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SOVIET POLICY TOWARDS THE MIDDLE EAST  
1945 - 1957

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## ABSTRACT

With the division of the world into two camps after World War II, Soviet policy towards the Middle East acquired increased importance. Russia wanted to infiltrate into the area by using all available means - propaganda, armed forces and the communist parties. On the other hand, the Western world led by America wanted to prevent this infiltration at any cost. Conditions in the young Middle Eastern states themselves were at a stage of ferment so that the reluctance of the British and French to leave the area and the persistence of the United States to fill the "vacuum" when they did leave only added to the embitterment of the states of the Middle East against the West. When Russia realized this fact she approached the countries concerned with offers compatible with their demands from the West.

The first attempt of Soviet Russia to expand into the Middle East was through the use of force. That took place in Persia and Turkey but threats and pressures did not pay and both Turkey and Persia aided by the United States resisted and rebuffed Russia. The failure of Russia's expansionist policy resulted in her withdrawal from the area so that she adopted a comparatively aloof attitude criticizing the Western policy and

supporting nationalist claims. This latter policy characterized Russia's attitude towards the Arab world in the meantime.

Russian forward policy had a chance to reemerge when the Western defence systems were finding expression in the Northern Tier policy. Threats and pressures were replaced by friendly appeals and offers of economic and military aid on a comparatively large scale. This was met again by another American challenge in the Eisenhower Doctrine. The result was not withdrawal as in 1947 but increase of co-operation with those countries where Russia had already acquired some kind of a foothold. Expansion was no more to be acquired by threats and pressures but by friendly appeals, propoganda and aid.

This thesis utilizes the analytical and the chronological approach. It is divided into chapters coinciding with the areas which were of special interest (or neglect) at any particular time, with special emphasis on the course that Soviet attempts at infiltration followed. Russian documents are relied upon as the ultimate guide in the light of which Soviet moves are analyzed and interpreted.

Soviet policy has been characterized primarily by its opportunism as conditioned by the developments in Russia itself, in the international world and in the countries which were the object of that policy. Russia has used all opportunities to interfere, varying from use of force, threats and pressures to more peaceful means and friendly appeals and to identification

of interests. Although co-operation with the "uncommitted" part of the Middle East may involve infiltration, no sign of the effectiveness of this infiltration has yet appeared. On the contrary, communism is suppressed and no commitments to Russia have been made. However, what Russia did accomplish was mainly in the sphere of moral gains. She won the sentiments of the people rather than any material concessions. The extension of economic and military aid accompanied by the flow of technicians to those countries which welcomed them seem to be reinforcing her gains.

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## INTRODUCTION

In the past few years Soviet policy towards the Middle East has acquired a new impetus. The Middle East today is an area about which there is a good deal of controversy in world politics, and Soviet Russia who is as much interested as any of the other Great Powers, is playing a major role. It is the purpose of this thesis, therefore, to study the development of the Soviet attitude towards this area from the end of World War II up to the emergence of the Eisenhower Doctrine in 1957. For a clearer perspective, however, it goes back to the inauguration of the Soviet regime in 1917 and as briefly as possible surveys Soviet attitude towards the area until the end of the war. Without this introductory part which lays down the background for later developments, the post-war period cannot be properly comprehended. Soviet policy since then may be divided into three main phases, the forward policy of the two immediate years after the war focused on Persia and Turkey, the comparatively aloof attitude of the next six years, and the re-emergence of the forward policy in 1955 with greater emphasis on the Arab world.

In retrospect, Tzarist Russia had always coveted the Middle East whether for warm water ports or for its strategic importance. Today, the strategic value of the area is the main attraction. In addition, there is its market potential, and of course, its oil wealth can by no means be overlooked.

This study does not aim to condemn or praise, but to show that Soviet foreign policy, no matter what shape it takes, is still moving within the general framework originally set for it, the change being mainly in tactics. In other words, Soviet policy shows a long-range objective and an immediate one. It is motivated by communist ideology as much as by Soviet self-interest. The classical examples of this aspect are the NEP (1921-1928), the support of popular fronts (1936-1939) and more recently the dissolution of the Comintern in 1943 when Russia was more in need of alliance with the Western powers than of spreading communism abroad, and its restoration in the form of the Cominform in 1947 when such an alliance was no more desirable. Thus, the idea of world communism is shelved, whenever necessary, for the more immediate interests, and the caution taken in presenting the policy to the world makes it so uncommitting that retreat is possible without much difficulty. A dominant feature of this policy has aimed to present Soviet Russia as the liberator of oppressed people and the anti-imperialist leader.

It must be emphasized, also, that although Soviet policy is the product of both theory and circumstances, it is characteristic of that policy to use the ideology, amend it or alter it, to suit the necessities of the moment, whether internal or external. By thus remoulding the theory, Soviet policy becomes more a product of circumstances than anything else. This, however, does not mean that the idea of world communism is sacrificed. On the contrary, by supporting reform and nationalist



demands, Soviet Russia is furthering the cause of her long-range aim. This is evident from the fact the Soviet Russia in feeding the revolutionary spirit of the people does not carry out her support to the end but stops whenever stability is gaining ground.

A great handicap in preparing this work is the absence of adequate source material. The sources available are mainly Western and this leaves great room for doubting the impartiality of the work. However, by keeping this point in mind, the writer has used the material as objectively as possible. Equally important is the lack of primary sources which is due both to the historical nature of the study and to the fact that we are dealing with something that originates from behind the "iron curtain." Thus a great deal depends upon speculation and the thesis by no means claims to be the last word on the subject.

The term Middle East as used throughout is for convenience, not accuracy. It thus comprises those countries over which Soviet policy has had a direct bearing during the period under discussion. In other words, it is limited mainly to Turkey, Persia, Afghanistan, Egypt, Palestine (Israel), Jordan, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon. The term Middle East is used all through except in quotations or titles which use the term Near East instead.

## CHAPTER I

### HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

#### Between Two Wars: Turkey, Persia and Afghanistan

The theme of this thesis might well be Russia's policy of support to the nationalist cause. Characteristic of the Soviet attitude towards the Middle East at one time or the other, this policy was inaugurated as soon as the Bolshevik revolution was accomplished. The newly formed Third International (Comintern) in its Manifesto in March 1919 emphasized the mission of the proletariat to liberate the colonial people from imperialism.<sup>1</sup> This policy was made more specific at the Eighth Congress of the Russian Communist Party which was held soon after. The Bolshevik leader, Nicholas Bukharin, said that communists should support the national movements and the right of self-determination in the dependent states, since by doing so they would be helping to destroy British imperialism. The Second Comintern Congress of July 1920, expanded on this. It resolved to support and align with the "revolutionary liberation movements" in the colonies and dependent countries, to show the inequalities present in the capitalist world and to emphasize that only under

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<sup>1</sup>Jane Degras, ed., The Communist International 1919-1943 (London: Oxford University Press, 1956), I, 38-47.

a Soviet system would they be overcome. The support was to be given to the "national revolutionary movements" which were genuine as distinguished from the "reformist movements" which were pro-Western. The distinction between the two was necessary since in the backward countries there was as yet no class-conscious proletariat and the revolution was led by the bourgeoisie.<sup>2</sup>

The paradox resulting from this support of self-determination and nationalism as compared with the internationalism of communism was explained by Stalin. The right of self-determination meant 'all power to the toiling masses of the oppressed nationalities,'<sup>3</sup> and the controversy resulting from the support of nationalism was attributed to "Marxian dialectics," just as the dictatorship of the proletariat was being strengthened when the withering away of the state was the ultimate objective.<sup>4</sup>

In the period immediately following the Bolshevik revolution, the aim of Soviet Russia's foreign policy in general was basically concerned with the establishment of friendly relations with powers that could help in the economic development of the country, the prevention of the formation of an anti-Soviet bloc by imperialist powers and the construction of a security system

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<sup>2</sup>  
Ibid., pp. 138-144.

<sup>3</sup>  
Joseph Stalin, Marxism and the National and Colonial Question, ed. by A. Fineberg (Moscow: Co-operative Publishing Society of Foreign Workers in the U.S.S.R., 1935), p. 74.

<sup>4</sup>  
Ibid., pp. 261-262.

by which treaties of friendship would be concluded with neighbouring countries that would act as a barrier against foreign intervention.<sup>5</sup> The newly-born state had to be established on a firm footing at home first and so the theme of her foreign policy centred around defence against foreign attack. Russian communists wanted a class war, it is true, but by no means could they afford an international war.<sup>6</sup>

Soviet Russia's earliest manifestation of such a policy was the calling of the Baku Conference in September 1920, by which she hoped to win the friendship of her neighbours. Delegates from thirtyseven nationalities attended it, but those of special interest to Russia came from Turkey, Persia, Afghanistan and India; and, as the majority of the inhabitants of those countries were Muslims, Russia tried to appeal to them through the slogan of "holy war" against Western imperialist powers, particularly Britain who was the dominating power in that area.<sup>7</sup> Russia called upon these people to unite and collaborate with her in order to free themselves from the yoke of imperialism. Even in these early days, Russia tried to appear as the champion of liberalism. The Bolshevik regime in itself appealed to the

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<sup>5</sup> Max Beloff, The Foreign Policy of Soviet Russia 1929-1941 (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), I, 12.

