

Shamir's Africa Tour

In mid-June, Israeli Prime Minister Shamir toured Africa, visiting Togo, Cameroon, Liberia and the Ivory Coast. The significance of his trip exceeds the direct results, for it serves to reinforce Zionist penetration of Black Africa.

A highlight of Shamir's tour was the ceremonies in Togo which restored relations with the Zionist state earlier this year. Following in the footsteps of Zaire, Liberia, the Ivory Coast and Cameroon, Togo became the fifth to restore the relations broken off by 29 African states in 1973. Predicting economic development for African states in cooperation with 'Israel', Shamir and other Zionist officials presented this as an achievement for Israeli diplomacy, and gave the impression that a number of other African countries are waiting impatiently to follow suit.

The five states which have restored diplomatic relations with 'Israel' are among the most reactionary in Africa and those most linked with world imperialism. This explains the desire of their rulers to have close relations with the Zionist entity. Moreover, they hope to benefit from Israeli expertise in the fields of state security and suppression. The president of Togo frankly declared that he wants to benefit from the Israeli experience in suppressing 'terrorism' i.e., any opposition to the regime.

From the Zionists' side, Shamir's visit was part of the drive to encourage African states to restore diplomatic relations with 'Israel'. (24 African countries are continuing the diplomatic boycott begun in 1973.) Shamir's visit also aimed to reinforce relations with the countries visited via economic and military contracts, which will encourage Zionist business interests to penetrate these countries. Israeli papers reported that Zionist businessmen are planning either to invest their money directly in the African countries which have relations with 'Israel', or to use their influence to get US-European funds for projects in these same countries.

On the political level, 'Israel' aims to win African states to its side against the Arabs, convincing the former to adopt the Zionist point of view on resolving

the Arab-Zionist conflict, while damaging the reputation of the Palestinian national struggle with false accusations about the PLO being a terrorist organization. The Israeli reentry into Africa also aims to supplement imperialist exploitation and plunder of the continent by increasing Israeli participation in joint projects with the USA and Western European countries. At the same time, by expanding their political and economic presence in Africa, the Israeli leadership intends to provide new avenues and cover for the Mossad's activities on the continent.

Shamir's visit also had aims related to Israeli domestic politics, and the friction between the Labor and Likud blocs in the national unity government. Shamir was accompanied by an entourage of about forty persons in a clear bid to augment his prestige, presenting him as a leader who can make political gains for the Zionist state, and boost the Likud's popularity. This is part of the competition between the Likud and Labor to gain votes in the next elections. After all, Peres rounded off his term as prime minister by presiding over the restoration of relations with Cameroon in August 1986, and Shamir needs to deliver comparable foreign policy results.

Security and military cooperation between 'Israel' and the countries visited figured most prominently in the negotiations, followed by economic relations.

WHAT FACILITATED THE ISRAELI RETURN?

The restoration of diplomatic relations by five of the 29 African countries that broke relations in 1973, does not grant 'Israel' a stable official presence in Africa, despite the fact that a number of countries maintain economic relations in the absence of diplomatic relations. However, there are indications that other African countries will resume diplomatic rela-

tions with the Zionist state in the future. The Central African Republic, Guinea, Gabon and Sierra Leone are being named in this connection. What then are the reasons for the current Israeli return to Africa?

First is the Camp David accords between Egypt and the Zionist state, which gave African states an avenue and an excuse for restoring ties with 'Israel'. This trend was reinforced by the Moroccan regime's reception of Shimon Peres in 1986.

Second is the policy of a number of African states to try to develop their countries through linkage with the imperialist countries. The countries in question are ruled by traditional reactionary classes more concerned about personal enrichment than serving the cause of the African people's freedom.

Third is the inability of the Arab states, whether reactionary or nationalist, to understand the nature of relations with the African countries. Relations were limited to financial aid through the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa, and secondary projects which did not seriously help African countries to surmount their problems. No special political relations were established to reinforce the aid which was exclusively aimed at boycotting 'Israel'. Relations in the fields of education, science and journalism were neglected, despite the fact that Arab and African countries have a number of common causes.

Fourth is the role of the US and Western Europe, especially France, in pressing African countries to establish strong relations with 'Israel'. To this end, they exploited the difficult economic conditions and famine prevailing in some African countries, and the political instability in others. The US and France have defended reactionary regimes in Zaire and Chad, sending their aid via 'Israel' as evidence of Israeli good intentions.

As a result, it is increasingly important to move quickly to confront the Zionist penetration of the African continent. The PLO is called upon to strengthen relations with the progressive and democratic African states and forces. On the other hand, it must strive for the increasing isolation of Zionism, by increasing the armed struggle against its state, 'Israel', and on the international level, by defending the UN resolution 3379 which branded Zionism as a form of racism, and con-