

- (c) The eradication of illiteracy in all NBC offices by 1976. The Council argued that the liberation of man is not complete until the liberation of the mind is complete. An illiterate man is a prisoner of ignorance and cannot truly be said to be free. The Council resolved, therefore, that all Branches must draw up concrete action programmes to fight and to completely overcome this problem, a legacy of our neglected past, by 1976 at the latest.
- (d) The education of all Bank staff in the goals of the liberation struggles of Africa and the dangers to which Tanzania is exposed being in the midst of these struggles. The Council resolved that the Bank has an obligation to see that staff have access to the necessary literature on African liberation and that they fully understand it. The Head Office of the Bank has therefore been charged with the task of circulating such literature. The Council also resolved that all staff should be called upon to make generous financial and material contributions to the liberation struggle, and to launch their campaign, the Council itself made a contribution of Shs. 1,300/-.

We have, therefore, a genuinely effective Workers' Council and one which has an enlightened view of the responsibilities of the Bank. With its help and encouragement, NBC is slowly becoming a more democratic institution where the voice of the worker is heard and is regarded as important. There is still a long way to go before the autocratic leadership styles and the hierarchical management structure that was built up before nationalization are completely eradicated, but a commendable start has been made.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In conclusion, the role of NBC in helping the socialist construction of Tanzania is not rigidly laid down in any document. As a dynamic institution, the Bank will have to adjust to changing circumstances. In the same way it will be, as it always has been, responsive to public debate and suggestions on how best it might improve its contribution. I hope that this paper will provoke a lively debate out of which constructive criticism and positive ideals for improvement will be forthcoming. There is no detailed blueprint of how NBC should develop and, therefore, any ideas on how we might better our performance in the service of the people and the nation are welcome.

Israel and Nigeria: Continuity and Change in their Relationship

OLAJIDE ALUKO*

When Nigeria broke diplomatic relations with Israel on 25 October 1973 a new dimension to the relationship between the two countries was introduced. Although some people had speculated that Nigeria would take this step as far back as late 1972¹ when five African countries, Uganda, Chad, Congo (Brazzaville), Niger, and Mali broke diplomatic relations with Tel Aviv in quick succession, the Federal Military Government did not give it any serious thought until the second half of last October, although since the late sixties, Nigeria had at times taken an anti-Israeli stance especially in international conferences. In fact, on 9 October 1973, three days after the outbreak of hostilities in the Middle East, General Yakubu Gowon not only declined to talk about the possibility of breaking off relations with Israel, but also blamed both sides for not scrupulously observing the Security Council Resolution 242 of 22 November, 1967.² Within a fortnight of this, however, Nigeria reversed her position, condemned Israel as an aggressor, and broke diplomatic ties with her. But in taking this position, as does happen frequently in foreign policy decision-making, the Federal Military Government was largely forced by circumstances outside its control. First, as the current chairman of the OAU, General Gowon could not remain neutral when the tide was rapidly moving against the Israelis in Africa (sixteen African States had broken off diplomatic relations with Tel Aviv), and when it was crucial to stand by the OAU successive resolutions on the Middle East since June 1971, which had virtually committed the African countries to the side of the Arabs. Second, with Kenya and Ethiopia breaking with Israel, Nigeria's position became untenable. Third, there was the report that South Africa sent arms, military aircraft, and money to aid the Israelis against the Arabs. Thus, Lagos had no choice but to bow to these forces not only by breaking off diplomatic relations with Tel Aviv, but also by adopting some pro-Arab policies.

These recent developments may be seen as further evidence of the change that has been evolving in the pattern of relationships between Lagos and Tel Aviv since Nigeria's independence in 1960. Yet some elements of continuity in their relationships remain. For instance, the Israeli firms continue to operate in Nigeria, while their technical experts have continued to work in the country. It is these elements of change and continuity that will be the theme of this article, and an attempt will be made to offer some explanation for them. There

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¹ See *Africa Confidential*, 13, No. 25 (22 December 1972).

² *Daily Times* (Lagos), 10 October 1973.

follows a brief historical background to the Nigeria/Israeli bilateral relationships.

BACKGROUND TO RELATIONS

The relationship between Nigeria and Israel dates back to pre-independence days. It effectively began with the visit to Israel in 1958 of a Western Nigerian Government delegation led by Chief Akin Deko, then Minister of Agriculture and Natural Resources. This visit directly led to the establishment in 1959 of joint commercial ventures such as the Nigersol Construction Company Limited, and the Nigerian Water Resource Development Company Limited between Israel and the then Western Nigerian Government.³ Similar joint ventures such as the Eastern Nigeria Construction and Furniture Company Limited and the Eastern Nigeria Water Planning and Construction Company Limited were also set up about the same time between the Israelis and the Eastern Nigerian Government.⁴

On independence in October 1960, all these relationships were formalized by the recognition of the State of Israel by Nigeria; at the same time Israel was allowed to establish an Embassy in Lagos.

CONTINUITY IN RELATIONSHIPS

Notwithstanding the recent break in diplomatic ties with Israel, some features of their relationships dating back to 1960 have persisted. For example, when the Federal Government allowed Israel to open an Embassy in Lagos in October 1960, it did not make any move to establish its own diplomatic mission in Tel Aviv despite the various cooperative activities linking Israel and the Governments and organizations of the former Eastern and Western Regions. Nearly twelve years after independence, in spite of the pressure of some MPs and some voluntary organizations such as the Nigeria-Israel Friendship Association to make the Federal Government open an Embassy in Tel Aviv, and despite the assurance in 1965 of Alhaji Nuhu Bamali, then Minister of State for External Affairs to the House of Representatives, that the Government would soon set up a diplomatic mission in Israel,⁵ there is yet to be a Nigerian Embassy in Tel Aviv. With the break in diplomatic relations, this matter has receded further to the background.

