:

1. Morally it contradicts both the principles of our Declaration of Independence and our Jewish values.
2. The involvement of Israeli arms merchants in controversial areas creates "political facts" without prior parliamentary approval or constant supervision.
3. Increasing arms exports to such unstable areas may endanger Israel's economic base.

(The author is director of Mapam's Department of International Relations)

Israel-Nicaragua

GUNBARREL VIEW

This article on Israel's relations with Latin America is excerpted from a pamphlet being published by MAPAM's International Relations Department, "America's Mercenary War in Nicaragua."

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Israel's support for the Somoza regime--by supplying arms and training mercenaries who fought alongside the National Guard--will certainly

not be registered as a golden moment in the history of Israeli-Nicaraguan relations.

Yet Israel continues to support Somoza's heirs--the "Contras"--a right-wing force waging a guerrilla war in order to depose the Sandinista government.

In the United States, internal criticism--particularly within the Congress--of the Reagan administration's aid to the rebels (which

reached its apex with the mining and bombing of Nicaragua's ports) has risen. But in Israel, we hear no warnings of the dangerous political and moral consequences inherent in selling arms to the darkest dictatorships.

Indeed, the MAPAM Knesset faction proposed legislation prohibiting arms sales without appropriate public supervision and without prior approval by the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Security Committee, but it fell on deaf ears.

And on Nov. 19, 1984, MK Haika Grossman, chair of the MAPAM Knesset faction, introduced a motion in the Knesset, stating: "No sale of military equipment to a foreign power will be carried out if its constitution, laws or actions systematically violate the human rights provisions of the U.N. charter."

In explaining her motion, MK Grossman wrote: "Arms sales...to the apartheid regime in South Africa or to Latin American nations with despotic regimes, such as the tyrants in El Salvador, the former Somoza regime in Nicaragua, and especially the ruling sect in Guatemala...is liable to undermine our national status and all our diplomatic relations on that continent."

Until now, her efforts have been in vain.

Once, Israel took care to gain friends in Latin America by virtue of its agricultural assistance and development programs; today, her friends belong to the Latin American despots club, who buy Israeli weapons to turn against their own people.

The dictatorships are not eternal, and perhaps the people of the region will find it difficult to forget Israel's contribution to extending the life of the dictatorships and prolonging their suffering.

The ousting of the tyrannical Somoza regime in Nicaragua indicates the failure of this policy -- that the future of our diplomatic relations with the Third World is viewed through the barrel of a gun.