

Israel's Relations with Emerging African States - In the Light of Some Hungarian State Security Documents from the First Half of the Kádár Era¹

Attila Novák²

Abstract:

Israel developed its relations with African countries relatively early. The initial boom in the 1950s was followed by a slowdown in the 1960s and then, in many respects, a standstill after the 1973 Yom Kippur War. Israel was seen by many African countries as an anti-colonial power, which gradually changed over time. In 1957, the Jewish state recognized the independence of Ghana, and in 1958 it set up a separate organization, the Agency for International Development Cooperation (MASHAV), to assist the newly independent African states. In 1963, it established a new embassy in Nairobi, Kenya.

Based on newly discovered Hungarian state security documents, this paper will give an insight into how Hungary – as a member of the Soviet-led Eastern European socialist bloc – in the early 1960s and 1970s, viewed its relations with Israel and African countries, and the information and political-ideological patterns on which it based its approach. The state security surveillance (through the Hungarian diplomatic missions) later covered not only Israel, but also the American Jewish organizations which, according to the agencies, had been in contact with African states and organizations at the instigation of Israel. Archival sources with a strongly anti-imperialist tone and bearing the imprint of Soviet state security suggest that the treatment of Israel as an enemy occurred in this region before the 1967 break-up, i.e. the diplomatic freeze did not significantly affect the way the Jewish state's relations with the emerging African nations were viewed.

Keywords:

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² Thomas Molnar Institute for Advanced Studies (National University of Public Service), Budapest; Goldziher Ignac Institute of Jewish History and Culture, Budapest; ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8316-0007>; Attila.Novak@uni-nke.hu



Introduction

Hungary and Israel's Africa policy in the 1960s was based on completely different foundations, but they had common features dictated by the emergence of the new African states. The African countries that gained independence around 1960 triggered the interest of the Jewish state and the Eastern bloc, which, for different reasons, wanted to build trade and economic-political relations with the new countries. This also means, of course, that the African region has become a rivalry between different blocs and countries, fighting for influence and sometimes even for the displacement of each other.

So Hungary – within a closed political and economic system – sought to establish good relations with Africa. While the Socialist world preferred the post-colonial states because of their real or perceived anti-Imperialism, Israel's search for alliances because of its isolation made it a partner for the African states. After the Six Day War of 1967, and especially after the Yom Kippur War of 1973, Israel had to reposition itself in Africa, and not only with the so-called Black African countries, but also with the otherwise problematic Republic of South Africa.

In our study, we attempt to reconstruct, with the help of Hungarian state security sources, how the Hungarian state, especially some of its diplomatic and state security actors, viewed Israel's Africa policy, and how Israelis (diplomats and civilians) positioned Africa from Israel's point of view, and what was the framework in which this foreign policy could be inserted. In this regard, I must say that, not being a scholar of Africa, the framework of perspectives was developed through the study of Jewish and Israel-related archival sources in Hungary and Israel. It is also important to note that there is still a lot of research to be done on this subject, a good deal of the relevant material on this topic is still unexplored.

Excursus: Israel's Policy in Africa

In order to better understand the course of events, we need to know the history and the essential features of Israeli policy towards Africa in the period (albeit briefly). The long-awaited opening up of Israeli policy towards Africa was a consequence of the country's reduction of its foreign policy isolation. It had its antecedents, as the leading figures of Zionism were sympathetic to Africans, from Tivadar (Theodor) Herzl to many others, even Vladimir (Ze'ev) Jabotinsky, the founding father of the right-wing Zionism took a stand against the slavery of Americans of African descent, and David Ben Gurion also had great sympathy for Africans and high hopes for the whole region.

According to Israeli historian Zach Levey, Israel's Africa policy was also motivated by certain illusions, believing (on the Israeli side) that the Jewish state could be a kind of proxy for the West against Nasserism, China and the Soviet bloc's encroachment into Africa. On the other hand, at the same time, Israel was shying away from a traditional imperialist role. This policy was successful for a long time, but at the same time, after