Another element of continuity in the Nigerian-Israeli relationship can be found in the economic field. Nigeria continues to request Israeli technical assistance as in the past. For instance, it was the Israelis who were approached late in 1971 about the possibility of establishing in Nigeria a National Youth Service Organization to provide youths between the ages of 15 and 25 "with

³ *Report of the Coker Commission of Inquiry into the Affairs of Certain Statutory Corporations in Western Nigeria*, Vol. II, 1962 (Lagos: Government Printer, 1962), p. 31.

⁴ For details, see *Ninth Annual Report of the Eastern Nigeria Development Corporation, 1963-64* (Enugu: Government Printer), pp. 31-32.

⁵ *House of Representatives Debate*, 26 April 1965, Col. 1485.

appropriate training in various skills in real working conditions", and to inculcate "in them a healthy attitude towards manual labour" as provided for in the current Four Year Development Plan.⁶ By April 1972, the feasibility study of the project had been completed and presented to the Federal Military Government by the Israeli Ambassador in Lagos.⁷ Earlier in the year, about twenty Nigerians including two technical officers of the Federal Ministry of Mines and Power⁸ went to Israel for further training. With this it was estimated that about one thousand Nigerians had been trained in Israel since 1960, while over 300 Israeli experts had been sent to Nigeria under the Israeli technical assistance programme⁹ since independence.

Joint commercial ventures between the various Nigerian Governments and Israel have continued as in the past. Although the Nigersol Construction Company Limited in which the Israelis held 40 per cent of the shares and the Western State Government the remaining 60 per cent, went into voluntary liquidation late in 1971, the Nigerian Water Resource Development Company Limited which was a partnership between the Israelis and the Western State Government, has continued to expand its activities.¹⁰ While the Israelis had to withdraw from partnership with the former Eastern Nigerian Water Planning and Construction Company Limited, and the Eastern Nigeria Construction and Furniture Company Limited in mid-1967 as a result of the civil war, attempts are being made to set up similar commercial ventures between the Israelis and some state Governments in the former Eastern Nigeria.¹¹ Whether this will be affected by the break in their diplomatic relations is difficult to say.

Apart from all this, the Israelis have, since the mid-sixties, been running their own commercial companies in Nigeria without going into partnership with any Nigerian interests. The most notable of these is the Solel Boneh Construction firm which originally went into partnership with the former Western Nigerian Government to form the Nigersol Construction Company Limited in 1959. The Solel Boneh Company had by early 1970 constructed many important roads such as the first-class highway between Ijebu-Ode and Idi-Ajunque, a distance of some 30 miles, and Ondo to Ife, a distance of about 42 miles, the two best roads in the country. Since the end of the civil war, the company has won many contracts for road building and road rehabilitation from the Federal Government. These include the Ode-Remo in the Western State to Mokwa in the Kwara State, a distance of about 180 miles, and also the Abeokuta to Ibadan road, a distance of about 48 miles. The Solel Boneh had by 1970 put up important public buildings such as the Lagos City Council Hall, and many halls of residence and faculty buildings in the Universities of Lagos

⁶ For further details, see the *Second National Development Plan 1970/74* (Lagos: Government Printer), pp. 260-1.

⁷ *West Africa*, 28 April 1972.

⁸ *Nigeria: Bulletin on Foreign Affairs*, I, No. 3, p. 23.

⁹ Information from the Israeli Embassy in Lagos and the "Minutes of the Re-Union Meeting of the Nigerian Former Students in Israeli Institutions held at the Israeli Ambassador's Residence, Ikoyi, Lagos," 20 February 1971 (mimeographed).

¹⁰ For details, see Nigeria Water Resources Development Limited, *Annual Report, 1970/71*.

¹¹ Information from the Israeli Embassy, Lagos.

and Ife. At present they are constructing several public buildings in the University of Ife and in other parts of the Federation. There are other Israeli owned firms which have been operating in the country since the early sixties and whose activities have continued to expand. These include the Utigas Company Limited that supplies thousands of homes with gas for domestic use, and the Coastal Shipping and Agencies Limited which has been operating in Nigeria since 1964. Another Israeli firm which has continued to operate in Nigeria since independence is Dizengoff (Nigeria) Limited. This company which deals in retail and wholesale trade, imports Israeli products including pharmaceuticals, building materials and electrical appliances for sale in the country.

Similarly, trade between the two countries has continued though it showed some decline from 1966 to 1970 as shown in Table 1 below. The trade figure for 1971 showed a little improvement though the value of exports to Israel during the year amounted to only £2,510,¹² and her imports from Israel during the same year rose to £2,135,739.¹³

Table 1—NIGERIA TRADE WITH ISRAEL AND EGYPT

Year	Value of Exports (in £N)		Value in Imports (in £N)	
	Israel	Egypt	Israel	Egypt
1966	54,913	29,545	1,202,449	109,008
1968	33,188	187,060	896,096	971,348
1970	25,995	1,487,923	229,122	15,971,500

Source: *Nigeria Trade Summary*, December, 1966, 1968, 1970.

CHANGES IN RELATIONSHIPS

Nigerian-Israeli relationships have undergone changes on three main issues since the latter part of the sixties. First, restrictions were lifted on the movement of the Israelis in some parts of the country; second, Israeli aid was accepted throughout the country; and third is the Nigerian Government's attitude to Israel over the Middle East conflict which recently led to the severing of diplomatic ties with Tel Aviv. We will consider each of these briefly.

Between 19 and 24 February 1972, the former Israeli Ambassador in Nigeria, Mr. Yissakhar Ben-Yaacov, paid an official visit to the North-Eastern and North-Western States. He became the first Israeli diplomat to visit the towns of Maiduguri and Sokoto.¹⁴ Under the Sardauna regime in the former

¹² *Nigeria Trade Summary*, December 1971 (Lagos: Government Printer), p. 9. The value of Nigeria's exports to Egypt in 1971 was £169,420 while that of her imports from Egypt during the same year was £2,111,198. See *Nigeria Trade Summary*, December 1971, p. 6.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Much of this is taken from the interview of the author with His Excellency Mr. Yissakhar Ben-Yaacov, the former Israeli Ambassador in Nigeria.

