

# Israel's Campaign in Africa

EMIL LENGYEL

ON THE VERANDA of the new Ambassador Hotel at Accra, the capital of Ghana, I noticed a group of young people engaged in earnest conversation one evening early last fall. They were Israeli technicians and advisers, of whom there are now close to three hundred in Ghana, and they were discussing Ghana's current Five-Year Plan and Israel's prominent role in its future.

Although Israel's ambitious technical-assistance experiment in Africa began in Ghana, it has spread to other parts of West Africa, from Dakar to Nigeria and beyond, and the same sort of experiment has been set in motion in Asia. As a result, one of the world's newest and smallest countries has acquired a prestige in many parts of Africa and Asia that can only be compared with that of the United States and the other major powers which have undertaken aid programs in underdeveloped areas.

Part of the appeal Israeli aid holds for the Africans is its low cost. Moreover, while the Israeli technicians have western skills, they themselves come from the East, from a country which has itself been a recipient of foreign aid and has faced similar economic problems—how to raise two blades of grass where one grew before, how to create industries for an area's untapped resources, and how to introduce basic social reforms without recourse to strong-arm methods. Israel's own record in social development and in raising living standards by democratic means has fired the imagination of many African and Asian leaders. Technical advisers from rich countries are adjusted to different standards, and their concepts of aid to backward nations tend to be more grandiose. The contrast was well described by an Asian official: "I spent two months in the United States on a study tour. At the end they asked me what I thought of America and I answered that it was wonderful. Fabulous! Fantastic! Then they asked me what I had learned and I said: Nothing! You see, America is

too big for us. The smallest project I saw costs millions. Israel is closer to the problems we are up against."

ONE MAJOR PROBLEM of the new African states is how to become fully integrated nations. Their basic structure is still largely tribal, and a modern nation cannot tolerate political fragmentation, tribal or otherwise. On the other hand, the tribes cannot be done away with overnight. The collective and co-operative farms of Israel—kibbutzim, moshavim, and intermediary types—have impressed some of these African leaders as being especially suited to their needs. The settled tribes could continue to operate, but as economic units, not as political sovereignties.

Israel finds many advantages, of course, in its new trade-and-aid invasion of Africa. For one thing, when African countries turn to Israel they necessarily turn away from Egypt.



Prime Minister Kwame Nkrumah warned the All-African People's Conference in Accra in December, 1958: "Do not let us also forget that colonialism and imperialism may come to us yet in a different guise, not necessarily from Europe." His allusion to Cairo was obvious. Nasser had made his intentions clear in his book,

*Egypt's Liberation: The Philosophy of the Revolution.* "The Dark Continent," he wrote, "is now the scene of strange and excited turbulence: the white man representing various European nations is again trying to redivide the map. We shall not in any circumstance be able to stand idly by in the face of what is going on, in the false belief that it will not affect or concern us." Despite its persuasiveness, the Voice of the Arabs Radio, alternating between bravado and braggadocio, guardianship and paternalism, has not prevented a number of African states from turning to Israel. Israel, on the other hand, stands isolated by the Arab states, in need of friends and even more in need of trade outlets. Through this program of technical assistance Israel has leapfrogged across the Suez Canal into the heart of Africa. By becoming an asset to these underdeveloped countries, Israel's survival is a matter of interest to a large part of the Afro-Asian group in which the hostile Arab nations hope to play a leading role.

The mutual advantages are practical as well as political. Ghana, for instance, is rich in natural resources and is the world's largest producer of cacao; Israel purchases a number of products, including manganese, rough diamonds, bauxite, copra, oil seed, palm kernels, hides, and skins.

## Israel's Point Four

Israel's African experiment began on March 6, 1957, Ghana's Independence Day. The Israeli minister of commerce and industry, representing his country in Accra, stayed on after the celebrations were over to suggest trade relations. The Ghanaian government was receptive and the first shipload of cement and assorted industrial goods was on its way from Haifa to Ghana a short time later.

Today Israel's participation in Ghana's economic development, and particularly in its ambitious Five-Year Plan, includes building projects, highways, an airport, a fishing harbor, a co-operative bank, and even Ghana's major development project, the Volta River plan, to generate hydroelectric power for the production of aluminum. Israel's role in the new country's development is proclaimed in eye-catching

posters and prominently displayed signs in the capital. At the intersection of two main streets in Accra, for instance, a new building for the Ghana Trades Union Congress is going up. It is being erected by the Ghana National Construction Company, which is jointly owned by the Ghana government, holding sixty per cent, and the Solel Boneh Company, a large construction concern belonging to Israel's nation-wide labor union, the Histadrut, holding forty per cent.