the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, one African country broke off relations with the Jewish state, and after the 1973 Yom Kippur war, 22 countries did so.³ The Arab countries – especially Egypt – were also present in the region, had a huge influence on these countries and wanted to convince Africans that Israel was nothing but an imperialist and colonialist state of European white settlers. These influences prevailed, for example, in January 1961 when Ghana, Guinea and Mali called the Jewish State the African pillar of Imperialism. The AAPSO (Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organization), a non-governmental international body, has repeatedly condemned Israel: in April 1960 and at the 4th AAPSO Conference in 1965, Israel was described as a threat to regional and world peace and security. After 1973, oil from the Arab countries reached Africa, and by 1981 it had reached the continent to the tune of USD 1.67 billion. In terms of lending, Israel had its successes: between 1958 and 1966, Israel lent USD 199 million to 10 African countries, but between 1959 and 1967, USD 617 million came from the Soviet Union, while the Eastern Bloc states (outside the Soviet Union) lent USD 277 million. China alone lent more than \$300 million to the Sub-Saharan region.

By contrast, David Ben-Gurion, who was Prime Minister of Israel until June 1963, was convinced that African countries wanted to draw from *halutziyuth*, the ideal and practice of Zionist pioneering, and such conviction, alongside *Realpolitik*, drove his rapprochement, driven by the Israeli political elite.

The first Israeli consulate in Africa was established in Ghana in March 1957. Israel launched aid programs, winning the sympathy of the local elite. Egypt's arrival in Accra, Ghana's capital, only a year later bought Israel time. In 1957 Israel sent Ehud Avriel as its ambassador to Ghana, Liberia and Congo.⁴ Avriel (1917-1980) was no stranger to Hungary, having been Israel's first ambassador to Budapest and Prague. The Israeli diplomat, who had also negotiated with the leading Hungarian Communist politician, Mátyás Rákosi, presented his credentials in the Hungarian capital in February 1949, but after that he was mainly in Prague. He was succeeded in Budapest in July 1950 by Shmuel Elyasiv, and Ehud Avriel continued his long diplomatic career, which found him in Africa in the second half of the 1950s. From February to March 1958, Foreign Minister Golda Meir visited Ghana, the Ivory Coast, Liberia, Nigeria and Senegal.

Interestingly, the successes of Ghana and others are contradicted by the fact that Ghana was a signatory to the 1961 Casablanca Conference, where Israel was condemned. But such withdrawals did not prevent the Jewish state from establishing diplomatic relations with 14-16 African states in 1960-1961. Later, Israel's attention turned to East Africa, especially Ethiopia. In 1964, Israeli soldiers trained Kenyan officers, and in 1966 Israel established military cooperation with 17 African countries. At the same time, the Soviet Union, Poland and Czechoslovakia did not want to be left behind,

³ In March 1972, Ugandan President Idi Amin Dada expelled all Israelis from his country.

⁴ Avriel was Ambassador to Ghana, Liberia and Congo until 1960, after which he became Deputy Director-General of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and then held Ambassador positions in other countries.



supplying arms to Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Nigeria, Somalia and Uganda. In 1967, Israel's successful diplomacy in Africa came to an end: 29 of its 96 diplomatic missions were in Africa.

The big question – and it is regularly raised in Hungarian state security documents – is what and who financed Israel's activities in Africa. Levey points to the fact that Israel could not persuade the West to finance its programs in Africa. The Jewish state was 'peddling' its bastion against the Soviets and China, but the British, for example, saw Israel as a threat to their African interests (especially in Kenya). In 1964, Ehud Avriel proposed ongoing consultations with the British Foreign Office, but this did not materialize. At the same time, there was a strong demand among Israeli policy-makers (also because of the past) that Africans should not be allowed to see Israel as a colonial power, a tool of British diplomacy.

Israeli lobbying was successful once, with the United States giving \$7 million for operations in Africa in 1965, but it was a one-off sum and the Jewish state only received it in 1967. The money was given to the *MASHAV* (International Agency for Development Cooperation), which was set up in 1955 after the Bandung Conference, but which began its real work – concentrating on Africa – in 1958 and can trace its origins back to this time.