Northern Region, the Israelis were not allowed to visit any town outside Kaduna, Kano and Jos. Maiduguri and Sokoto in particular were forbidden places to the Israelis for fear of desecrating such holy places. Indeed, the late Sir Ahmadu Bello, while on a tour of the Middle East in Amman late in 1964, said that there was "no Israeli infiltration in Northern Nigeria".¹⁵ But not only did Mr. Ben-Yaacov meet all the top Government leaders in both States, he also met at Sokoto, the Sultan of Sokoto,¹⁶ the religious head of the Northern Emirates, and Alhaji Abubakar, the cousin of the late Sir Ahmadu Bello who shortly before his death said "Israel does not exist".¹⁷ This visit which top Israeli Embassy officials regarded as a great achievement, effectively marked the end of the restrictions on the movement of the Israelis throughout Nigeria and opened up new opportunities for their activities in the country.

The second change which has occurred and which is connected with the first one is the universal acceptance of Israeli aid throughout Nigeria. Under the Balewa Government, Israeli aid was confined to the Federal Government, and the then three Regional Governments in the south. For instance, it was these four Governments that shared the Israeli loan of £5,299 million¹⁸ granted to Nigeria between 1960 and 1963. In actual fact when the first Israeli loan agreement of £3 million was signed shortly after independence in 1960, the then Northern Nigerian Government denounced it and dissociated itself from it, declaring that it would not accept any part of it.¹⁹ Similarly, until very recently, Israeli technical assistance was confined to the south. But beginning effectively with the visit of the former Israeli Ambassador, Mr. Ben-Yaacov, to the Kwara State in November 1970, during which the Military Governor of the State, Colonel David Bamgboye asked for Israeli technical assistance,²⁰ the situation has changed. Since then almost all the Northern States have made use of Israeli technical assistance. Much of this has taken the form of sending some Nigerian personnel for short-term training in Israel. For instance, in 1971, the North-Central, Benue-Plateau, Kwara, and the North-Eastern States sent teachers to attend courses in kindergarten teaching while other people were sent for courses in community development and agricultural engineering.²¹ Although the amount of technical assistance cooperation between Israel and the newly created Northern States is still rather small,²² what is important is that a decisive break has been made with the past when the Israeli technical assistance was shut off from North of the Niger River.

The third major change that has occurred in the Nigerian-Israeli relationship is the attitude of the Federal Government to Israel over the Middle East conflict. Here the change has been adverse to the Israelis. Up until the coup

¹⁵ *Africa Diary*, 5-11 September 1964, p. 1932.

¹⁶ Interview.

¹⁷ *Africa Diary*, 18-24 September 1965, p. 2518.

¹⁸ For further details, see *Second National Development Plan 1970/74, First Progress Report* (Lagos: Government Printer, 1972), p. 110.

¹⁹ C. Phillips, *The Development of Nigerian Foreign Policy* (Northwestern University Press, 1964), p. 82.

²⁰ *Daily Times* (Lagos), 2 November 1970.

²¹ Interview.

²² For further details, see *Nigeria Bulletin on Foreign Affairs* (Lagos: Nigerian Institute of International Affairs), I, No. 3 (January 1972), p. 23.

d'état of January 1966, the Federal Government, in spite of Sir Ahmadu Bello's rigid hostility to the Israelis, remained uncommitted to either the Arabs or the Israelis. It maintained friendly relationships with all the Governments in the Middle East. In October 1964, in a note to each of the seven Arab Ambassadors protesting the behaviour of their wives who had staged a demonstration against the visit of Mrs. Golda Meir, then Israeli Foreign Minister, to Nigeria, the Federal Government said "Nigeria remains neutral in the dispute between the Arab countries and the state of Israel".²³ For nearly 18 months after the overthrow of the Balewa Government, the Nigerian Government tried to steer a middle course between the Israelis and the Arabs. Speaking at the United Nations Security Council on 13 November 1966 on the Israeli raid on Jordan, Chief S.O. Adebó, Nigerian Permanent Representative at the UN, said that his delegation would condemn Israel for the action just as it had earlier, on 20 October 1966, bitterly criticized the Arabs for unnecessarily provoking the Israelis.²⁴ He added that this was the role Nigeria would play because she was not committed to either side.²⁵ At the special emergency meeting of the UN General Assembly late in June 1967 to discuss the consequences of the June 1967 War, Chief Anthony Enahoro, Federal Commissioner for Labour and Information and leader of the Nigerian delegation, expressed the same view as Chief Adebó. Not only that, he went further to say that since Nigeria was friendly with both Israel and Egypt his delegation could more easily and more meaningfully mediate between the two major antagonists.²⁶ To this end, Chief Enahoro planned to travel to Cairo on his return journey from Washington and from there to Tel Aviv for three days before returning to Lagos.²⁷

But this attitude has now changed. Although Nigeria officially remained friendly with all the antagonists in the Middle East conflict up until 25 October 1973,²⁸ in practice, the Federal Government had tended to be pro-Arab against the Israelis. Thus at the Lusaka Conference of the non-aligned powers in September 1970, Dr. Okoi Arikpo, Federal Commissioner for External Affairs, bitterly criticized the Israelis for their continuing occupation of the Arab territories which he roundly condemned as "intolerable".²⁹ He described as "regrettable" the refusal of Israel to cooperate with Dr. Gunnar Jarring "in the search for peace in that troubled region of the world".³⁰ Later, in October 1970, at the UN General Assembly, Dr. Arikpo delivered a blistering attack on the Israelis for their non-compliance with the UN General Assembly and Security Council resolutions on the Middle East.³¹ He also condemned the

²³ *Africa Diary*, November 28-December 4 1964, p. 2061.

²⁴ *Morning Post* (Lagos), 2 December 1966.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *New Nigerian* (Kaduna), 22 June 1967.