<sup>6</sup> Louis Fischer, The Soviets in World Affairs (London: Jonathan Cape, 1930), II, 743.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., I, 283-284. For the appeal, see Degras, op.cit., pp. 105-109.

neighbouring countries as it preached national self-determination and professed to grant to the minorities political, social and cultural rights, together with economic autonomy. Thus social and religious ties existed between Soviet Russia and her Eastern neighbours. Politically, the common bond was hatred and fear of the Western powers. Economically, these Eastern countries did not have a capitalist economy in the Western sense because they were not highly industrialized and so there was no great conflict between their socio-economic status and that of Russia.

By 1921, Soviet policy in the East took a concrete form in the conclusion of treaties of friendship with Persia, Afghanistan and Turkey. The Persian nationalist movement led by Riza Khan, war minister, and later self-appointed Shah, had found ready support in Soviet Russia. On 26 February 1921, a treaty with Persia confirmed the new friendship. It ostensibly aimed to undo the injustice done to Persia by Tzarist Russia. Debts to Tzarist Russia were cancelled, capitulations and concessions annulled, Russian interference in Persian home affairs stopped and the Russian bank in Persia handed over to the Persian government. Two important conditions stressed in the famous Articles VI and XIII of this treaty, respectively, were that Soviet troops could occupy Persian territory temporarily in case of an attack from a third power on that territory with the view of using it as a base for attacking Russia and that concessions given back to Persia were not to be ceded to any other state

without Russia's consent.<sup>8</sup>

The treaty with Afghanistan was concluded on 28 February, 1921. It maintained that neither party should enter into a military agreement with a third party to the detriment of the other. Lenin, here, took advantage of the anti-British movement in Afghanistan which was led by Emir Amanullah. When the progressive Emir of Afghanistan appealed to Lenin for help the latter, although in no position to give effective assistance because of the civil war, responded by expressing his willingness to supply him with military aid and to readjust the borders of Soviet Russia with Afghanistan.<sup>9</sup> The movement of Emir Amanullah achieved the independence of his country from the British.

In both Persia and Afghanistan we see Soviet Russia supporting the national movements. This was due to her desire to maintain buffer states between Britain's spheres of influence in Asia and her own. She realized that Persia and Afghanistan could not be effective buffers if they were not politically independent, enjoying national unity and cultural and economic progress.

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See text of the treaty in J.C. Hurewitz, Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East (Princeton, New Jersey: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., 1956), II, 90-94. The circumstances under which this treaty was concluded are rather interesting. Lord Curzon, the British Acting Foreign Secretary, had since 1919 been trying to conclude a treaty with Persia but the privileges demanded by the British were so many that they aroused Persian criticism and hatred. The negotiation dragged until June 1921 when they finally failed. J.C. Hurewitz, Middle East Dilemmas (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1953), p. 11.

<sup>9</sup> Fischer, op.cit., I, 285-7.

Soviet policy towards Turkey followed a similar line, a treaty being concluded on 16 March of the same year. Relations between Tzarist Russia and Turkey had been characterized by continuous hostility as Russia had always coveted Constantinople, the centre of the Greek Orthodox Church, a desirable ice-free port, and a strategic area that would bring Russia nearer to the Mediterranean countries and be a buffer against the entry of any hostile power to the Black Sea. In the early years of the Bolshevik revolution, however, Russia was weak militarily and in no position to carry out an ambitious policy with any body and so the revolutionary leaders adopted a conciliatory attitude and cancelled former Tzarist claims on Constantinople and the Black Sea Straits. They also did not want to have the Straits opened to all users, as Britain desired, in order to avoid being within easy access to foreign attack. To make their disapproval effective, they adopted a policy of friendship towards Turkey and concluded the treaty of 1921 by which the important port of Baku which had been occupied by the Turks, was ceded back to Russia (in return for Kars and Ardahan which had been annexed by Tzarist Russia in 1878). The Caucasian frontiers between the two powers were readjusted and their mutual interests and common struggle against imperialism recognized. In 1922, the Bolsheviks extended to Mustapha Kemal military and financial aid and helped him in ousting the Greeks from his country.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>  
Ibid., pp. 390-396, 399-400.

Further support of Turkey came at the Lausanne Conference which was held in 1922-23 in order to reshape the Treaty of Sévres after Mustapha Kemal's victory over the Greeks. Russia maintained that the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus should be closed to all warships, except Turkey's, in time of peace and war (so that she herself would be safe from attack). Britain, Russia's main rival and against whom she was building the security edifice, argued that since Turkey was weak the Straits should be opened and demilitarized in order to provide easy access to the Black Sea in case of aggression. Thus Soviet Russia in defending her own interests which coincided with Turkey's national aspirations appeared to be upholding Turkey's cause. Her presence at the conference and her arguments gave moral strength to Turkey in asking for her rights.<sup>11</sup> The Treaty of Lausanne, however, pleased neither Turkey nor Russia. Turkey wanted sovereignty over the Straits but the treaty demilitarized the area and established an international commission of control. Russia wanted the Straits to be closed but the treaty opened them. The grievances of the two powers drew them closely together.

Such a state of affairs culminated in the conclusion of the Soviet-Turkish neutrality pact signed on 17 December, 1925. Soviet Russia was taking another step in building up the security system with her neighbours. Four years later the effectiveness of this treaty was extended to 1945 and neither party was allowed

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., pp. 404-407, 413.



to enter into treaties with its neighbours without the consent of the other.<sup>12</sup>

As in 1921, the 1925 treaty with Turkey was paralleled by treaties of neutrality and non-aggression with Afghanistan in 1926 and with Persia in 1927. The treaty with Afghanistan released the tense relations which were a result of clashes along the Soviet-Afghan borders and improved economic relations.<sup>13</sup> The treaty with Persia improved economic relations and was followed by commercial agreements.<sup>14</sup>

The theoretical framework for these treaties may be found in the resolution of the Fifth Congress of the Russian Communist Party in 1926 which advocated assistance to the underdeveloped countries in order to prevent them from falling into the hands of Western imperialism.<sup>15</sup>

Friction between Soviet Russia and her neighbours was not altogether absent during this period. Despite the treaties of friendship concluded with Persia, Turkey and Afghanistan, none of these states were willing to go all the way for fear of being incorporated in Soviet Russia. Mustapha Kemal, for example, was not willing to turn his country into a communist state and so

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<sup>12</sup> Beloff, op.cit., II, 39-40.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., pp. 208, 209.

<sup>14</sup> Fischer, op.cit., II, 230.

<sup>15</sup> F. Parkinson, "Soviet Aid to Underdeveloped Countries," The Year Book of World Affairs, 1957, ed. by G.W.Keeton and G. Schwarzenberger (London: Stevens & Sons Limited, 1957), pp.199-200.

he did not hesitate to suppress the communist movement at home. Pravda (Truth), the official organ of the Russian Communist Party, in November 1928, called his regime "the enemy of the workers and peasants."<sup>16</sup>

Similarly, Riza Khan of Persia persecuted the communists and the revolutionary movement so that his regime was criticized by the Soviet press both before and after the conclusion of the 1927 treaty. He feared that economic dependence upon Russia might be used later for political purposes and therefore he sought to check this dependence by encouraging local industry and establishing control over foreign trade. On 27 October, 1931, a commercial treaty with Russia limited the import of Russian goods and in 1933 Russian goods were temporarily boycotted. The Russian press considered the industrialization of Persia harmful to the masses and the settlement of the nomads a violation of their national independence. However, Russia had only to give tacit support to Persia in reshaping the agreement between the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company and the Persian government in 1933 in a form more favourable to Persia in order to appear again in the role of the liberator. Relations again seemed cordial as was apparent in Litvinov's, the Foreign Commissar's, reference to Persia in his speech of 29 December, 1933. On 27 October, 1935, a commercial treaty improved relations. Russian experts in different fields entered Persia in large numbers and propaganda took on a renewed effort with special interest in

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<sup>16</sup>Beloff, op.cit., II, 40.

