

by *Arshad Jagan*

The Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI), Reagan's "Star Wars" plan, is yet another obstacle on the road to relieving international tension and achieving nuclear disarmament. The little hopes expressed after the Reagan-Gorbachyov talks in Geneva in November, 1985 were shattered with the official launching of the "Star Wars" Programme on March 23, 1986. <sup>introduction of the</sup> The SDI, a plan designed to install a space-based defence and strike system, was the cause of the deadlock reached at the Iceland Summit, ~~with~~ which otherwise would have cut strategic weapons by 50 per cent in five years, eliminated medium-range missiles in Europe and cut Soviet medium-range missiles in Asia to 100.

Agreement on both long and medium-range missiles was not reached because of Reagan's stubborn insistence on his "star wars" dreams. He rejected the proposal to ban testing of Defensive Weapons in space for at least 10 years.

There was clearly method in the President's "madness". The previous argument that the SDI was a defensive shield and a bargaining chip to get the Soviets seriously to negotiate arms reduction was exposed. Why a defensive shield when there opened up the possibility of no nuclear weapons?

The Reykjavik Summit made it apparent that the objective of the SDI was not only defense but offense. It is only the latest of a long list of weapons systems, <sup>breaching?</sup> aimed at breaking parity and equal security between East and West, and giving the USA nuclear superiority for a possible ~~first~~ first strike against the Soviet Union.

The SDI forms part of a global strategy to destroy the socialist camp and to contain communism and the national liberation movement. Towards this objective of "liberation" and "roll back", the ruling circles in the West have embarked on a world-wide military programme in favour of the monopolistic monopolists and contractors, who reap fantastic profits manufacturing weapons of death.

At the expense of social programmes, military expenditure increased in the USA from US\$190 billion in 1981 to US\$219 billion in 1987, with a request for US\$313 billion in 1988.

In the third world, military spending increased from US\$33 billion in 1972 to US\$81.28 billion in 1981, and has doubled during the past ten years. In Latin America, arms purchase shot up by 55% in the 1970 to 1979 period, and US exports of weapons and materials increased from US\$1.2 billion in the 1966-1975 period to US\$3.2 billion in 1976-1985. For the Caribbean Basin countries, US military assistance expanded from US\$13.8 million in 1980 to US\$106.2 million in 1983.

The SDI is a direct contravention of the ABM treaty. It is also a clear violation of the spirit of the Tlatelolco Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Resolution of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) that the Caribbean must be a Zone of Peace.

Ever since - 1947 with the Inter-American Treaty of ~~Reciprocal~~ Reciprocal Assistance (Rio Pact), the United States has <sup>enslaved</sup> the Latin American and Caribbean countries in an aggressive plan to fight "communism within and without" and to suppress the national liberation and anti-imperialist movement. The Hemisphere Defense Doctrine, which formed part of the Massive Retaliation Doctrine during the Cold War era, was later changed to the Internal Security Doctrine for war against the "internal enemy", the communists.

The United States maintains 70 naval and air bases and other military centres in the Latin American region, with 22,000 military personnel.

Puerto Rico is a nuclear arsenal, and naval manoeuvres with nuclear warships are regularly carried out there. No doubt this US colony and other client Latin American and Caribbean states are included among the countries where hundreds of companies and over a thousand sub-contractors are engaged in fulfilling SDI orders.

The Caribbean Project for Justice and Peace, a Puerto Rico based human rights organisation, disclosed that several locations in the various CARICOM states have been earmarked for setting up factories to produce equipment for the advancement of the US military force.

The Caribbean Basin, considered by the United States as its backyard, has been the constant victim of US dumping, protectionism, militarism and direct invasion. The "colossus of the north" uses its military might to threaten and dictate the political, economic and foreign policies of many governments in the region. The most recent NATO Exercises went on for three months (January-March, 1987), while another joint US/Honduras Division which led the invasion against Grenada in 1983 was part of this task force. At present US marines are engaged in "Solid Shield 87" aimed at intimidating Nicaragua, and "Camele 87" is in progress in the Eastern Caribbean. Simultaneously, the United States has been pressing for the establishment of a Regional Security System for the Eastern Caribbean countries.