The first steamship line of black Africa, the Black Star Line, is also jointly owned by the Ghana government, holding sixty per cent of the stock, and the Zim Israel Navigation Company, holding the rest. Zim will run the line for five years, and then, according to the present contract, the government in Accra will take over. Already Israeli experts are training merchant marine officers at the Accra Nautical Academy. The line began its operations with the S.S. *Volta River* and the charter of several modern ships. Recently, a five-man Black Star delegation visited Britain to place orders for twenty freighters. The line is establishing direct service between West Africa and North America. Of further significance, as Arnold Rivkin of M.I.T. points out, Egypt would be unlikely "to interfere with free access to the Suez Canal of ships flying the flag of Ghana even if such ships would be plying routes originating or terminating in Israel."

Economic assistance is only part of Israel's activities in Ghana. A headline in the September 2, 1959, issue of the *Ghana Times*, "Israeli Training Armed Forces," introduced a detailed report about the work of Israeli instructors at Giffard Camp, an air-force base near Accra.

When I suggested to an Israeli technician that his country was engaging in an equivalent of the American Point Four Program, he replied that in his opinion it rated much higher. Its scope was indicated by Michael Comay, Israel's deputy director general of foreign affairs, last March: "If all the Asian and African states had normal relations with Israel, the Arabs would start reconciling themselves to the facts, and the way would be opened for a negotiated settlement."

While Ghana is certainly the most striking example of Israel's trade-and-aid program, its success there has had notable repercussions. Nigeria, at present divided into three regions, has made arrangements to draw upon Israeli technical resources when it becomes fully independent on October 1. Direct trade relations have already been established on a modest scale. Dizengoff West Africa, Ltd., an Israeli trading concern named after the first mayor of Tel-Aviv, has a branch in the capital, Lagos. The Western Region has invited the Alliance Tyre and Rubber Company of Israel to establish a branch there.

### Kibbutzim for Nigeria?

The prime minister of the Eastern Region, Nnamdi Azikiwe, is particularly interested in Nigerian-Israeli trade, and his government has published a detailed "white paper" on the Israeli farm economy. It recommends the establishment of co-operative farms similar to those of Israel as a means of counteracting the tendency of rural youths to move into Nigerian towns. In both the Eastern and Western Regions of Nigeria, Israeli technicians are engaged in preparatory work on water-development projects. But Northern Nigeria, which is Moslem, still seems to be under the influence of Arab propaganda.

Nevertheless, Israel's economic influence has reached even some of those countries whose population is

heavily Moslem. In recent months leaders of the new Federation of Mali, consisting of Senegal and French Sudan, formerly part of French West Africa, have paid visits to Israel. The president of the Federation, Modibo Keita, was among them, and since his return he has granted many interviews praising Israel's accomplishments and its role in the underdeveloped countries. He has helped organize groups of young Senegalese and Sudanese to visit Israel for study. President Keita, who is also prime minister of the Sudanese area, has asked Israel for advisers on farm development. Senegal also wants Israeli advice on how to diversify its agriculture, which is concentrated at present on the production of peanuts, its largest export item.

From French Equatorial Africa the premier of Chad, François Tombalbaye, and three members of his government recently went to Israel on a two-week "tour of exploration." Another Moslem country, the Republic of Chad lies close to Egypt, and its turning toward Israel can only be regarded by Nasser as a further indication that his influence, even close to home, is slipping.

ISRAEL'S INITIATIVE in extending technical aid to underdeveloped countries now stretches through the Congo as far east as Ethiopia, and does not stop with Africa. Moshé Sharett, Israel's former prime minister and minister of foreign affairs, paid visits to key Asian nations not long ago, and Israeli technicians have been working most successfully in Burma and Hong Kong. More recently, Foreign Minister Golda Meir called on several South American countries.

A series of articles about Israel, written by a native Nigerian, Ebenezer Williams, his country's best-known journalist, is perhaps typical of the interest that the Israeli achievement has aroused in all these regions. In the concluding full-page article in the *Sunday Times* of Lagos, Mr. Williams summed up his findings during his recent trip to Israel: "My prayer and hope is that Nigeria, too, ten years after independence, will prove a land into which many flock to hear and learn another success story. To Nigeria the story of Israel gratifies the soul."