Persian culture.<sup>17</sup>

As for Afghanistan, the fact that Amanullah concluded a treaty with Britain in November 1921 proved that he did not want to be drawn completely into the Russian orbit. Although his successor who was more in favor of friendly relations with Russia concluded in 1931 a non-aggression pact and in 1936 renewed it for a period of ten more years, economic relations did not improve until after a serious fall in trade activities in 1936 when a commercial agreement for the exchange of goods was finally concluded.<sup>18</sup>

With Turkey also, periods of friction alternated with periods of cordiality. In March 1927, a commercial and shipping agreement was concluded. In March 1931, a naval agreement and another commercial treaty were signed. The years 1931 and 1932 saw the Soviet Foreign Commissar and the Turkish Premier and Foreign Minister exchange friendly visits in Ankara and Moscow.<sup>19</sup>

In pursuing her policy, Soviet Russia saw that it was in her interest to remove the discord which existed between her southern neighbours and to encourage peace and co-operation among them so that her pacts and her propaganda would be more effective. To this end she worked and on 28 November, 1927, was successful in bringing about a Persian-Afghan treaty for solving frontier disputes. A Turko-Persian treaty for a similar purpose was signed on 22 April, 1926. In bringing about these agreements,

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., pp. 201-205.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., pp. 207-210.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 41.

however, Russia was careful not to expand them into blocs or tripartite agreements in order not to be involved in them herself.<sup>20</sup>

The friendly policy of Soviet Russia towards these countries found a favorable response as was shown at the Geneva Disarmament Conference of 2 February, 1932. Besides Germany, Turkey, Persia and Afghanistan were the only countries which supported the Russian proposal for total disarmament. The Russian proposal to extend to the whole world Britain's move that European powers should undertake not to use force, was supported by Turkey, Persia, Afghanistan and China.<sup>21</sup>

In seeking security Russia made the departure from her previous policy of aloofness more definite by her entry into the League of Nations in September 1934. After Hitler withdrew from the League in 1933, Russia joined it in order to get the advantages that its membership could offer. At the League Council, her main policy of blocking the formation of an anti-Soviet coalition by winning as many friends as possible, especially along her borders, again found expression.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Fischer, op.cit., II, 732-733.

<sup>21</sup> Beloff, op.cit., I, 49-50, 52.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., pp. 197-199. In March 1919, the First Comintern Congress had called upon the proletariat of the world to oppose this "League of robbery, of exploitation, and of imperialist counter-revolution." Degras, op.cit., p. 35. However, the Seventh Congress of the Communist Party, held in Moscow in July-August 1935, which formulated the "popular front" policy permitted co-operation not only with the masses, but also with the leaders and with non-communist movements in order to eliminate the menace of Nazism and Fascism. Hugh Seton-Watson, From Lenin to Malenkov (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1954), p. 177.

At the Montreux Conference in 1936, Russia found a second chance for taking up where she left at the Lausanne Conference. The conference was called from 22 June to 20 July, at the request of Turkey, for the revision of the Straits Convention. Turkey's move was instigated by her fear of the growing power of Italy and the latter's revisionist policy especially after Mussolini's Abyssinian campaign in 1935. The outcome of the conference pleased Turkey because it restored her sovereignty over the Straits, since she could close them to warships of all nations in case she herself was involved in war. As for Russia, the fact that she was unwilling to allow the closure of the Straits to be left entirely to Turkey's discretion, but rather strove to set up an arrangement that would make the matter of closing or opening the Straits in case of war an automatic one,<sup>23</sup> proved that she really was not interested in Turkey's sovereign rights but in her own interests.

A closer look at the internal situation in Soviet Russia during this period will show the main factor which affected her foreign relations for the next few years. Between 1936 and 1938 Stalin's great purge was taking place. A wave of arrests, trials, exiles and executions was sweeping the country. In August 1936, people in large numbers including prominent political and military leaders were accused of conspiring to overthrow the government.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Arnold J. Toynbee, ed., Survey of International Affairs 1936 (London: Oxford University Press, 1937), p. 632.

<sup>24</sup> Beloff, op.cit., II, 6-8.

With so many able leaders removed, the purge meant a decline in the military might of Russia and Stalin had to concentrate on rebuilding it. All signs of consolidation were overshadowed by these events and people abroad gave up hope of counting on Russian military support. In fact, they were scared away from seeking it. The purge could be well considered as one of the main factors which made Russia's friendly neighbours be on their guard and seek support outside as well. The conclusion of the neutrality and non-aggression treaty known as the Saadabad Pact between Turkey, Persia, Iraq and Afghanistan in July 1937, may be considered as one manifestation of these states' distrust of Russia if not an attempt on their part to consolidate without Soviet interference, although of course the ambitions of Fascist Italy or the traditional policy of Britain in the Middle East might have been other factors.

The effects of the purge were reflected more in Turkey than in other countries of the Middle East. With Hitler's invasion of Czechoslovakia in March 1939 and Mussolini's seizure of Albania in April, Turkey who was alarmed was in need of a strong ally for protection. The purge put an end to any immediate hope of having Russia as the desired ally. With a huge number of her leaders, both in the administrative and military fields, executed or banished, Russia was not considered strong enough at the moment to be an effective ally. Also, the Italian challenge was a naval one and Russia did not have a strong fleet while Britain and France did. Turkey, therefore, turned to the West and concluded a preliminary mutual assistance agreement with

Britain in May 1939. At that stage, Russia who feared Hitler's and Mussolini's expansion welcomed this agreement as a means for the prevention of further German aggression in Europe.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, on 2 June, 1939, she sought guarantees against possible German attack by trying to secure an agreement with Britain and France that would allow her the use of military and naval bases in the Baltic region and Poland and Rumania. Negotiations to this end failed and Russia who felt that the West was not giving her enough security turned to Germany and on 23 August, 1939, concluded a pact of neutrality and non-aggression,<sup>26</sup> hoping to keep away any immediate threat from Hitler while she had a breathing space for strengthening herself after the purge.

#### During World War II: Turkey

The conclusion of the pact with Germany marked a changing point in Russia's attitude towards Turkey. Soviet Russia now wanted Turkey to shift her policy so as to conform with her own, and to close the Straits to the British and French fleets. In fact, a suggestion to this effect was made to Turkey in September 1939 but Turkey rejected it. She followed the more convenient course and went on to conclude the treaty of alliance

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George Kirk, The Middle East in the War, ed. by Arnold Toynbee (Survey of International Affairs 1939-1946, London: Oxford University Press, 1952), p. 443.

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Beloff, op.cit., II, 225-276.

with Britain and France in October.<sup>27</sup>

When the Soviet attack on Finland took place in the last week of November 1939, and the Turkish press sympathized with the Finns, the Soviet press used this opportunity to criticize Turkey's mutual assistance pact with Britain and France openly. The Soviet press accused the Turkish government of being undemocratic, of abandoning the policy of Mustapha Kemal and of co-operating with Turkey's traditional enemies in defiance of the wishes of the people. This was the first time that Russia differentiated between the people and the government of Turkey in trying to appeal to the people.<sup>28</sup>

Relations for some time were further strained when on 3 July, 1940, the Germans published captured French documents which disclosed Allied plans for negotiating with Turkey to obtain the use of her air bases for attacking the Baku oil fields from which Russia was supplying Germany with oil. Although the captured documents indicated that the Turkish government were unwilling to become involved in the French and British plans, the Soviet press criticized Turkey for allowing the Allies to use her as an instrument for their own ends which were hostile to Russia, and the Soviet Ambassador to Turkey was temporarily withdrawn.<sup>29</sup>

At the Berlin talks held in November, 1940, Russia's designs on the Straits and her desire to expand southward appeared again. While Ribbentrop, the German Foreign Minister,

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<sup>27</sup> Hurewitz, Middle East Dilemmas, pp. 184-187.

<sup>28</sup> Kirk, op.cit., pp. 445-446.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 448.



wanted to conclude a security pact with Russia in which Italy and Japan would also take part, Molotov, the Russian Foreign Commissar, wanted no agreement on paper but real guarantees of Russian security. Thus, he demanded the conclusion of a mutual assistance pact with Bulgaria and the right to have naval and land bases in the Dardanelles and Bosphorus area, together with a recognition of Soviet interests in the area south of Baku and Batum near the Persian Gulf. The Germans would not go so far and the talks failed.<sup>30</sup>

By 1941, the German advance in the Balkans alarmed both Turkey and Russia so that on 24 March a communique confirming the respect of both governments for the 1925 treaty of neutrality and non-aggression, was issued in Ankara and Moscow.<sup>31</sup> Hitler's attack on Soviet Russia in June of that year, however, changed the latter's attitude. It took Russia unprepared so that she was desperately fighting for survival. Thus, while until then she had striven to detach Turkey from her alliance with Britain and France, now, she wanted Turkey to conform with her changed policy and become hostile to Germany. If the hypothesis is accepted that the attempt on the life of von Papen, the German Ambassador to Turkey, on 24 February, 1942, was planned by Soviet officials, it shows Russia trying to create tension

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Beloff, *op.cit.*, II, 349-353. See documents in Nazi-Soviet Relations 1939-1941 (Washington: The Department of State, 1948), pp. 258-259.

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Kirk, *op.cit.*, p. 450.

between Germany and Turkey.<sup>32</sup> Whatever the truth may have been, the plan failed and Turkey remained strictly neutral.