²⁷ For reasons difficult to ascertain this proposed visit to Cairo and Tel Aviv did not take place.

²⁸ *Morning Post*, 10 October 1969.

²⁹ *Statement by His Excellency Dr. Okoi Arikpo, Commissioner for External Affairs, to the Third Summit Conference of Non-aligned States, Lusaka, 8-10 September 1970* (Lagos: Ministry of External Affairs).

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Statement by His Excellency Dr. Okoi Arikpo, Commissioner for External Affairs, to the 25th Session of the U.N. General Assembly on 16 October 1970.*

continuing occupation of the Arab territories by Israel as "unjustified". With the Israeli rejection of key recommendations³² of the OAU Committee of Ten to the Middle East by early December 1971, the Federal Government became increasingly critical of the Israelis. In line with this attitude Nigeria has, since late 1968, continued to vote for pro-Arab resolutions in various international conferences. For example, she was among the five African States³³ that voted for a pro-Arab resolution at the meeting of the World Health Organization in Geneva early in 1972 condemning the Israeli activities in the Middle East.³⁴ It was partly this increasing anti-Israeli posture and partly other external forces mentioned earlier that led to Nigeria's diplomatic break with Israel.

The pro-Arab stance of the Nigerian Government in political matters is also reflected in trade with Israel. Until early 1968, Nigeria's trade with Israel was greater than that with Egypt. But in 1968, a trade pact was signed with the latter country. With this, trade between Egypt and Nigeria has increased as is clearly shown in Table 1. The recent undertaking between the Federal Government and the Egyptian Government to cooperate in the field of insurance³⁵ will further boost trade between the two countries while that with Israel may not show any appreciable increase or may decline.

FACTORS FOR CONTINUITY

The factors making for continuity in Nigeria's relations with Israel are many and varied. But the most important ones are the following: the religious diversity and the political balance in the country, the continuing need for Israeli technical assistance, and also for the Israeli services in construction and some commercial activities in Nigeria.

Religious Diversity

There are three major religious groups in Nigeria, the Muslims, the Christians and those belonging to traditional religions. Their size and distribution according to the 1963 census figures are shown in Table 2.

From the table above one can see that about 47.9 per cent of the total population belonged to Islam, while 33 per cent were Christians, and 19 per cent belonged to traditional religions or held no religion. What is perhaps more significant is their distribution. About 71.7 per cent of the northerners were Muslims in 1963, but if confined to the Northern Emirates the percentage would be as high as 97%. In the south the situation is different. Although there are a large number of people belonging to Islam in the West (43.4 per

³² For details, see the *O.A.U. Sub-Committee on the Middle East, Two Visits to Israel, 2-5, 24-25 November 1971* (Lagos: Israeli Embassy); and *Address by His Excellency Mr. Abba Eban, Minister for Foreign Affairs at the U.N. General Assembly on 6 December 1971* (Lagos: Israeli Embassy), pp. 11-14.

³³ The other African States that voted for the resolution were Congo (Brazzaville), Mali, Upper Volta, and Guinea.

³⁴ *The Jerusalem Post*, 4 July 1972.

³⁵ *West Africa*, 24 September 1971.

Table 2—SIZE AND DISTRIBUTION OF RELIGIOUS GROUPS IN NIGERIA

Region	Religious Groups		
	Muslims	Christians	Those belonging to traditional religions and others
North	21,386,450	2,881,437	5,540,771
East	29,964	9,573,622	2,790,878
West	4,458,531	4,995,692	811,625
Mid-West	106,857	1,393,009	1,035,973
Lagos Area	294,694	363,384	7,168

Source: 1963 Census Reports.

cent) and in the Lagos area (44.3 per cent in 1963), the majority of the southerners are Christians. Furthermore, the Muslims in the south are different from their northern counterparts in two important ways. Firstly, they mix freely with those belonging to other religions and participate without any inhibition in their religious and ritual activities, whereas the northern Muslims are more puritan. Secondly, the southern Muslims do not claim to have any lineage connections with any other race outside Nigeria, unlike the northern Muslim leaders who believe that they have some connections with the Arab people in North Africa and the Middle East.³⁶ For instance, the late Northern Regional Premier, Sir Ahmadu Bello, traced his lineage to Prophet Mohammed in the Middle East,³⁷ and the late Alhaji Zanna Bukar Dipcharima, a prominent Federal Cabinet Minister before the coup of January 1966, said that he came "from Egypt".³⁸ The result has been a powerful religious group in the north which has always wanted the Federal Government to pursue a pro-Arab policy, while in the south there have been some vocal groups which have always favoured close association with Israel. This has been one reason for the Federal Government's previously mentioned compromise solution. It allowed Israel to establish an Embassy in Lagos and allowed its technical and commercial experts to operate in the southern part of the country as they did before independence. But it did not itself open an Embassy in Tel Aviv. This was a delicate compromise which the Government could not easily destroy; the Federal Military Government went to great lengths to justify its break of diplomatic relations with Israel.³⁹

36 During the constitutional crisis of 1953 when the northern leaders gave serious thought to seceding, they also talked of receiving assistance from "brother Muslims across the Sahara". See Sir Bryan Sharwood Smith, *But Always as Friends* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1969), p. 275.

37 Sir Ahmadu Bello, *My Life* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1962), p. 239.

38 *House of Representatives Debate*, 5 April 1962, Col. 939.