State Security and Other Reports from Hungary before 1967

The first reflection of the Hungarian state security on Israel and the African countries, which we know of, comes from a report from May 1960, written by Zoltán Dohány, the secretary at the Hungarian embassy in Tel Aviv, who was also a police captain, and whose pseudonym was István Balogh.⁵ The police officer working at the (so-called) Hungarian Residency in Tel Aviv, i.e. the intelligence department, reported on the meeting of the Socialist International in Haifa, from which Anna Kéthly (1889-1976), a veteran Hungarian Social Democratic politician in exile, had been forced out: (allegedly) the local Hungarian diplomacy managed to get the Israeli side to withdraw its invitation. For the first time in its history, the Socialist International held a congress in a non-European country in Haifa in April 1960, which was a great international success for Israel. In his report, the police officer noted that, “*The sole aim of the congress is to fight Communism and to isolate it, especially in relation to the Asian-African countries.*”⁶ Although the report does not actually deal with Israel's policy on Africa, but with the attitude of the prestigious international socialist world organization towards Africa, the

⁵ Report. 20 May 1960. Historical Archives of the Hungarian State Security (Hereafter ÁBTL). 3.1.5.0-8-089/1.

The identification of “István Balogh” was carried out by the Hungarian historian István Pál (2018).

⁶ Report. 20 May 1960. ÁBTL 3.1.5.0-8-089/1.

intelligence officer's irritation at the fact that this subject is being dealt with in Israel is strongly felt.

On January 7, 1962, Hungarian Foreign Minister János Péter (1910-1999) summoned Meir Sachar, Israel's representative in Budapest.⁷ Sachar, a man of Kibbutz Tel Yosef of Israel, was an interesting figure among the Israeli diplomats serving in Budapest⁸. He was a former left-wing *kibbutz* member, also sympathetic to the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc, who found it difficult to accept the Hungarian socialist foreign policy reality that did not want to approach to Israel. In the discussion on Hungarian-Israeli family reunification and the clarification of the tasks of the Israeli ambassador in Budapest, the ambassador – who meanwhile, was being lectured by the Hungarian minister – demonstrated the 'progressive' nature of Israeli foreign policy, and one example of this was the Israeli position on the condemnation of the South African racism. Naturally, the Hungarian Foreign Minister was not convinced by this line of argument and kept repeating that if one looks at what the Israeli delegation votes on in the UN, one can see that it always takes a stand against 'progressive proposals.' "*And the representation of the Southern African Union and China is now in a position in the UN where even traditional colonial powers cannot maintain their old positions on these issues,*" he said. Although the criticism was more about the different attitude towards the Arab countries and the too close Israeli embassy connection to the Hungarian Jewish community according to the head of the Hungarian diplomacy. It is no coincidence that there was not complete harmony on this issue either, since the two countries represented completely different interests in African countries.

The Hungarian diplomatic mission in Israel, which was constantly monitoring the Hungarian-speaking community in Israel (including mainly the resident intelligence service), came into contact with entrepreneur Alon Moshe sometime in 1962.⁹ Moshe, who had left Hungary in 1935 and moved to what was then Palestine, lived in Israel until 1955, after which he left for Liberia in West Africa, where he worked as a road contractor and owned several hotels. Moshe suggested that as an intermediary (and with his money) he would like to be involved in establishing business relations with Hungary. He claimed to have met Ferenc Münnich (1886-1967), who was the President of the Council of Ministers of the Hungarian People's Republic until September 1961, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Endre Sík (1891-1978) and Dániel Nagy (1910-1983), Vice-President of the Presidential Council, who were visiting Liberia in the second half of 1961. He tried to "do a service" for the Hungarians, and (allegedly) Endre Sík welcomed and supported his visit to Hungary in early September 1961. Moshe repeatedly claimed to his partner that he could arrange many things 'in Africa' and through his Swiss

⁷ Memo of 26 January 1962, Budapest. ÁBTL O-12/233 Shachar Meir.

⁸ Shown here on a visit to a cooperative in Hungary (this is the only photo that survives). Anonymus (n.d.) digitalized a photo about this occasion.

⁹ Alon Moshe is an Israeli citizen. Summary. ÁBTL 3.1.5.0-8-089/1. The case of "Abraham" Hungarian emigration to Israel.



capitalist interests. The entrepreneur must have been inaccurate, because we know of a Hungarian government delegation in Liberia in early 1960 and in December 1962. The first time they visited Guinea and Ghana, the second time they visited the Republic of Guinea, the Republic of Mali, the Republic of Dahomey, the Republic of Ghana, Nigeria, the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria and the Kingdom of Morocco.¹⁰ As a result of the opening up, Hungarian foreign affairs officials also travelled to Congo, Somalia and the Malagasy Republic (early name of Madagascar) in the following months.