During the spectacular advance of the Germans in the summer of 1942, a section of the Turkish press had been openly pro-German in the hope that a complete Soviet collapse would result in the liberation of the twenty million Turkish-speaking Muslims of Soviet Russia. However, by the end of the year it was evident that the strategic initiative had passed to the Allies, alike on the Russian front, in North Africa and in the Pacific. Russia went on with her efforts to draw Turkey into the Allied front. She wanted Turkey to join the war immediately, and by compulsion if necessary. She wanted a new front to be opened for Germany in the Balkans in order to divert pressure away from her own borders.<sup>33</sup> Her argument was that Turkey's entry into the war would, besides opening a new front for Germany, also allow the use of Turkey as a base from which to attack Germany and thus shorten the war.<sup>34</sup> Further, if Turkey hoped to

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Two Russians who were officials of the Soviet trade mission to Turkey and two Turks were accused, tried and imprisoned. The two Turks claimed that the two Russians had led them into this action for the presumable purpose of arousing hostility between Germany and Turkey. The two accused Russians denied having had anything to do with the conspiracy and blamed it on the Germans or Trotskyists. Ibid., pp. 452-454.

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Ibid., pp. 26-27, 459.

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William Hardy McNeill, America, Britain and Russia 1941-1946, ed. by Arnold Toynbee (Survey of International Affairs 1939-1946, London: Oxford University Press, 1953), p. 328.

share in the peace settlement, she should also share in the suffering, argued Vyshinsky.<sup>35</sup> Russia's point of view was persistently stressed at the Moscow Conference of the "Big Three" foreign ministers, held in October 1943.

However, an abrupt change in the Soviet attitude appeared when Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin met at the Tehran Conference, 28 November to 1st December 1943. Stalin surprised both America and Britain by agreeing with President Roosevelt's point of view that while Turkey might be useful as an ally, to bring her into the war would mean an intolerable delay in the main effort in Europe. Stalin also added that a Balkan campaign would be a waste of time since the direct road to Germany lay through France. The change in Stalin's attitude as compared with that of his subordinate a month earlier is rather puzzling. Evidently, Stalin by then had given up hope of Turkey entering the war on her own, and her demands for entering were too heavy. Furthermore, Russia said that if the Western Allies attacked the Balkans through Turkey, they would demand a greater say in the political reorganization of that region after the war when she wanted it to be in her own sphere of influence.<sup>36</sup> Turkey who was then subjected to Allied diplomatic pressure and who saw that Allied victory was certain, followed a different policy and on 2 August 1944, broke off diplomatic relations with

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<sup>35</sup>  
Kirk, op.cit., p. 27.

<sup>36</sup>  
The change also is said to have reflected "debate within the Russian Government." McNeill, op.cit., pp. 342, 352, 352n.

Germany.<sup>37</sup> The arrest in May of the leaders of the Pan-Turanian movement which had aimed since 1940 at uniting under one government all Turkish-speaking people, including the twenty million in Russia, was an effort to win the favour of the latter. However, Soviet opinion was not appeased by this and the Soviet government daily, Izvestia (News), was openly satirical of the 'rather late' discovery of this pro-German movement.<sup>38</sup>

In February 1945, at the last plenary session of the Yalta Conference, Stalin asked that the revision of the Montreux Convention to which he referred as a treaty that was "out of date" should be considered at the next meeting of the British, American and Soviet Foreign Ministers. He argued that it was impossible to accept a situation in which Turkey had "her hand at the throat of Russia" and that the interests of Russia should be considered, at the same time providing that Turkey's independence and territorial integrity would be guaranteed. Britain and France agreed.<sup>39</sup> Turkey's declaration of war on Germany on 23 February, 1945, was received with the sarcasm of the Soviet government who soon after denounced the Soviet-Turkish treaty of neutrality and non-aggression "on the

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<sup>37</sup> L. Thomas and R. Frye, The United States and Turkey and Iran (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1951), p. 99.

<sup>38</sup> Kirk, op.cit., pp. 460-461.

<sup>39</sup> Foreign Relations of the United States, Diplomatic Papers, The Conference of Malta and Yalta 1945 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1955), pp. 916-917. The background to the Russian argument was the fact that Turkey allowed Italian vessels to use the Straits during the war.

ground that it needed to be adjusted to the new situation."<sup>40</sup> The Soviet government were determined to have the status quo of the Turkish Straits modified in their own interest.

#### During World War II: Persia

Unlike Turkey, Persia at the outbreak of World War II was not of any immediate interest to Soviet Russia. At that stage, Persia was under no obligations to the Allies and was on good terms with Germany. The Russo-Persian treaty of 25 March, 1940, gave Persia transit facilities for her trade with Germany from which Russia benefited. Persian-German trade relations were flourishing and German technicians and "tourists" poured into the country in great numbers. No treaty was concluded, however, as Persia did not want to be involved in hostilities with the Allies.

Hitler's attack on Soviet Russia, however, changed the whole situation. Russia desperately needed Allied material aid and Persia was the easiest transit route for it. However, the presence of a large number of Germans in the country, together with their anti-Allied activities, might have obstructed the passage of these goods. Therefore, in the period between 19 July and 25 August, 1941, both Britain and Russia started a despatch of notes to the Persian government asking for the

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<sup>40</sup> Kirk, op.cit., p. 28.

departure of Germans whose presence was unnecessary and for the cessation of anti-Allied activities. At the same time Soviet Russia and Britain "launched a vigorous propaganda of intimidation" which "irritated the Iranians enormously." In her reply, however, Persia was unwilling to comply with the Anglo-Soviet demands at the expense of her relations with Germany and so she gave reassurances that there was no justification for the Anglo-Soviet fears.<sup>41</sup>

On 25 August, the British and Soviet envoys to Tehran delivered to the Persian government notes conveying their decision to advance their troops into the country. Unlike the British note, the Soviet note found legal justification for the move by basing it on Article VI of the treaty of 1921 - Soviet troops were thus being introduced into Persia in self-defence, as German activities were considered a threat to the security of Russia, and their withdrawal when the danger was over was promised in accordance with the same treaty.<sup>42</sup>

The Anglo-Soviet troops thus invaded Persia and on 29 January, 1942, a tripartite treaty confirmed the situation in which the country was divided into a British zone in the south and centre, a neutral zone under Shah Mohamad Pahlavi around Tehran and Meshed, and a Soviet zone comprising the five northern

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George Lenszowski, Russia and the West in Iran, 1918-1948 (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1949), pp. 167-168.

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Kirk, op.cit., pp. 134-136.

states of Azerbaijan, Mazanderan, Gilan, Astarabad and Khorasan. The Allies, by this treaty, promised to respect the territorial integrity and independence of Persia, to protect her against foreign aggression and to withdraw within six months after the end of the war.<sup>43</sup>

To Russia, the occupation of Persia meant not only securing a transit route but an opportunity to extend communist policy outside her own borders. Her position was particularly favoured by the fact that the changed scene left Britain, her traditional rival, as an ally. The Soviet authorities thus treated the northern zone as conquerors. The land left behind by landowners who moved into the south was taken over by the Soviet authorities. Foreigners were not allowed to enter the zone. In the province of Azerbaijan, Persian officers were replaced by Soviet officers. Further, the Soviet authorities' control of the north gave them the use of the principal source of food supplies within Persia so that the British had to import food for the south which was a food deficit area. The Soviet government exploited the difficulties arising from this situation by trying to win the favour of the Persian government at the expense of the Western Allies. In September 1942, for example, and again in April 1943, when there was a scarcity of food in the south, the Soviet government sent a gift of wheat by which they won the favour of both the Persian government and the

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Hurewitz, Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East, II, 232-234.

Persian press, although the amount was less than what the northern territory would have normally supplied to the south.<sup>44</sup>

On the other hand, propaganda activities were carried on in the zone on a large scale. They stressed the accomplishments of Soviet troops in the war in such a way as to overshadow the Western effort, and supplied the press with a flow of despatches on Soviet economic, social, artistic and political achievements. The frequency and volume of the despatches proved that they were aimed at serving general propaganda purposes more than the war effort.<sup>45</sup>

These propaganda activities spread to the south too and took the form of press propaganda through continuous contacts of the Soviet Press Attaché with the editors in Tehran, of cultural propaganda through the establishment in autumn 1943 of the Irano-Soviet Society for Cultural Relations, war propaganda through radio Tehran which had to give the Allies a certain amount of time for broadcasting their news, and through films, the Soviet Hospital in Tehran and the relief work done by the Red Army.

Censorship was another instrument of Soviet policy. The Tripartite treaty of January 1942, had provided that Britain, Persia or Russia could veto news despatched by private agencies. Russia in this case was at an advantage as the Tass agency was

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Lenczowski, op.cit. See also Arther C. Millspaugh, Americans in Persia (Washington: The Brookings Institution, 1946), pp. 174-182, 184-186.