39 For details about the text of the Government statement see the *Daily Times*, 26 October 1973.

Political Balance

The need to preserve some sort of political balance in the country is an important factor making for continuity in Nigerian-Israeli relations. Apart from the different religious groups, the press and some voluntary organizations or pressure groups have sought to influence the Federal Government's attitude to the Israelis. Among the organizations that have tried to influence the Federal Government towards an anti-Israeli stance are the Nigeria-Arab Friendship Association, the Nasser Youth Club and the Nigerian Afro-Asian Solidarity Organization (NAASO) which in November 1970, after criticizing the Israelis, called on the Federal Military Government to name Western Avenue in Lagos after the late Gamel Abdul Nasser. On the other hand, there are some voluntary organizations which are interested in persuading the Federal Government to develop close relationships with the Israelis. The most important of these are the Israel-Nigeria Friendship Association and the Association of Nigerian Ex-Students of Israeli Institutions of Learning (ANESIL). These organizations often include important members of the public; among those who attended the reunion meeting of the Nigerian former students⁴⁰ in Israeli institutions in February 1971 were Chief Mrs. Ayo Manuwa, the wife of the former head of Federal Medical Services, Chief Dr. (Mrs.) E. A. Awoliyi, then head of the Federal Health services, and Mr. F. A. Ukhureigbe, a top official of the Technical Assistance Division of the Federal Ministry of Economic Development and Reconstruction.⁴¹ Exactly how these organizations have tried in their different ways to influence the Government attitude to Israel is not clear. What is clear is that they cannot be entirely ignored by the Government. For instance, the reunion meeting held in the Israeli Ambassador's residence on 20 February 1971 was attended by senior officials of the Ministry of External Affairs and the Federal Ministry of Economic Development and Reconstruction,⁴² and representatives of the radio and the press.⁴³

The Nigerian press is equally divided in its attitude to the Israelis. The powerful *New Nigerian*, jointly owned by the six northern States, has been implacably hostile to the Israelis. For instance, it not only refused to report the visit of the Israeli Ambassador, Mr. Ben-Yaacov, to the north in February 1972, but also carried anti-Israeli articles when the visit was going on.⁴⁴ On the other hand, when the Egyptian Ambassador in Nigeria, Mr. Abu El-Khair, paid an eight-day visit to the north later in April 1972, the *New Nigerian* gave it wide coverage. Furthermore, it was the *New Nigerian* that on 15 October and 22 October 1973 called on the Federal Military Government to sever diplomatic ties with Israel. But most of the southern-based newspapers, with

40 These included those who visited Israel for a seminar of about two weeks.

41 "Minutes of the Re-Union of Nigerian Former Students in Israeli institutions held at the Israeli Ambassador's Residence, Ikoyi, Lagos," 20 February 1971, op. cit.

42 Ibid.

43 Ibid.

44 On the day the Israeli Ambassador was to start his visit to the North-Western State, the newspaper carried a long article entitled "Israel's Intrigues in Africa". See *New Nigerian*, 21 February 1972.

the possible exception of the *Morning Post* group which sometimes carries anti-Israeli articles, favour closer cooperation between Lagos and Tel Aviv. The *Daily Times* with the largest circulation in the country, wants Nigeria to steer a middle course between the Arabs and the Israelis. But sometimes it carries articles that are extremely critical of the Arabs. On 14 February 1972 it carried an article by Mr. Gbolabo Ogunsanwo, the present editor of the *Sunday Times*, severely criticizing what he called President Sadat's "reckless use of words", and his "bellicose attitude" to the Middle East.⁴⁵ The *Daily Sketch*, owned by the Western State Government, and the *Nigerian Tribune*, a non-Government newspaper, often publish articles and news items favourable to the Israelis. On 4 May 1972 the *Daily Sketch* carried a news item captioned "We Must Be Friendly With All Nations".⁴⁶ The *Nigerian Tribune* on 27 June, 1972 severely criticized the unanimous anti-Israeli resolution of the OAU at the Rabat Summit in mid-June 1972. Similarly, both the *Nigerian Tribune* and the *Daily Sketch*⁴⁷ called on the Nigerian Government not to break off diplomatic relations with Israel, and the former described the *New Nigerian* call for a break with Tel Aviv as "reckless".

This split attitude to the Israelis can also be found among the Nigerian military leaders. While the present Western State Military Governor, Brigadier C. O. Rotimi heartily thanked Mr. Ben-Yaacov during his visit to Ibadan in May 1972⁴⁸ for past Israeli aid, and expressed hope for greater future cooperation with Israelis just as his predecessor, Colonel R. A. Adebayo had when he received in Ibadan the Ambassador in December 1966,⁴⁹ some northern Military Governors were, and are still, unsure of their attitude to the Israelis. Although they could not be said to be as rigidly anti-Israeli as the Sardauna, none of them, with the possible exception of the Military Governor of Kwara State, can at present warmly embrace the Israelis without causing social and political unrest in his State. In these circumstances, the Federal Military Government has to tread warily so as not to upset the delicate political balance in the country.⁵⁰ If the Federal Government were to go too far in one direction either in favour of the Arabs or the Israelis it would face serious criticisms from some important sections of the community. And if this situation arises, and goes too far, it could result in civil strife. To avoid this, the Federal Government has tended to keep as close as possible to a position of

45 *Daily Times*, 14 February 1972. It is interesting to note that this article drew anger from some readers from Kaduna as can be seen from letters to the editor in the *New Nigerian*, 23 February and 26 February 1972.

46 The news item was the reported statement of Chief Akin Deko at a symposium organized in Ibadan by the Nigeria-Israel Friendship Association in which he said the Federal Government should maintain cordial relations with all nations in the Middle East in order to foster world peace and understanding. For details, see the *Daily Sketch* (Ibadan), 4 May 1972.

47 See the *Nigerian Tribune* (Ibadan) 15 and 16 October 1973, and the *Daily Sketch*, 16 October 1973.

48 See "West Governor Hails Israel," *Daily Sketch*, 19 May 1972.

49 *New Nigerian*, 8 December 1966.