In August 1963, in a report signed by police lieutenant colonel Tibor Vadász (BM III/I Group Headquarters), a so-called "social contact" reported in detail on Israel's relations with African neutral countries.¹¹ According to the informant, Israel built up its relations with these countries under duress, forced to do so by threats from Arab countries. It is alleged that, at the suggestion of a senior Israeli foreign affairs official of 'Czechoslovak origin,' the African countries were approached in turn and offered their help for development. Various Israeli delegations and committees travelled to African countries and concluded scholarship contracts and agreements on scientific and technical assistance. An agreement was concluded with Ghana to establish a shipping company. Ghanaian experts in Israel have studied border security, in particular the *kibbutzim* on the borders. "*Like Israel, the border is defended by young people settled in 'cooperatives' on the border, who also serve their military service by working in the 'cooperative'.*"¹² At the same time, the social contact reassured the Hungarian Interior Ministry that Israel's relations' with Africa are more insignificant than the outside world thinks, that the Jewish state only spends 7 million dollars a year on this, and that plans for "penetrating" Abyssinia have been developed in vain, but the necessary 3 million dollars have not been secured for this purpose. As the Hungarian police lieutenant colonel put it: the information has not been verified, but it comes from a reliable source.

Although diplomatic relations existed between the two countries before 1967, a 1963 secret document, probably translated from Russian but intended for Hungarian domestic use, was entitled the revealing title "Informative Report on the Subversive Activities of Foreign Zionist Centres," expressed its views in the most virulent anti-Israel and anti-Zionist terms.¹³ According to the document Israel, which is seeking to undermine the anti-colonial and colonial liberation movements, not only wants to join NATO, not only wants to conclude military agreements with France and Germany and not only wants to join the European common market, but is 'invading' Asian and African countries.

¹⁰ Dr. Endre Sík, Minister of Foreign Affairs: The Main Guarantee of Peace and Human Progress: The Strength of a United Socialist Camp. (Népszabadság, 1960, p. 1; Népszabadság, 1962, p. 1).

¹¹ 26 August 1963 Report. Subject: Israel's policy towards African neutral countries. ÁBTL 3.2.5 O-8-301/1 "Herzl Tivadar" – Zionist organisations.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ ÁBTL 3.2.5 O-8-301/1. "Herzl Tivadar" – Zionist organisations.

The socio-political network of Israeli ambassadors (or *chargés d'affaires*) accredited to Budapest was important. David Giladi (grandfather of the Israeli politician Yair Lapid; 1908-2009), who was sent to Budapest after Sachar and served as the last ambassador to Hungary between 1964 and 1967 before diplomatic relations were severed, was a colorful personality and was welcomed by the Jewish society of Budapest (Novák, 2022). In late May 1965, he was received by Deputy Foreign Minister Béla Szilágyi (1908-1995), together with Eliezer Doron, Head of the Israeli Foreign Ministry's Eastern Europe Department.¹⁴ Doron – who became head of the department shortly after Moshe Avidan (Új Kelet, 1964, p. 2) – and who, according to his own account, had come to Hungary in an 'unofficial capacity,' had intended to visit other Eastern European countries on his trip. Doron, who believes that Israel should buy arms (we are talking about buying) from any country that sells them because of the Arab threat, criticized several Eastern European leaders, including East German President Walter Ulbricht, who was visiting Cairo, for his joint statement with Egyptian President Nasser. He said that it was no wonder that Israel would seek the help of Western countries in such circumstances. The Hungarian deputy foreign minister rejected Doron's position on the GDR and the United Arab Republic and criticized the country's 'secret agreement' with Konrad Adenauer. He did not explain this, so perhaps he was referring to the 1952 reparations agreement. Doron, who was not critical of the Eastern European countries, told Szilágyi that the Hungarian side was certainly aware that “*especially the black African countries were receiving large loans, investments, technical and scientific assistance, also from French and American sources.*”¹⁵ He also offered this assistance to Hungary, which Szilágyi rebuffed. In all the high-level meetings, the issue was why Hungary was sending only an envoy to Tel Aviv and why it was forcing Israel not to send an ambassador-level diplomat to Budapest itself. Budapest has usually explained this (unofficially, of course) precisely by its alignment with the nonprogressive in Israel and by the fact that the Jewish state is a colonial and 'imperialist power.'