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Lenczowski, op.cit., p. 211.



owned by the government and therefore could not be interfered with, while Reuter, United Press and Associated Press were private. The Soviet authorities could thus veto any news sent by these, reproduce it in their own interest and despatch it by Tass.<sup>46</sup>

The main channel through which Soviet policy poured, however, was the Tuda Party. Whether Tuda was really communist or not cannot be definitely stated, although evidence seems to be in favor of the affirmative. Officially inaugurated in January, 1942, its origin goes back to 1938 when the Persian government under Riza Shah had arrested communist agitators and put them in jail. The abdication of Riza Shah and the succession of Shah Mohamed Pahlavi in September 1941, was followed by the granting of amnesty to political prisoners. Among those released were the founders of the Tuda Party or the Party of the Masses. Although organized like communist parties, with a central executive committee, a control commission and 3 secretaries, Tuda did not call itself communist nor did it ask for revolution or public ownership. It took the form of a liberal party and asked for reform with stress on the welfare of the workers and the peasantry. It also avoided direct communist propaganda and so appealed to the young intelligentsia who were liberal and anti-imperialist. The Party had extremists who seemed to follow Marxian ideology. Like any other party, it had moderates too.

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Ibid., pp. 199-206.

These were mainly the intellectuals who had come in contact with poverty and misery and had no hope in their government for satisfactory reform. These were patriotic Persians, neither pro-Russian nor pro-British. To them, Tuda was not the embodiment of political and economic theories but the way to overthrow the government and achieve social reform. In July 1943, Tuda founded the Freedom Front which was a coalition of newspapers advocating liberalism and progress and included both Tuda and non-communist papers. During the elections of 1943, they carried out a vigorous campaign against the return to Persia of the anti-communist leader, Seyyid Ziauddin Tabatabai, whom they accused of being a British stooge. Eight Tuda candidates and thirty Tuda-supported nominees became deputies, and the Party gained strong grounds.<sup>47</sup>

The Tehran Conference of the Big Three closed this period of Soviet policy towards Persia. At its conclusion on 1st December, 1943, it issued a declaration which recognized Persia's role of assistance to the Allies during the war, promised economic aid and reaffirmed the Big Three's respect for her independence and territorial integrity.<sup>48</sup>

A decisive turn in Soviet-Persian relations took place in 1944 as a result of Anglo-American competition for oil

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Ibid., pp. 223-234, 198n. See also Kirk, op.cit., p.473, L.P. Elwell-Sutton, "Political Parties in Iran, 1941-1948," The Middle East Journal, III (January 1949), 47-51, and A.C. Edwards, "Persia Revisited," International Affairs, XXIII (January 1947), 54-55.

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Lenczowski, op.cit., p. 176.

concessions in Persia. When the Anglo-Soviet occupation of Persia took place there was one active oil company, the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, in the southwest, and another unimportant Russo-Persian one, the Kaviri Khurian, in the north which had been abandoned since the 1920s as drilling there gave no fruitful results. In the autumn of 1943 the British Shell Company presented a request to the Persian government for oil concessions in the southeast and was followed in spring by similar requests from the American Standard Vacuum and Sinclair Oil companies,<sup>49</sup> and as a time gaining device, the Persian government employed American engineers to advise on the resources of the country. On 8 August, 1944, an Anglo-American oil agreement was signed providing for the promotion and co-ordination of the production and distribution of oil in the world. With these developments in view, the Soviet government decided on 6 September to ask the Persian government for oil concessions in the five northern provinces and on 26 September Sergei I. Kavtaradze, the Soviet Vice-Commissar for Foreign Affairs, presented the request. The Persian government, however, had on 2 September decided not to negotiate for concessions with any power before the withdrawal of foreign troops from Persian territory, and so rejected the Soviet move. The United States and Britain accepted the decision of the Persian government

but the Soviet government took a different attitude.<sup>50</sup>

On 24 October, 1944, Kavtaradze gave a press conference at the Soviet Embassy in Tehran in which he criticized the unfriendly attitude of the Persian Prime Minister and appealed to the press to bring pressure on the government in order to comply with Soviet demands, pointing out that Persia would also benefit from the arrangement as it would mean more employment, training in skilled jobs, development of natural resources and a larger market for its products. The Persian press responded to his appeal and the Tuda Party criticized the Prime Minister and agitated for his dismissal. The party also changed its attitude of opposing the granting of oil concessions to all foreigners and supported a grant to Soviet Russia. Demonstrations took place in the square outside the Majlis and Soviet troops "happened" to march into the place at the same time, so that their presence made the Persian government refrain from any action against the demonstration in case it was interpreted as being directed against the Soviet forces. Similar demonstrations took place in the important cities of the northern zone.<sup>51</sup>

The new phase in Soviet policy thus found reflection in the Tuda Party which as a Persian organization had up to then appealed to Persian nationalists as opposed to imperialism. Tuda's enthusiastic support of the Soviet cause, however, revealed the Party's pro-Soviet policy in opposition to its claim of "genuine

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Kirk, op.cit., pp. 475-478.

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Lenczowski, op.cit., pp. 219-221.

liberalism." If Tuda was really nationalist, then why did it want to put national property in foreign hands? This attitude of the Tuda Party made the nationalists turn away from it. By January 1945, a new party, the National Will Party, was inaugurated in the south under the leadership of former Premier Seyyid Ziaduddin Tabatabai. Tuda was no longer the only organized party. The National Will Party criticized Soviet interference in Persian home affairs and advocated a neutral foreign policy for Persia.<sup>52</sup>

The Freedom Front, which by 1944 numbered twentyseven newspapers favoured friendly relations with Soviet Russia so that Moscow radio and press used this feature to show that a majority of Persian public opinion favoured them. The Soviet press too, launched its attacks on the Persian government accusing them of giving in to the influence of the British and the Americans. Izvestia of 4 November, 1944, criticized the presence of American troops on Persian soil without a treaty. "It was [thus] clear that a new element was introduced in the oil debate, namely, the Soviet view that British and American influence was behind Iran's refusal."<sup>53</sup>

Further, Soviet policy in the northern zone was accentuated. A tight control of political activities was maintained. Local Persian officers of whom the Soviet

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Ibid., pp. 234, 242-243, 244-245.

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Ibid., p. 221.

authorities disapproved were dismissed or put in jail<sup>54</sup> and the people were forced to accept the Soviet policy.

Different interpretations have been given to the Soviet request for oil concessions. One was that Soviet Russia really needed oil. But, Soviet reports themselves, published in the Soviet Embassy in Washington on 2 October, 1946, gave figures representing the oil wealth of Russia.<sup>55</sup> Besides, she could have approached Persia on the basis of the 8 August Anglo-American oil agreement or agreed to wait until the end of the war.<sup>56</sup> The other interpretations were that the Soviet government aimed to oblige Persia to refuse all concessions in order not to provoke the Soviets by refusing only theirs, or to obstruct the granting of concessions to the United States so that the latter's presence would not interfere with Soviet schemes there.<sup>57</sup> In any case, Soviet policy showed distrust of the Western Allies and a desire to lay a firm basis for Soviet infiltration into Persia after the war.

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54  
Ibid., p. 198.

55  
Ibid., pp. 218n-219n. There is a possibility that these reports were deliberately falsified or exaggerated for propaganda.

56  
Kirk, op.cit., p. 481.

57  
Lenczowski, op.cit., pp. 217-218. See also L.P. Elwell-Sutton, Persian Oil (London: Lawrence and Weshart Ltd., 1955). He believes that Russia wanted to exclude the British and American oil companies from the north rather than develop oil in the fields themselves.

### Summary

Thus throughout the first two decades of the Bolshevik revolution, the theme of the foreign policy of Soviet Russia was that of building up a security system which would protect the country against foreign attack and in the meantime give her the chance to concentrate on internal development.

In her early years, Soviet Russia was in no position to carry out an aggressive policy as the decline in the effectiveness of Tzarist rule and the losses in World War I had left her so weak that the Bolsheviks had to start almost from scratch. They, therefore, sought to make friends that would act as barriers against aggression. To this end, a series of treaties of friendship starting in 1921 and running through to 1937, was concluded with Turkey, Persia and Afghanistan, their southern neighbours who saw in Soviet Russia an ally against Western imperialism and so were easier to approach and more willing to respond than the Western neighbours such as Poland and Rumania who were anti-Russian, feared communism and looked to the West for help.

In Russia's search for security, the Straits had their traditional appeal so that when she supported Turkey's cause for the right to close them during wartime, it was because her interests coincided with those of Turkey. Still, she did appear in the role of the liberator. In fact, her support of the nationalist movements in Persia, Turkey and Afghanistan made her appear in the role of the liberator when in reality she was keen on having these neighbouring countries freed from rival control

in order to be effective buffers. These countries were not unaware of this and although they accepted Russia's offers of aid, yet they did not go all the way with her and strictly suppressed communism within their own borders.