50 Since independence it has been the Federal Government's policy to avoid a foreign policy stance that might cause social and political strife at home. See Frederick Schwarz, *Nigeria, The Tribes, The Nation or The Race* (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1965), p. 233.

neutrality⁵¹ between the Middle East adversaries although it can safely take an anti-Israeli stand in international conferences as it has been doing for some time, mainly on the grounds that territorial acquisition by force is unacceptable to the majority in Nigeria. All this would account for the Federal Government's moderate attitude to the Israelis until 25 October 1973, and when relations were broken off with Tel Aviv it was carried out in such a way as not to cause any disaffection in the country. In the circumstances in which the Government broke with Israel, it was very difficult, even for very pro-Israeli elements in Nigeria not to accept the decision as inevitable.⁵²

Need for Israeli Aid

Although Nigeria does not now look to Israel for financial aid, partly because Israel has very little money to spare, its leaders believe that the country can derive much benefit from the Israeli technical assistance programme. In a statement to the symposium organized by the Nigeria-Israel Friendship Association on 2 May 1972, Chief Akin Deko, who after serving as the Minister of Agriculture in the former Western Region became the FAO representative in Accra and was later a member of the Western State Executive Council, called *inter alia* for greater cooperation between the two countries especially in the fields of technology, engineering, medicine and agriculture⁵³ which are all vital to Nigeria. We have already referred to Brigadier Rotimi's request for more technical assistance from the Israelis. Many of the top Nigerian Government officials believe that Israeli technical assistance can be valuable to Nigeria especially in places where the experiences of the two countries are similar. It was the success of the Israelis in solving the problem of unemployment through such para-military youth organizations as the *Nahal* and the *Gadna* that made the Federal Government seek the assistance of the Israelis in setting up a national youth organization. This need for Israeli technical aid is an important continuing factor in maintaining and strengthening the technical cooperative activities between the two countries.

In the fields of construction and development of water resources, the Israelis have proved themselves to be extremely efficient. As indicated earlier, the best roads in Nigeria, the Ondo-Ife road and the Ijebu-Ode-Idi Ayunre road which were both financed with loans from the World Bank, were built by the Solel Boneh of Haifa. At present, this firm holds perhaps the largest number of road construction and road rehabilitation contracts awarded by the various Nigerian Governments. In the development of water resources the Israelis have secured for themselves a good reputation for efficiency, speed and thoroughness. The Nigerian Water Resources Development Limited⁵⁴ which

51 Perhaps this was the reason why General Gowon did not refer to the Middle East question in his closing address to the OAU Summit Meeting in June 1972 at Rabat. For the text of his address, see *Federal Government Press Release No. 738*, 16 June 1972.

52 See *Daily Times*, 27 October 1973.

53 *Daily Sketch*, 5 May 1972.

54 As pointed out earlier, this company was a joint venture between the Israeli Water Resources Development Corporation with a capital investment of £100,000, the former holding 40 per cent of the shares and the latter 60 per cent.

has been largely managed by the Israelis since 1959, has supplied water to most of the Western, and Mid-Western States, and to Lagos.⁵⁵ By the end of 1971, the company had executed various water projects to a value of about £70 million. Likewise, the Eastern Nigeria Water Planning and Construction Company Limited,⁵⁶ through boreholes and other methods, supplied water to a large part of the former Eastern Nigeria before the outbreak of the civil war in July 1967. Although the Israeli partnership with the former Eastern Nigerian Government on water resources has been terminated partly as a result of the civil war, and partly because of the split of the former Eastern Region into three states in May 1967, the Israelis have, through the Nigerian Water Resources Development Limited, started to make plans to meet the demand for boreholes in the three Eastern States, and also in some parts of the Northern States.⁵⁷ Because of their superior technical know-how in the field of borehole drilling, the Israelis may well expand their activities in this sector in Nigeria.

FACTORS FOR CHANGE

There are a number of reasons for the changes that have occurred in the relationship between Nigeria and Israel. The most important ones are the coup d'état of January 1966 and the subsequent split of the country into twelve States in May 1967, the civil war in Nigeria from July 1967 to January 1970, and the continuing stalemate in the Middle East.

The Coup and the Split of the Country into Twelve States

The January 1966 coup ended political parties and removed from office such leaders as the late Sir Ahmadu Bello and the Sardauna of Sokoto who were intensely anti-Israeli. Until the coup the Sardauna was not only the northern regional Premier but was also the President of the Northern Peoples' Congress (NPC), the then senior partner in the federal coalition. By virtue of this, and by virtue of his direct descent from Uthman dan Fodio, the founder of the Fulani Empire in the nineteenth century, he was, from independence in 1960 until his death on 14 January 1966, the "most powerful politician" in Nigeria as Walter Schwarz has rightly stated.⁵⁸ Indeed it was said that the late Prime Minister Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa was unable to take any major decision without the approval of the Sardauna.⁵⁹ Sir Ahmadu Bello was, until his death, the vice-president of the World Muslim Congress and a devout and austere Muslim leader. In spite of the heterogeneous nature of the former

55 For details, see *Nigerian Water Resources Development Ltd., Annual Report 1970/71*, op. cit.

56 This company was also a joint venture between the Israelis and the former Eastern Nigerian Government.

57 *Nigerian Water Resources Development Ltd., Annual Report 1970/71*, op. cit.

58 Walter Schwarz, *Nigeria* (London: Pall Mall, 1968), p. 103.

59 A former NPC Cabinet Minister at the federal level said that all appointments to important posts in the federal civil service were made after consultation with the Sardauna whose approval was essential.

Northern Nigeria, the Sardauna ruled a monolithic entity in which his authority was never effectively challenged. He used his political and religious position to exclude the Israelis completely from the former Northern Nigeria which he ran as his private preserve.

But the January 1966 coup in which the Sardauna was killed had put an end to this situation. Since then, no one of his stature has emerged in the north. The military, and the civilian leaders who have emerged in the north since the coup are less hostile to the Israelis. None of them could effectively challenge General Gowon. Not only that, with the division of the former Northern Region into six States in May 1967, an end was put to the monolithic nature of the north. Each of the States is free to adopt any attitude it likes to any foreign power as long as it is not in direct conflict with that of the Federal Military Government.⁶⁰ It was the combination of all these factors that made it possible for Mr. Ben-Yaacov to visit, early in 1972, Sokoto, Maiduguri and other places in the north forbidden to the Israelis under the Sardauna regime; it also made possible the acceptance of Israeli technical assistance in the north.

