

## Middle East Report by Robert Dreyfuss

### Sharon's cold war in Africa

*Why the potential has increased for the continent to become a vast and bloody replica of Central America.*

Israeli Defense Minister Ariel Sharon, in a secretive visit to a number of African countries, has set the stage for a sharp escalation of U.S.-Soviet tensions throughout Africa.

The November tour of Africa by the flamboyant Israeli general immediately preceded his arrival in Washington on Nov. 30 to sign the so-called Memorandum of Understanding on U.S.-Israeli strategic cooperation. In the Knesset debate that followed that accord, Sharon proclaimed that the memorandum "will strengthen Israeli ties with African and Asian nations who fear the Soviets" and that it will lead to "a range of possibilities for geopolitical cooperation."

Among the nations visited by Sharon—who reportedly sojourned at seven African states—South Africa was the most prominent. According to Drew Middleton of the *New York Times*, Sharon spent 10 days in South Africa and South African-occupied Namibia, where talks concentrated on military cooperation and arms sales.

But, contrary to the widely held impression that Sharon's trip through Africa was organized by the Reagan administration out of some desire to use Israel in the defense of Africa, Sharon's actual partners on the continent are the former African colonial powers of Britain and France. In particular, French Socialist François Mitterrand's regime has made great ef-

forts to reconstitute the Tripartite Alliance of 1956 that organized the Anglo-French-Israeli invasion of Egypt in the Suez War (see Report from Paris).

Then, as now, the Tripartite Alliance was aimed directly against American policy and interests.

Although this policy in Africa is supported by certain elements of the Reagan administration, notably Alexander Haig, it by no means has won the backing of the White House. Should Sharon's Africa policy succeed in dragging Washington behind it, the same left-right polarization that has wracked Central America in grinding civil wars and East-West tensions will become entrenched in Africa.

In Central America, it is well known that the forces linked to the Socialist International and to the Society of Jesus have been able to stage-manage a growing set of bloody insurgencies while still maintaining controlling influence over both the "left" and "right."

Now—using Israel as their spearhead—the old European colonial powers, including Belgian mineral interests, British and French raw material-extraction concerns, and British Petroleum and Royal Dutch Shell oil companies, are trying to do the same in Africa.

Sharon, who arrived in Washington at the same time as Zaire's President Mobutu and Jonas Savimbi of the UNITA gang from An-

gola, has joined the chorus of British intelligence specialists demanding that Reagan support a civil war in Angola backed by the South African-sponsored UNITA.

Mobutu, whose poor nation is desperately short of funds, is being blackmailed by French and Belgian interests to support the suicidal scheme. During his stay in Washington, Mobutu hinted that he would soon reopen relations with Israel, and, according to Israel's daily *Davar*, was recently to have held a secret rendezvous with Sharon in London.

But the real nature of the Franco-Israeli game is revealed by the simple fact that Sharon and Mitterrand are simultaneously courting both South Africa-UNITA and Algeria and Libya!

Sharon's intent to transform South Africa into a military bastion whose influence radiates as far north as Zaire is no secret. Nor is the fact that together the French and Israelis are the chief arms suppliers to Pretoria.

But Mitterrand's recent trip to Algeria, during which he proclaimed himself Africa's greatest liberator, was also coupled with a series of French statements pledging closer ties to Qaddafi's Libya! And Israel, in its effort to upset the Saudi peace plan, is actively engaged in a secret game to strengthen Libyan and radical Arab influence in Arab councils.

Thus, in Africa, Sharon and Mitterrand will have the best wishes of the Soviet KGB. By enlisting Washington's support for futile crusades in Africa, Cuba's unhappy presence there will be reinforced, and the United States will find itself without friends or influence south of the Mediterranean.