

tral African Republic, Nigeria and South Africa. The next month, while in Washington negotiating the original US-Zionist strategic alliance agreement, Sharon conferred with Zaire's Mobutu, who then announced that he would resume diplomatic relations with 'Israel' and anticipated that others would follow suit. The following fall, then Foreign Minister Shamir had secret meetings in New York with African officials, and the following summer in Geneva. Back in 'Israel', Shamir could boast, "Hardly a week goes by when there isn't someone here from Africa" (*Jerusalem Post*, August 7, 1983). So far, only Liberia has officially followed Zaire's example, but this beginning has cemented the Tel Aviv-Pretoria-Zaire-US alliance, pivotal for imperialism's plans in the region.

#### *Victims of the South African raid on Matola, 1983*



#### Zionism's place in neocolonialism

Aside from their own efforts, there are three factors that have facilitated the Zionists' comeback in Africa: (1) the nature of the neocolonial African regimes, (2) Arab reaction's politics, and (3) US imperialism's global offensive.

While there is sympathy for the Palestinian and Arab cause among the African people, the neocolonial regimes are most concerned with maintaining their own positions of power. Generally speaking, these regimes lack a viable program for confronting the socioeconomic problems inherited from colonial rule, much less the discriminatory workings of the imperialist-dominated world market. They are thus highly dependent on foreign aid. It is these conditions which 'Israel' exploited when originally infiltrating Africa in the fifties and sixties. In this period, the Zionist state provided expertise in agriculture, education, construction and services. Posing as a fellow developing country with humanitarian aims, 'Israel' sent 2,763 experts to Africa between 1958 and 1971, and trained almost 7,000 Africans in occupied Palestine (*Near East Report*, January 21, 1983). The bulk of funding for these

projects came from the US; 'Israel' served as the conduit, getting imperialism's foot in the door of countries that were sceptical of dealing with the big powers. The US's specific interest in this 'third country' approach was countering the influence of Nasser and the tendency of newly independent countries to turn to the socialist community for aid.

In the early seventies, with the rising power of OPEC and in the context of 'third world' countries seeking more equitable terms within the imperialist system, neocolonial African regimes found it opportune to align with official Arab positions. This trend reached a climax when most African states broke diplomatic relations with 'Israel'.

#### Covert Zionist presence

Figures reveal the limits of the political positions taken by such states at the UN and elsewhere. In the decade after 1973, Israeli-African trade tripled. The details of this figure show which side was benefitting: 'Israel' exported over three times what it imported from Africa. As of 1983, 'Israel' had economic ties with twenty African nations in the absence of diplomatic relations. More Israelis (at least 4,000) now work in Africa than in 1973, with Israeli economic presence concentrated in Kenya, Ivory Coast and Nigeria; more than 400 Israeli firms operate in Lagos through various 'fronts'. Israeli involvement in these countries includes major infrastructure projects. In the absence of diplomatic ties, 'Israel' has maintained interests sections in other embassies in Zaire, Kenya, Togo, Gabon and Ivory Coast.

From the start, the Histadrut, the Zionist colonial enterprise which poses as a trade union, played a central role in Israeli involvement. Such a cover for spreading Zionist influence among African workers and youth was especially convenient in the period of no official ties. Today, Histadrut prides itself on not having relations with the white South African trade