The Nigerian Civil War

The involvement of the Israelis on the side of the secessionist regime during the civil war from July 1967 to January 1970 whipped up a strong anti-Israeli attitude in Nigeria, while the Egyptians' massive material, military and moral help to the Federal Military Government substantially contributed to the pro-Arab stance of Nigeria over the Middle East conflict. Although the extent of the Israeli support for the Biafrans is difficult to establish precisely, it is nonetheless clear that the Israelis gave moral encouragement and material assistance to the secessionist regime. As far back as December 1966 when the constitutional crisis between Lagos and Enugu had almost deteriorated to a point of armed conflict, the *New Nigerian* came out with the news that Israeli military experts were training the soldiers of the Ojukwu regime, quoting the report of Mr. Llewellyn Chanter, Commonwealth affairs correspondent of the *London Daily Telegraph*.⁶¹ Although the Israeli Embassy in Lagos quickly denied this report,⁶² it was widely believed in Nigeria that the Israelis stepped up their military aid to the secessionists after the outbreak of hostilities in the country in July 1967. Thus, while receiving the credentials of the new Israeli Ambassador to Nigeria in October 1969, General Gowon expressed the hope that the Ambassador would give an "accurate interpretation" of the situation in the country in order to improve understanding between the two countries.⁶³ Although the Ambassador, Mr. Ben-Yaacov, told General Gowon that his country supported the Federal cause,⁶⁴ this was not taken seriously in view of

60 The author has analysed how the split of the country into twelve states in May 1967 has weakened the state Governments vis-à-vis the Federal Government in "Federal-State Relationship," *Quarterly Journal of Administration* (University of Ife), July 1969.

61 *New Nigerian*, 20 December 1966.

62 *New Nigerian*, 23 December 1966.

63 *Daily Times*, 10 October 1969.

64 *Ibid.*

the reports and rumours of continued Israeli aid to the Biafrans.⁶⁵ If there was any doubt anywhere in the country about the Israeli support for the secessionists, this was dispelled by the mournful statement of Mr. Abba Eban, the Israeli Foreign Minister, on 19 January 1970 in which he lamented the collapse of the Biafran rebellion. He said *inter alia* that "... Israel had exerted itself to such an extent in providing aid to the former secessionist regime that if another dozen or twenty countries had done so the result of the war would have been different".⁶⁶ This statement dealt a severe blow to the standing of Israel in Nigeria. Almost all the Nigerian newspapers called for throwing all the Israelis out of Nigeria and the closure of the Israeli Embassy in Lagos. The Israeli Ambassador was summoned to the Ministry of External Affairs to be presented with a protest at the Eban statement.⁶⁷ Many newspapers thought this was insufficient, and the powerful *New Nigerian* regarded the Federal Government's reaction to it as nothing but "a show of naivety".⁶⁸

Whatever might have been the level of the Israeli aid to the Biafran regime, it was never as high as that of the French which had more than anything else prevented the collapse of the rebellion and contributed substantially to the prolongation of the war.⁶⁹ Yet by now the French iniquities during the civil war have almost been forgotten and forgiven in Lagos. Since the end of the war there has been a steady expansion of commercial and cultural activities between Lagos and Paris. In fact, so relaxed has Nigeria's attitude to France become, that the Federal Military Government has started to buy military hardware from France.⁷⁰ But the Israelis seemed not to have been so forgiven. Anti-Israeli feelings are still strong within Government circles. The main reason for this has been the continuing deadlock in the Middle East which Government leaders attributed to the Israeli obstinacy.

The Middle East Deadlock

Although Nigeria has since late 1968 been taking a pro-Arab stand on the Middle East, she has nonetheless tried to help bring about a satisfactory and peaceful solution to the conflict. The reasons for Nigeria's interest in any early peace settlement in the Middle East are not hard to find. The first is that Egypt is a member of the OAU and as such Nigeria should assist her.⁷¹ The second is that the continuing conflict in the Middle East has been diverting Egyptian attention and material resources from the task of liberating areas still under colonial and racist regimes in Africa. Because of this, the question of Arab

65 Mr. Rolf Steiner, the German mercenary who once fought for the Biafrans and who was later captured and tried for subversion in the Sudan in 1971, told the court trying him that the Israelis supplied the Biafrans with large quantities of arms and ammunition, medical supplies and food. See *Morning Post*, 25 August 1971.
66 For the full text of Abba Eban's statement see the *Morning Post*, 21 January 1970.
67 *Ibid.*
68 *New Nigerian*, 22 January 1970.

69 See Roy Lewis, "Britain and Biafra," *The Round Table*, July 1970.
70 See *West Africa*, 25 June 1971.

71 This was one of the main reasons given by Chief Anthony Enahoro, the Federal Commissioner for Information and Labour, for Nigeria's interest in an early Middle East peace settlement. See *Daily Times*, 24 June 1967.

pressure on Nigeria was of little relevance.⁷² Apart from actively participating in the meetings of the UN Security Council and General Assembly on the Middle East, the Nigerian delegates have privately met the Israeli delegation during such meetings⁷³ to discuss the acceptance and implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 242 of 22 November 1967⁷⁴ on the conflict. Nigeria supported the Jarring mission to the Middle East. The suspension of peace talks under Dr. Gunnar Jarring late in 1970 was ascribed to the Israeli refusal to compromise and this was severely criticized by Dr. Arikpo.⁷⁵ Israel's negative reply to Dr. Jarring's initiative of 8 February 1971 regarding "a commitment to withdraw her forces from occupied U.A.R. territory" was roundly condemned in Nigeria.⁷⁶

