

## FOREIGN RELATIONS GO AWRY

### AMIN'S ISRAELI CONNECTION

Close relations with Uganda had been nurtured by Israel, especially by David Ben-Gurion, the Israeli prime minister, well before Uganda's independence. This was part of Israeli foreign policy known as the "Peripheral Doctrine". The policy sought to develop strategic partnerships with nations on the periphery of the Arab world, including Uganda, Kenya, Turkey and others, to counter hostile nations on Israel's borders. Israel actively participated in developing those countries to forge and strengthen strategic relationships. In Uganda, they trained and equipped the military, constructed infrastructure projects, undertook commercial agriculture and supported numerous other development projects. Post-independence, Israel developed a special relationship with Uganda and became fully entrenched in the economy. Shortly after the Six-Day War in 1967, Israel sold Uganda weapons worth more than seven million dollars, a relatively large amount by the standards of those days. By 1969, Israel was channelling weapons and logistical support to the southern Sudanese rebels, known as the Anyanya, through Uganda. Amin had become the go-between for the Ugandan authorities to facilitate Israeli support for the Anyanya.

This relationship soured when Obote, a pan-Africanist, refused the Israelis' use of Ugandan airspace. This resulted from bilateral discussions with the new Sudanese President, Jafaar Numeiri, who pleaded with Obote to stop his support of the Anyanya. To foster better relations with the incoming Sudanese regime and to uphold his pan-African credentials, Obote agreed and ordered the Israelis to stop using Ugandan airspace to that end. The Israelis however, had by now built a good rapport and relationship with Idi Amin. Despite being the commander of the army, he secretly and covertly continued supporting the Israeli cause of assisting the Anyanya, without the knowledge of Obote or his government. The Israelis continued

their policy to keep another of the Arab nations, Sudan, distracted from interfering in or inflaming the Arab-Israeli conflict or, worse still, joining the Egyptians in their war with Israel.

Throughout the period of Israeli support for the Anyanya, Amin was in close contact with Colonel Baruch Bar-Lev, Israel's military attaché at the Israeli embassy in Uganda. The relationship between the two had grown and developed to the stage where the two even socialised at the family level. Further, Amin had become an admirer of Israel, especially its military capabilities and battlefield victories. Thus, when relations soured between Obote, Britain and Israel, the Israelis were ready to encourage, embolden, and ultimately assist Amin in overthrowing Obote. As mentioned previously, the Israelis were even seen driving army tanks and flying jets on the day of the coup to ensure Amin's success.

***(See New York Times article- Israeli asserts he helped Amin achieve rule in '71 - Chapter 12).***

Once in power, Amin's honeymoon with the Israelis only lasted a year. The Israeli perception and calculation that Amin would be a pliable puppet who could easily be controlled to the advantage of their own selfish interests was quickly shattered when he expelled 700 Israelis in April 1972. The reason for the fallout was the Israeli and British refusal to supply arms and fighter jets to Amin to invade Tanzania. In 1972, the Addis Ababa Agreement temporarily paused hostilities between the Anyanya and the Sudanese regime based in Khartoum. This resulted in Israel losing interest in Amin and his ever-increasing armament demands. Amin, realising that he was unlikely to get arms from Israel, began courting the Arab world, especially the flamboyant, unpredictable (and sworn enemy of Israel), Muammar Gaddafi of Libya.

Relations with Israel deteriorated further when Amin glorified Hitler's actions during World War II, in a totally bizarre telegram to the United Nations Secretary-General, Kurt Waldheim. The telegram, apparently dictated by Amin, said:

"Germany is the right place where, when Hitler was supreme commander, he burnt over six million Jews. This is because Hitler and all German people knew that the Israelis are not people who are working in the interest of the people of the world, and that is why they burnt the Israelis alive with gas".