A completely different type of state security reports was presented by the Hungarian mission in Tel Aviv, which was made mainly with Israelis of Hungarian origin. In the mid-1960s, Sándor Kovács, a cultural attaché who went by the pseudonym Pál Egri, played a prominent role in obtaining information. Kovács met with the Israeli journalist of non-Hungarian origin, Simon Shamett (1904-?) in December 1965.¹⁶ The attaché was a regular information-gatherer whose main interest was in the renewed relations between Israel and West Germany, which were irritating the entire Eastern Bloc. Shamett spoke about several issues, though they were not central ones, and were reported extensively in the Israeli press. He told of the plans of President Zalman Shazar (1889-1974) to visit several African countries in the summer of 1966, but the “Africans” had turned him down. Shamett attributed this to the fact that the Jewish state had not

¹⁴ Report. 29 May 1965. ÁBTL 0-13 612. Personal file of Dávid Giládi.

¹⁵ Report. 29 May 1965. ÁBTL 0-13 612. Personal file of Dávid Giládi.

¹⁶ Report. 22 December 1965 Subject: the case of Simon Shamett. ÁBTL 3.1.5.0-8-089/2
The case of “Abraham” Hungarian emigration to Israel.



shown enough ‘radical behavior’ on the Rhodesian issue, had not broken off diplomatic relations, and called the new Rhodesian regime illegal (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 1965). Therefore, African countries are more oriented towards Nasser’s Egypt, which is “radical” on the Rhodesia issue. *“Regardless, African countries still require Israeli economic aid and Israel will need an additional \$100 million by 1966 to complete the investments it has begun. One of the purposes of Finance Minister Sapir’s visit to the United States was to obtain that \$100 million. According to Samett, the trip was successful in this respect because the UJA /United Jewish Appeal/ is raising the amount in addition to annual contributions...”* – declared Shamett.

Shamett gave information about Africa to the embassy’s intelligence officer on another occasion: in April 1966, when they met in a café in Tel Aviv.¹⁷ The main topic was, of course, the development of the Federal Republic of Germany (GDR)-Israeli relations, the breakdown in these relations and the reasons for this. Shamett was present at the Embassy’s reception on 4 April, which the Hungarian mission in each country gave to mark the liberation of the country. The journalist reported that Prime Minister Levi Eshkol (1895-1969) and Foreign Minister Abba Eban (1915-2002) will travel to African countries during the summer. They will be mostly busy in Nigeria and one other country, where they will assess the effectiveness of the use of Israeli aid and decide whether to maintain or increase it. Eshkol is not yet travelling to Ghana, but the large Israeli state construction company Solel Boneh has received new orders for further construction from Ghana. It is worth noting that, although African relations were of some interest to the diplomatic correspondent, they no longer appeared in the report’s summary, but rather Israel’s relations with the socialist countries and the Arab world were emphasized. Shamett continued to be a valuable source of information, meeting the Hungarian diplomat at the Rison Cellar restaurant on 26 May.¹⁸ Shamett also spoke in detail (among other topics) about Eshkol’s trip to Africa, making it abundantly clear that the trip was aimed at strengthening Israeli influence in Ivory Coast, Liberia, Leopoldville in Congo and Kenya. The visit to Uganda is not considered a sure issue, given the ‘complicated’ situation there. According to Shamett, these countries owe Israel a total of \$100 million, but there are also problems with the investments of Solel Boneh, the Mayer brothers¹⁹ and the Federmann company (Israeli companies also operating in Africa). On the African aid structure, he said that 60% of this large sum came from US sources, 20% from other Western countries and only 20% from Israel.²⁰ Although other European issues (Foreign Minister Aba Eban’s planned visit to Warsaw, the Israeli-Syrian border tension and the World Jewish Congress conference in Brussels at the end of the

¹⁷ Report. 12 April 1966. ÁBTL 3.1.5.0-8-089/2.

¹⁸ Report. 27 May 1966. ÁBTL 3.1.5.0-8-089/2.

¹⁹ The Mayer brothers, an Israeli entrepreneur in Africa, started in the late 1950s, their investments were dependent on Israeli policy, with materials and construction workers coming from Israel. The Israeli government often financed not only the sister projects but also the company itself.

²⁰ Sándor Kovács notes that, *“This information is supported by the fact that both Mayer and Federmann are currently in the country mentioned above.”* Ibid.

summer) were again a priority, Israel's African policy was also highlighted in this report. The situation was similarly assessed by two Hungarian officers from the Ministry of the Interior's III/I-5-T subdivision²¹ at the end of June 1966²², who found Israel's African policy "remarkable" and asked for more detailed information "as far as possible."