During World War II, the Straits were of special importance to Russia, but, unlike the pre-war period, her interests and those of Turkey did not coincide. Russia had to discard the role of the liberator for her more immediate interests. While Turkey wanted to remain neutral, Russia wanted her allies to use the Straits and so she strove to involve Turkey in the war whether against the Allies before Hitler's attack of June 1941 or against Hitler after his attack. Russia pressed the latter attitude at every occasion until she abruptly gave up the effort at the Tehran Conference in 1943 for reasons which cannot be finally explained. Turkey's firm attitude, however, aroused her hostility so that she did not hesitate to seize the first opportunity to ask for the revision of the Montreux Convention and the 1925 treaty to her own advantage.

Soviet policy towards Persia during the corresponding period could be divided into two main phases. From 1941 up to 1944, its main characteristic was the desire to maintain an orderly situation in Persia in order not to obstruct the transit of Allied material which Russia badly needed. So, she concentrated on exercising a very strict control over that part of Persia which fell under her sphere of influence. By 1944, however, Allied success was certain and Russia's need for material aid lessened. Thus she used the first opportunity to accentuate her policy



and when American and British oil companies presented their requests for oil concessions, she joined the race. However, Persia's rebuff to them all stopped America and Britain, but not Russia. Once started Russia had to go all the way. She used all means to create trouble and to infiltrate as much as possible.

From this brief survey we see that the pattern of Soviet policy was set. While Russia concentrated on building up a security system, she also tried to infiltrate wherever possible. But, except in Persia where her troops were present to help her carry out Russian aims she was kept at arms' length and her infiltration was not effective. Given the slightest opportunity, Soviet Russia did not hesitate to take advantage of it. Although on a much larger scale, her policy towards the Middle East since the war moved within a similar framework.

## CHAPTER II

### EXPANSION AND REBUFF 1945 - 1947

#### Persia and Turkey

Immediately after the war, Soviet policy towards Persia and Turkey was marked by its new forward character. Whether it was in search of oil, territorial or other concessions, it tried to make use of all opportunities at hand in order to get as much as possible. Russia was coming out of World War II with gains in Eastern Europe and the Far East and although her material resources were weakened Russia still had Marxist ideology and propaganda machinery which she could rely upon in spreading her influence and undermining the West's. In Persia, in addition, she was favoured by the presence of her troops in the north in accordance with the Tripartite agreement.

In conformity with the traditional Soviet policy, Stalin wanted to have a cushion between him and any source of danger to his regime, namely, the West. He felt more secure if British and American influences were excluded from Persia and Turkey and so wanted to make these two countries dependent upon Russia. He could afford an expansionist policy since with the post-war inflation the standard of living in Russia was much higher than what it was during the war<sup>1</sup> and the vicissitudes in the world

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<sup>1</sup>Merle Fainsod, How Russia is Ruled (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953), p. 108.

situation gave him the opportunity to speak from a position of strength. The emphasis on Russian achievements and the pride in Russian nationalism during the war as opposed to the ideology of the pre-war period, was going to be given expression in expansionism. How far did that policy go?

### Persia

In considering Soviet policy towards Persia at the close of World War II, the question of the withdrawal of Soviet troops from the northern zone is worth primary consideration. Russia wanted to keep her troops there as long as possible while she hoped for further concessions. According to Article V of the Tripartite Treaty of 1942, British and Soviet troops were to be allowed to stay in Persia for six months after the surrender of Japan.<sup>2</sup> However, on 19 May, immediately after the German surrender, the new Persian Prime Minister, Ibrahim Hakimi, officially requested the British and the Russians to withdraw their troops. In doing so, he was giving expression to the nationalists' argument that those troops were not needed in Persia any longer as their presence was only necessary to facilitate the transit of war material to Russia and the opening of the Black Sea to Allied fleets in November 1944 had taken care of that. The Soviet reply showed an inflexible attitude

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<sup>2</sup>  
Hurewitz, Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East,  
II, 233-234.

as it reminded the Persian government that Soviet troops could stay on until the deadline agreed upon in the Tripartite Treaty. Further, Soviet propaganda activities were intensified, Soviet shows and exhibits increased and additional hours for the Soviet programs in radio Tehran obtained.<sup>3</sup>

Few months later, the question came up again at the Potsdam Conference, held in July - August 1945 and attended by Truman, Stalin, and Churchill (Atlee). The conference reached an agreement by which Allied troops were to withdraw from Tehran immediately. Withdrawal from the rest of Persia was to be discussed at the Three Foreign Ministers' Conference in London in September.<sup>4</sup> Although before the end of September, all troops withdrew from Tehran some form of Soviet influence in the capital remained. Uniformed troops were replaced by thousands in civilian dress and the military offices connected with the Soviet Embassy and the N.K.V.D. or Secret Police, were retained. When the London Conference was held, the British Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, who had suggested to the Soviet government withdrawal from all Persia except for the oil area in the south and a corresponding area in the north, received the Soviet reply which reaffirmed that no evacuation would take place before the set date of 2 March, 1946.<sup>5</sup> In other words, the Soviet authorities were adhering to

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<sup>3</sup> Lenczowski, op.cit., pp. 284, 285.

<sup>4</sup> Benjamin Shwadran, The Middle East, Oil and the Great Powers (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1955), p. 68.

<sup>5</sup> Lenczowski, op.cit., pp. 285, 287.

the strict letter of the agreement meaning to stay until the last possible moment.

In the meantime, Soviet propaganda was active in supporting nationalist aspirations in the province of Azerbaijan. A movement asking for administrative and cultural autonomy, took on an active form. It was led by Tuda which in that area renamed itself as the Democratic Party. The Persian constitution had since 1907 provided for provincial councils but this provision had never been put into effect. The Soviet authorities exploited the fact that the population of Azerbaijan was mainly Turkish and Kurdish, not Persian, to revive this demand. Their efforts materialized in August 1945 when the Tuda Party occupied government buildings and pressed for autonomy. The episode, however, did not last long and after few weeks the situation was restored temporarily. Interpreters of this movement have referred to it as the "rehearsal" by which the Soviet government tried to find out the strength of the local Tuda Party and the possible reaction of the Persian government and the West.<sup>6</sup>

In the second half of November 1945, the Democrats of Azerbaijan, under the leadership of Jafar Pishevari who had

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., pp. 286-288. The Councils were provided for in Article 29. Helen Miller Davis, Constitutions, Electoral Laws, Treaties of States in the Near and Middle East (2nd printing; Durham: Duke University Press, 1947) p. 82. For a fuller treatment of the episode, see Robert Rossow, "The Battle of Azerbaijan," The Middle East Journal, X (Winter 1956), 17-32.

previously been in Soviet Azerbaijan, launched a coup d'etat by which they seized power. Persian troops, sent to suppress the rebellion, were prevented by the Red Army from entering the Soviet zone.<sup>7</sup>

The Soviet action led to new developments in the question of the withdrawal of the Soviet troops from Persia. Protest against Soviet interference was voiced by the Persian embassies in London and Washington. In response, the United States then sent a note to the Soviet government proposing withdrawal of all Allied troops by 1st January 1946, and two days later the British government despatched a parallel note. However, the fact that the Americans declared on 23 August their decision to withdraw had made Russia feel that America was not interested and that therefore she had only Britain to deal with. Thus the Soviet reply on 29 November rejected both notes and denied having interfered in Persian internal affairs. It further said that the Persian government had been warned that despatch of Persian troops to the area would mean more bloodshed which would necessitate the intervention of the Soviet authorities in order to insure the security of their own troops. On 12 December a Provincial National Assembly was set up in Azerbaijan soon to declare the

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<sup>7</sup> Lenczowski, op.cit., pp. 287-288. Jafar Pishevari had been Commissar of the Interior in the Soviet Republic in Gilan 1920-1921. He had returned to Persia in 1936 to escape the Great Purge, had been imprisoned by Riza Shah and freed after his abdication in 1942. He edited the Tuda newspaper Azhir. In the general elections of 1943 he was elected for Tabriz but his credentials were rejected by the Majlis. Ibid., pp. 224, 229.

autonomy of the province.<sup>8</sup>

The rebellion in Azerbaijan had repercussions in the neighbouring Kurdish province, the capital of which was Mahabad. The Kurdish Democratic Party in September asked for concessions similar to those asked for by the Azerbaijan Democrats. It appealed to the Kurdish masses as its program was the answer to their nationalist aspirations, the Kurds being dispersed in five states which were unsympathetic to their cause. Qadi Mohamed who had lived in Soviet Russia and was well indoctrinated led the movement which in October was reinforced by Kurds who had rebelled against the Iraqi government, fled to Persia and were put by the Soviet authorities under Qadi Mohamed. The Kurdish Peoples' Republic was declared on 15 December, and the dream of Kurdish nationalists for unity was realized.<sup>9</sup>

On the same day, the Persian government asked the British, American and Soviet envoys in Tehran to discuss the questions of early withdrawal and of Soviet interference at the coming Moscow Conference of the Big Three foreign ministers. The conference convened on 19 December. Stalin told James Byrnes, the U.S.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., pp. 289, 292-293. See also James F. Byrnes, Speaking Frankly (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1947), pp. 118-121.