Undaunted by this, Nigeria agreed to serve as one of the OAU ten member State committee on the Middle East set up at the Addis Ababa summit of June 1971. Twice in November 1971 General Gowon, along with the leaders of the three other members of the sub-committee of the OAU "Committee of Ten Wise Men", visited Jerusalem and Cairo in order to attempt to revive the Jarring mission⁷⁷ which had for months been suspended. In spite of the fact that General Gowon and the other African leaders did not succeed in persuading the Israeli Government to give in over such key issues as the fate of Jerusalem and other Arab territories acquired as a result of the June 1967 war and indirect negotiation under UN auspices which the Arabs preferred to the direct face to face negotiation insisted upon by the Israelis, the Nigerian leader still hoped that their proposals to, and discussions with the Israeli and Egyptian leaders might pave the way for the resumption of the Jarring mission, especially if backed by the larger powers. In pursuit of this, General Gowon invited the Lagos Ambassadors of four permanent members of the UN Security Council, the United States, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom and France (China's envoy attended as an observer), to a meeting at his Dodan Barracks on 3 December 1971, shortly before the discussion of the Middle East situation at the UN General Assembly, to brief them on the results of the OAU mission to the Middle East, and to urge them to put pressure on both parties to the conflict so that the Jarring mission might be resumed.⁷⁸

In spite of all this, when the matter was raised at the UN General Assembly, it was clear that the Israelis had not made any significant change

72 Any crude Arab pressure would be resented in Nigeria as it was in July 1971 when Mr. Abiodun Sogunle, the editor of the Federal Government-owned newspaper, castigated the Egyptians for trying to persuade Nigeria to attend the conference of Muslim States. The Federal Government issued a statement deploring this saying Nigeria is a secular State. See *Morning Post*, 17 July 1971.
73 Interview.

74 This resolution, apart from stating the "inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force" requested *inter alia* the "withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied" to "secure and recognised boundaries".
75 Text of the Statement of His Excellency Dr. Okoi Arikpo at the Third Summit of the Non-aligned Powers, September 1970.

76 *New Nigerian*, 2 May 1972.
77 For details about this visit, see the *O.A.U. Sub-Committee on the Middle East. Two Visits to Israel*, 2-5 and 24-25 November 1971.

78 For further details, see the *Federal Government Press Release No. 1164*, 3 December 1971.

from their original stand of seeking direct bilateral negotiations with the Arabs to iron out all the issues involved in the Middle East conflict. The speech of Mr. Abba Eban to the UN General Assembly on 6 December, 1971 was as intransigent as ever.⁷⁹ This uncompromising Israeli attitude caused anger in Lagos. It was after this that Nigeria again became more critical of the Israeli policy in the Middle East. It should be noted that when Dr. Arikpo addressed the General Assembly on 1 October 1971, he did not make any statement condemnatory of the Israelis⁸⁰ largely because the OAU leaders were then preparing to visit the Middle East and there was some hope that there might be a break-through as a result of the visit. The disappointment that followed this series of peace efforts led directly to resentment in Lagos. Thus Nigeria was one of the countries that forced through a unanimous anti-Israel resolution at the OAU Summit in Rabat, Morocco in June 1972.

The recent war between the Arabs and the Israelis has stiffened Nigeria's attitude to the Israelis. During the first ten days of the war, Nigeria had hoped to maintain diplomatic contact with both sides in order to exercise some moderating influence on them. But partly because of the anti-Israeli wave sweeping Africa during the second half of October 1973, and partly because the Israelis had taken advantage of the cease-fire agreement brought about by the Security Council resolution 343 of 22 October 1973 to gain more territories in the West Bank of the Suez Canal, the Federal Government was forced to adopt a tough anti-Israeli attitude by breaking off relations with Tel Aviv and charging the Meir Government with bad faith.⁸¹

In spite of all this, however, there is a limit to which the Federal Military Government can stretch its anti-Israeli policy. Beyond engaging in vituperative attacks against the Israelis in international conferences, and breaking off diplomatic ties with Tel Aviv, the Federal Military Government cannot easily proceed further. Nigeria cannot but do business with the Israelis. For instance, it cannot exclude the Israelis totally from Nigeria without precipitating fairly serious trouble in some parts of the country. At the same time, it cannot readily go ahead to open a diplomatic mission in Israel without antagonizing some significant sections of the population. This is principally because there have been some continuing domestic factors pulling the Federal Government in different directions in its relations with Israel since independence. It is these that have been largely responsible for continuity in Nigeria's attitude to Israel.

CONCLUSION

Judging from the analysis above, it could be said that the state of relationships between Nigeria and Israel may not change radically from what they are now in the immediate future. For the factors that make for continuity in their relationships are powerful ones which are closely linked with social and

political stability in Nigeria. Yet equally profound are the factors making for change in the pattern of their relationships. Although the Israeli support for the secessionists during the civil war still rankles with the Federal Military Government, the disappearance of the Sardauna, and the split of the former Northern Region into six States have opened up wide opportunities for close cooperation between Tel Aviv and Lagos. The Israelis quickly took advantage of these opportunities as shown by the acceptance of Israeli technical assistance by some northern States for the first time in 1971. But the Israelis will not be able to proceed very far unless they modify their present attitude to the Middle East conflict. Indeed, things may go sour for them in Nigeria. For the recent break of diplomatic relations with the Israelis has been a serious set-back for them in Lagos. Into the vacuum created the Arabs will most likely move. And the misfortune of the Israelis will be their lost opportunities. Thus, unless the Israelis adopt a more conciliatory and flexible attitude, and agree to give up most, if not all, of the Arab lands seized as a result of the 1967 and 1973 wars, they will find it hard to retrieve their fortune in Nigeria.

79 For details of this, see the *Text of the Statement of His Excellency Mr. Abba Eban to the U.N. General Assembly on 6 December 1971* (Lagos: Israeli Embassy, 1971).

80 *Statement by His Excellency Dr. Okoi Arikpo to the U.N. General Assembly on 1 October, 1971* (New York: Permanent Mission of Nigeria to the U.N., 1971).

81 *Daily Times*, 26 October 1973.