Perhaps the journalist did not know well, Eshkol, who later visited the Ivory Coast, Liberia, Congo (Leopoldville), Madagascar, Uganda, Kenya and Senegal in May and June (and 6 other African countries have invited him), was not accompanied by Eban. He became Foreign Minister in February and had visited African countries in 1969 and 1971 (among others) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 1966).

In 1966, the embassy's attention was also directed towards Israeli Hungarians. This is how Dezső Hermann, a lawyer from Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca in today's Romania), who was a member of the Kasztner group and later a successful lawyer in Israel, came into the focus of attention.

But he also met Frigyes Naschitz, a writer and literary translator, who was also the Consul General of Iceland to Israel. In August 1966, a report of the meeting was signed by 'Dunai,' i.e. Police Lieutenant-Colonel Kálmán Csécsi, at which Naschitz spoke at length about Israel's relations with Africa.²³ The Hungarian intelligence officer was interested in how Israel could cover its aid to African, Asian and Latin American countries. Naschitz replied that the United States provides the funds for this and also mentioned that Israel would like to employ some of its surplus labour (including intellectuals) in the developing world. Naschitz summarized the usefulness of aid to developing countries in several points. On the one hand, it increases the potential for Israeli exports and, on the other hand, it gives Israel political leverage in the region. Thirdly, it opens up the possibility of employing 'surplus' Israeli labour at home, as already mentioned. Naschitz also said that Israel has been negotiating with Denmark and Sweden to provide money for aid, which would be done without hiding where the money comes from, but with Israel as the executor of the "investments." The two countries have not accepted this 'offer,' but Israel has (allegedly) already proposed similar cooperation with West Germany, and the role of Britain has even been discussed, since the African countries in question are countries in the 'sterling zone.'²⁴ The summary report, in addition to reiterating what has been said so far, noted that 'developing Israeli aid to developing countries can be seen as a means of strengthening imperialist influence.'²⁵

In September 1966, at one of "Dunai's" meetings with Dezső Hermann, the issue of aid to Africa came up again.²⁶ Hermann confirmed that aid to African countries was

²¹ Police Majors Rezső Huller and Elemér Torsa.

²² Evaluation report. Budapest, 29 June 1966. ÁBTL 3.1.5.0-8-089/2.

²³ 13 August 1966. Tel-Aviv. Report. Meeting with Frigyes Nasitz. ÁBTL 3.1.5.0-8-089/2.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ 13 August 1966. Tel-Aviv. Report. Meeting with Frigyes Nasitz. ÁBTL 3.1.5.0-8-089/2.

²⁶ Report. 24 September 1966. Tel-Aviv. ÁBTL 3.1.5.0-8-089/2.

financed by West Germany and that the Germans were now Israel's biggest supporters, as far as accession to the Common Market was concerned. In this context, the African strand was completely subordinated to Israeli involvement in Western European politics. At the same time, the un. Centre, the evaluators and chiefs of the Tel Aviv Residency in Budapest (III/I-5-T) had already asked "Danube" for clarification on the nature of the relationship between West Germans and Israelis in the context of aid to Africa.²⁷

We have no information on what information the Residency provided to the Centre (the intelligence headquarters) in Budapest on the development of Israel's relations with Africa, because on 12 June 1967 Hungary severed its relations with the Jewish State, the diplomatic missions in both countries closed their doors and the Residency in Tel Aviv was also liquidated.

What Remains: Post-1967 Information

At the same time, some documents survived from the post-1967 period, when Israel and the African countries became of interest to the intelligence services in a completely different context. We have found an information report dated 16 November 1971 on the "joint propaganda activities" of the Israeli embassy and American Jewish organizations among "black African" students.²⁸ The information was given to Kolozsi (who was an embassy intelligence officer and we do not know if it is a real name or a pseudonym) by a person named Larre²⁹, and was not from the embassy's own 'collection,' which was typical of the post-1967 period, with Hungarian intelligence officers working second and third hand.