<sup>9</sup> Archie Roosevelt Jr., "The Kurdish Republic of Mahabad," The Middle East Journal, I (July 1947), 254-257. The Soviet authorities did not only help the establishment of autonomous Kurdistan and Azerbaijan, but also brought about a treaty of friendship between the two in order to enable them to present a united front in negotiating with the Persian government besides giving them the status of statehood. Cf. the Russian efforts to bring about treaties between Turkey, Persia and Afghanistan in the late 1920s, pp. 13-14 above.

Secretary of State, that withdrawal of Soviet troops in March would depend upon Persia's conduct as he feared sabotage in the Baku oil fields. Ernest Bevin, the British Foreign Secretary, then suggested to send a Big Three Commission to investigate the situation. Molotov first seemed to agree as he amended the proposal and left in doubt the date of withdrawal, but he changed his attitude at the next meeting and declared that the Persian problem could not be considered as it was not properly placed on the agenda of the conference.<sup>10</sup>

Rebuffed at Moscow, Persia decided to turn to the United Nations. On 19 January, 1946, she asked that the United Nations should investigate the matter. It is worth mentioning here that the United Nations Security Council was going to meet for the first time. At its very first meeting it was going to be presented by a protest against one of its permanent members when a smooth send-off for the organization was desired. At the Security Council Vishynsky, the Russian delegate, argued that the Soviet troops had nothing to do with the independent and spontaneous movement of Azerbaijan and that the issue should be dropped from the agenda of the Security Council and that it should be settled by negotiations between the Soviet government and Persia. On 30 January, the Security Council decided to refer the issue to such negotiations, the progress of which was to be reported back to it.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Byrnes, loc. cit.

<sup>11</sup>The United Nations, Security Council: Official Records, First Year, First Series, Supplement No. 1, pp. 16-19. See also I.D.W. Talmadge, "The U.N.O.'s First Test," Current History, X (March 1946), 195-196.



In the meantime, a cabinet crisis in Persia, due to the failure of the cabinet to settle the quarrel with Russia and to economic difficulties created by Soviet pressure, led to the resignation of Premier Hakimi who was replaced on 27 January by Ahmad Qavam us-Saltaneh, known for his flirtation with Tuda.<sup>12</sup> Qavam played a very important role in the Russo-Persian dispute. With extensive authority at hand, he handled the situation "as a consummate political juggler" although "opinions later differed as to whether he was a shrewd politician or a lucky opportunist."<sup>13</sup> On 19 February, he headed a mission to Moscow in order to carry out negotiations according to the Security Council's recommendations. On his return on 11 March, he announced that the talks had failed as he could not accept the Soviet demands. Those demands were autonomy for Azerbaijan within the Persian framework, the establishment of a Russo-Persian joint stock company to replace the oil concessions with fiftyone percent of its revenue to go to Soviet Russia and fortynine percent to Persia, and the retention of Soviet troops in some parts of Persia for an indefinite period.<sup>14</sup>

During Qavam's visit to Moscow, the second of March, the deadline for the withdrawal of all foreign troops from Persia, came. The British troops completed their withdrawal on that date but the Soviet troops evacuated the provinces of Khorasan, Shahrud

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<sup>12</sup> Lenczowski, op.cit., p. 295.

<sup>13</sup> Hurewitz, Middle East Dilemmas, p. 28.

<sup>14</sup> Lenczowski, op.cit., p. 296.

and Semnan only. The Soviet government announced that the troops in the remaining parts of northern Persia were to be retained until the situation was clarified.<sup>15</sup> Persia again appealed to the United Nations and Husain Ala, the Persian Ambassador to Washington, brought the issue before the Security Council on 18 March.

Two days later, a new Soviet Ambassador, Ivan V. Sadchikov, arrived in Tehran. He was reported to have given Qavam a message from Stalin. Qavam, whose plan was to conciliate the Russians and insure their withdrawal, arrested the anti-Soviet leader, Seyyid Ziauddin and told a press conference on 23 March that an agreement with Russia could be reached by negotiations. The next day the Soviet Ambassador gave Qavam three notes to the effect that if Qavam agreed to consider an oil agreement and recognized the autonomy of Azerbaijan, then withdrawal would be insured, provided "no unforeseen circumstances should occur."<sup>16</sup> Russia in other words, was trying to use the continuing occupation for bargaining with the Persians.

At the Security Council, in the meantime, Andrei Gromyko, the Soviet delegate, was trying to postpone the consideration of the issue on the basis that negotiations between the two governments were in progress. He did not want the negotiations

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., pp. 296-297.

<sup>16</sup> George Kirk, The Middle East 1945-1950, ed., by Arnold Toynbee, (Survey of International Affairs, 1939-1946, London: Oxford University Press, 1954), p. 69. See also Elwell-Sutton, "Political Parties in Iran," op.cit., p. 58.

to be under pressure from the Security Council in order to be in a better position to bargain.<sup>17</sup> Thus, on 26 March, he argued that the Persian complaint should be dropped from the agenda of the Council. Defeated on this, he asked two days later to have the discussion postponed until 10 April. Defeated again, he left the chamber of the Council. Husain Ala, on the other hand, denied Gromyko's claim that a three-point agreement had been reached between his country and Russia.<sup>18</sup>

As the Security Council listened to the arguments of the Persian delegate in the absence of the Soviet delegate, it was not willing to take any action against the Soviet government. In effect, Gromyko's attitude was equivalent to a veto as it paralyzed the argument. Therefore, the decision reached was that the Secretary General of the United Nations should report on the progress of negotiations on 3 April. He was to find out in particular whether the proposed Soviet withdrawal was conditional, as Persia complained, or not.<sup>19</sup>

On 3 April, Gromyko reported that negotiations for an oil agreement were independent of the question of withdrawal. The Security Council then agreed to defer further discussion of

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<sup>17</sup> Another explanation is that the Soviet delegate wanted to delay the meeting of the Security Council as he hoped to bring about a change in the attitude of the Persian government or in the government themselves. E.D. Carman, Soviet Imperialism (Washington: Public Affairs Press, 1950), p. 128.

<sup>18</sup> The United Nations, Security Council: Official Records, First Year, First Series, Supplement No. 2, pp. 11-13, 27, 56, 58, 63.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., pp. 70-82.

the issue until 6 May when both governments were to report whether withdrawal was complete or not.<sup>20</sup> The next day, Premier Qavam and the Soviet Ambassador in Tehran concluded an agreement by which a) evacuation by the Red Army was to be completed within one month and a half after 24 March 1946, b) a joint stock Persian-Soviet oil company would be established and ratified by the Majlis within seven months after 24 March, and c) a "peaceful arrangement" would be made with Azerbaijan, the question of which was considered an internal Persian affair, "for the carrying out of improvements in accordance with existing laws and in benevolent spirit toward the people of Azerbaijan."<sup>21</sup>

Although it may be argued that by this agreement Persia scored "half a victory" as she was able to raise her case against a strong state before the Security Council and as she obtained a Russian promise for evacuation,<sup>22</sup> the agreement in fact was a success for Russia. It showed that withdrawal was not unconditional but that it was closely connected with the Azerbaijan and the oil questions. The way the relations between the Azerbaijan government and the central government in Tehran were defined also made it clear that the Azerbaijan question was not really treated as an internal affair but instead was an object of Soviet-Persian arguments until a settlement was reached.

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., pp. 84, 89, 97.

<sup>21</sup> Lenczowski, op.cit., pp. 299-300.

<sup>22</sup> Sidney B. Fay, "Russia and the Middle East," Current History, X (May 1946), 385.

The only outlet for Qavam was the condition that the oil agreement had to be ratified by the Majlis and the Majlis had been dissolved in March in preparation for general elections.

On 18 April, Persia reported to the Security Council the withdrawal of Soviet troops from four northern provinces and a promise to evacuate Azerbaijan by 14 May. On 21 May, Persia announced that evacuation was complete.<sup>23</sup> The firm stand of Britain and the United States finally accomplished its aim. On the 29th Husain Ala was asked by his government to make no further statements on the subject.<sup>24</sup> The Security Council's consideration of the issue stopped there.

As far as Azerbaijan was concerned, an agreement was reached on 14 June, 1946. Azerbaijan was given a provincial council and the right to select its own government. Both Turkish and Persian were recognized as official languages and the questions of taxation, distribution of land and parliamentary representation were settled in favour of Azerbaijan. Its army, however, was to be incorporated into the Persian army.<sup>25</sup> Again, Soviet Russia scored a success.

After Qavam had secured withdrawal of the Soviet troops he held the trump card. He first turned his attention towards the Tuda Party. On 29 June he formed the Democratic Party of Persia in order to counteract Tuda. Except among the tribes, the

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<sup>23</sup> The United Nations, Security Council: Official Records, First Year, First Series, No. 2, pp. 50-51, 52-54, 285f.