# Harlem's Magic Numbers

DAN WAKEFIELD

THE NUMBERS, or "policy," racket is illegal in New York, but it flourishes in spite of the law, the censure of the pulpit, the overwhelming odds against a player making a profit from it, and, most recently, the charge of racial discrimination in its operation. After the latest of the periodic roundups of numbers men, Harlem's Representative Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., proclaimed from the pulpit at the Abyssinian Baptist Church that the cops had as usual arrested mainly Negroes although the really big-time policy "bankers" were Italians. The Italian numbers operators, Powell said, have "run the Negro banker out of business in Harlem."

In the past, such accusations by the Reverend Mr. Powell have resulted in boycotts by Harlemites against drugstores, clothing stores, breweries, and transportation lines. But it is easier to do without pills, clothing, beer, and busses than it is to do without dreams, and the numbers game is a principal source of that essential commodity for the people of Harlem and other poor areas throughout the city.

THE COST of buying this dream is cheap. It can be had for pennies, nickels, and dimes (though some people pay several dollars, and, on rare occasions, as much as a hundred) with the promise of a 600-to-1 return for picking the three correct numbers in their proper order, and 8-to-1 for locating just one correct number in the daily combination. The numbers are based on the pari-mutuel returns of certain races at a designated track. Each of the three numbers is figured separately as the races are finished, and the numbers come in one at a time, at hour-or-so intervals. This heightens the tension and encourages further one-shot betting for those who missed on the first or second number and can bet again in hopes of recouping some of their losses. When the third number comes up, usually around four o'clock in the afternoon, there is high excitement around the many "drops"

where the numbers are placed, as well as, of course, at the numbers banks. One businessman in East Harlem whose office is over a drop remarked, "I can always tell when its about four o'clock—there are people running out in the street and yelling the winning numbers and talking about what happened."

The relatively open nature of the operation is possible because it provides the easiest opportunity for graft (graft payments are considered a part of the overhead of the numbers bank) and the penalties for convictions of the lower-echelon numbers men, the ones usually picked up in roundups, are light fines—often twenty-five dollars for a first arrest. A few days after the latest big roundup, some of the "runners" in East Harlem were complaining—not about the law, but about the fact that there were so many people working as runners nowadays that it had become difficult to make a decent living any more.

The runners have cause for complaint about competition, for their earnings are figured as a percentage, usually fifteen per cent, of the bets they bring in. The runners' incomes range from about fifty to two hundred dollars a week depending on the season (the holidays are best) and the amount of regular trade they have built up. The upsurge in competition causes no complaints among bankers, however, for they get a percentage of the gross take. (The banker usually gets sixty-five per cent of the gross, out of which he pays off the hits as well as the overhead of graft, rent, and salaries to bookkeepers and adding-machine operators. The other thirty-five per cent of the gross goes to the "controller," a sort of branch manager, who pays the runners.)

Although the bets are often penny-ante, the profits are enormous. Authorities agree that the numbers game is the most widespread illegal activity in New York City, with an estimated 1,500,000 players putting down a total of about \$300,000 a day. Another educated guess is that as



much as \$4 million is bet each month in Harlem and the Bedford-Stuyvesant area of Brooklyn alone. In making his plea for Harlemites to lay off the numbers, Congressman Powell said that half of the gross profits go to bankers and higher-ups in the racket (mostly Italians, a few Jews) and that therefore a probable minimum of \$1 million a month from salaries, pensions, and relief checks goes to people "outside the community."

## A Major Industry

But the other side of the coin is that if Powell's estimate is correct, another million from numbers betting stays in the community, where it is an important item in the over-all economy. There are an estimated ten thousand people employed in the various phases of the numbers operation throughout the city; and whatever the exact figure, it seems certain that an end to the numbers would mean a sudden wave of unemployment in Harlem.

If it is true, as Mr. Powell has charged, that most of the big-time bankers are Italians, they at least can claim a certain historical justice, since the numbers or policy game is said to be an import brought to New York by Italian immigrants in the late nineteenth century. H. L. Mencken, in *The American Language*, wrote that the term "policy" was derived from the Italian word "*pòlizza*," meaning voucher or receipt, and first came into American usage around 1885.

Except for the sure profits to be