According to Larre, the objective of the Israeli mission and the Zionist organizations is to "produce" a supply of pro-Israel intellectuals and businessmen in African countries who are "receptive" to Israeli initiatives and whose activities will help to achieve Israeli foreign policy objectives, in line with the "divisive" aspirations of Israeli foreign policy among African countries.³⁰ The foreign informant, who himself was a member of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and also relied on Palestinian students' testimonies, passed on data on the Israeli mission's "propaganda" and

²⁷ 17 November 1966. Order VIII/16 from "B." 16 November 1966. Order signed by Sergeant Major Rezső Huller and Police Captain Antal Kaltenecker. ÁBTL 3.1.5.0-8-089/2. The case of the Hungarian emigration to Israel "Ábrahám."

²⁸ Information report. Report to "comrade" Palotas (9-4/1971). New York, 16 November 1971. ÁBTL 3.2.5 O-8-301/1. 25 November 1971.

²⁹ We do not know exactly who Mr Larre was, but there was a Rene Larre (1915-1999), who was the chief financial counsellor at the French Embassy to the United States (1961-67), and the French executive director at the International Monetary Fund (1964-67). But he was no longer living in the United States in 1971.

If true, the information comes from an earlier period (Anonymus, n. d.).

³⁰ Information report. Report to "comrade" Palotas (9-4/1971). New York, 16 November 1971. ÁBTL 3.2.5 O-8-301/1. 25 November 1971.

intelligence activities among African students. The informant explained that the Israeli embassy works closely with Zionist and other Jewish organizations in the US to provide university and college scholarships for African students. The Israeli embassy people themselves, in an advisory and coordinating role, make nominative recommendations for students to be invited from each country – always taking into the account the state of bilateral relations with the country in question. Most of the scholars come from Senegal, Chad, Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of Congo at the invitation of American Jewish organizations. Larre also told Kolozsi that in the past two years, about 70 African students have been awarded scholarships at Columbia, Yale and New York universities. The funds for the scholarships are raised by the Bnai Brith Foundation, the Jewish Labor Committee and the AJC (American Jewish Committee) from their own resources and private donations. Larre also named the two Israeli diplomats who will liaise with the students on behalf of the scholarship recipients and give educational lectures on the Jewish state. They also organize invitations for African students to visit Jewish families and invite them to events organized by Jewish organizations. They are also regularly invited to give “propaganda lectures” to other foreign scholarship holders, for which they are paid extra.

Summary

Until 1967, the Israeli-African relations were an important dimension, a “field of observation” for the Hungarian state security: Israel, seeking allies and building a political and economic zone of influence, was of interest to Hungarian politics, as it had similar ambitions, albeit with the permission and even support of the Soviets. Although the Kádár regime was recognized by Israel very soon after the 1956 revolution, the new leadership was isolated in foreign policy and wanted to exploit relations with the newly independent African countries. Israel, also isolated in its own region, sought economic and political influence in Africa, which it achieved with great success until 1967, but after the 1973 Yom Kippur War it found more difficult to achieve. At the same time, the political elite of some of the new African states themselves sought and found a model in Israel, which had created a prosperous and successful state from (so to speak) nothing, with fundamentally poor endowments. The nexus-building abilities of the Israelis were directly observed by Hungarian diplomacy and intelligence services for as long as possible. The diplomats and civilians did not admit that Israel's projects in Africa were not financed by Western countries, and almost all of them tried to convince (or even disinform) their Hungarian counterparts to the contrary. Generally speaking, the content and tone of the Hungarian reports were the usual, but the almost obligatory political suspicion and the content and style of the official anti-imperialist Soviet political propaganda were still sometimes interspersed with recognition and appreciation of the successful diplomacy of a small country surrounded by enemies, Israel.



Conflict of Interest

The author declares that no financial or conflict of interest was reported in the manuscript.

Notes on Contributor

Historian (PhD). Senior research fellow at the Thomas Molnar Institute for Advanced Studies (National University of Public Service, Budapest, Hungary) and the Goldziher Ignác Institute of Jewish History and Culture (Budapest, Hungary). His field of academic interest encompasses the History of Hungarian Jewry during and after WWII, the 1944' Zionist Rescue Movement, and the political and ideological problems of Zionism in East-Central Europe and State of Israel. He was the Cultural Attaché at the Embassy of Hungary in Tel Aviv between 2012-2016. He is a member of the Hungary Forum on the History of Hungarian Jewry, which is part of the Arnold and Leona Finkler Institute of Holocaust Research at Bar-Ilan University (Israel).

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