<sup>24</sup> Kirk, The Middle East 1945-1950, p. 73.

<sup>25</sup> Lenczowski, op.cit., pp. 301-302.

power of which Tuda underestimated and where it could not penetrate, Tuda was gaining ground in the country as it was supporting the peasants against the landlords and the workers against the employers. Communist influence was in particular spreading to the oil workers in the south. Tuda exploited the fact that the world war had limited the ability of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company to provide its workers with better conditions and encouraged a general strike on 16 July in Abadan. Violence was used and several people were killed or wounded. This strike could be considered as a part of a general offensive against the British oil interests in the region as a similar one occurred against the Iraq Petroleum Company in Karkuk simultaneously.<sup>26</sup> However, it is wrong to say that this strike was wholly the work of Tuda. According to investigations, reasons behind it were originally purely economic. The workers were asking for better working conditions such as provided for in the labour law which the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company was not implementing. One demand, for example, was for pay for one day holiday a week, namely, Friday. That Tuda did capitalize on that is a different question. Both the Persian government and the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company were responsible for these conditions, and the British contributed to the violence of the action by encouraging the Arabs in the area to demonstrate too.<sup>27</sup> In any case, Qavam did not want to be hostile to Tuda yet, and

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<sup>26</sup> Kirk, The Middle East 1945-1950, pp. 74, 75n, 76.

<sup>27</sup> Elwell-Sutton, Persian Oil, pp. 143-149.

so he reshuffled his cabinet on 1st August and admitted three Tuda members.

Qavam's opportunity to suppress Tuda, however, came two months later when the granting of autonomy to Azerbaijan had repercussions in the provinces of Isfahan and Fars in the south. A rebellion among the anti-communist Bakhtiari tribes there took place. They asked for autonomy similar to that gained by Azerbaijan. Some of their demands were granted and as a result the Tuda ministers in the cabinet resigned. It was reported also that the cabinet crisis arose because Qavam dismissed the Tuda governors of Tehran, Isfahan and Kermanshah.<sup>28</sup> Whether Qavam knew about the Bakhtiari rebellion beforehand and used it to get rid of Tuda is not a remote possibility. Qavam's suppression of Tuda was thus given free rein.

In the meantime, elections for the new Majlis to which the oil agreement was to be presented for ratification, were due. The central government in Tehran decided to have its troops maintain order throughout the country during the elections. This meant that government troops would have to go into Azerbaijan and the Kurdish Republic. Azerbaijan resisted but on 12 December surrendered. The Kurds did not resist but received the Persian army peacefully. They not only were disunited, but they also hated any kind of control, distrusted the Russian attitude towards religion and considered the Russians their traditional enemies.

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Kirk, The Middle East 1945-1950, pp. 77-79.

Pishevari fled to Russia and Qadi Mohamed was later hanged. The Persian central authorities reincorporated Azerbaijan and Kurdistan into Persia and destroyed all symbols of autonomy.<sup>29</sup> The surprising element in this episode is the failure of the Soviet government to come to the rescue of the puppet state which they created. Whether Russia was calculating on sacrificing Azerbaijan for the sake of the oil concession or whether the maintenance of the state was not possible because of the resistance of the United States and Britain to Soviet policy or the economic difficulties which arose during the war are questions which still remain unanswered.

Two more explanations of Russia's attitude are given by George Lenczowski. One is that "Russia feared the effect of adverse publicity upon the still influential pro-Soviet 'liberals' in the Western world," and the other is that "Moscow decided to turn from a direct to an indirect method of conquering Asia, once the direct method proved too embarrassing."<sup>30</sup> Rossow adds that Russia believed that Azerbaijan would be "more useful as a cancer inside the body of Iran than as a detached outlying base for Soviet assault forces,"<sup>31</sup> not to mention the effect of the world press which criticized the Russian measures.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., pp. 79-83. See also Roosevelt, op.cit., pp. 263, 266-267.

<sup>30</sup> George Lenczowski, The Middle East in World Affairs (2nd ed. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1956), p. 183. Subsequently referred to as The Middle East.

<sup>31</sup> Rossow, op.cit., p. 26.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 24-25.



The year 1947 saw new developments in East-West relations with the introduction of the Truman Doctrine and the Marshal Plan, and the response these evoked from Soviet Russia. As these have more bearing on Russo-Turkish relations, they will be discussed in the next section. It suffices here to say that they did bolster up Persia's resistance to Russia as much as they accounted for the latter's retreat.

In June of that year Qavam formed a new Persian cabinet with several members more inclined to the Western powers. The strings of the Russian hold were getting loose. On 12 August and again on 15 September, the Soviet Ambassador in Tehran asked for the presentation of the oil agreement to the Majlis for ratification. After all, Russia had withdrawn her forces from Persia only after she had obtained from Qavam a promise for an oil concession. However, on 22 October the Majlis voted by an overwhelming majority that in view of the Persian government's decision in September 1944 which prohibited all negotiations for oil concessions before withdrawal of foreign troops, the negotiations were null and void. In a couple of months Russia lost what she had striven to gain for several years.

On 24 December, Ibrahim Hakimi formed the new cabinet and on the same day a United States Military Mission, sent to raise the efficiency of the Persian army, was announced by the United States government to be on its way to Persia in accordance with an agreement signed on 6 October. A United States grant of military credit of \$25,000,000. had been granted back in

June.<sup>33</sup> American policy was gaining ground and Soviet policy for the time being had a marked rebuff.

### Turkey

With a similar background, Soviet Russia's attitude towards Turkey during the corresponding period was dominated by her desire for the revision of the Turko-Soviet Treaty of Neutrality and Non-Aggression of 1925 and the Straits Convention of 1936, as she considered both treaties to be in need of adaptation to the new situation. The first was due to expire on 7 December, 1945, and the latter was due for renewal on 9 November, 1946, if not denounced by any of the signatories three months before.

For twenty years the Turko-Soviet treaty had been the symbol of friendship between the two countries. This treaty also helped Turkey in following a neutral policy during the war. Thus, the treaty was of particular importance to Turkey so that when the Soviet demand for its abrogation was sent to the Turkish government in the spring of 1945, Turkey agreed to negotiate for a new treaty. On 7 June, Molotov told the Turkish Ambassador in Moscow that the treaty should be revised in such a way as to give Russia a base on the Black Sea Straits and to return to her the districts of Kars and Ardahan which Russia had annexed in the war of 1877-8 and had given back to Turkey in 1921 in return for

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Kirk, The Middle East 1945-1950, pp. 86-88, 89.

Baku, along with a revision of the Montreux Convention.<sup>34</sup>

In order to win popular support, Russia in the meantime extended an invitation to Armenians all over the world to go back to Soviet Armenia and according to Moscow News of 16 July, 1948, about 86 thousand of them did eventually return.<sup>35</sup> Even the Armenian Orthodox Church was utilized. Although restrictions on religion were lifted up during the war when the church was useful to the state in keeping up the morale of the people and in maintaining friendship with the Allies, it was only in June 1945, that the Soviet government asked the Armenians to send delegates to Soviet Armenia for the election of their new Catholicos, a practice which had been stopped since the Bolshevik revolution. The Armenians thus supported the Soviet claim to Kars and Ardahan and the new Catholicos even declared that the two districts should be returned to their rightful owners by being joined to Soviet Armenia.

Towards the end of 1945, the Soviet territorial claims expanded further. On 20 December, while the Big Three Foreign Ministers' Conference was being held in Moscow, Moscow radio and

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Cevat Acikalin, "Turkey's International Relations," International Affairs, XXIII (October 1947) 487. In response, however, radio Ankara announced that the Soviet government also suggested that in return for Kars and Ardahan, Turkey should get Aleppo from Syria. There is no sure evidence of this report except for the fact that back in December, 1941, when Eden visited Moscow, Stalin had suggested that Turkey should annex parts in northern Syria in return for other concessions. See Kirk, The Middle East 1945-1950, p. 21.

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Kirk, The Middle East 1945-1950, p. 23.

press republished a demand by two Georgian historians for the annexation to Soviet Georgia of the coastal region north of East Anatolia, that is, the territory adjacent to Ardahan and Kars on the West. This meant moving the frontier about 200 miles.<sup>36</sup>

If by appealing to the Armenians and by voicing the Georgian Professors' demands for Kars and Ardahan Russia hoped to induce Turkey to soften her attitude towards the revision of the Straits Convention and the renewal of the 1925 treaty, Russia failed. Turkey hardened as she believed that Russia would not go as far as risking a war in order to enforce her demands, and that by resisting until the world situation was settled and the glory of Russia's victory in the war wore off, she would succeed.<sup>37</sup> What is more probable, however, is that Russia realized that direct pressure from her upon Turkey would throw the latter into the arms of the Western powers, and that, therefore, she tried to achieve her objectives by agitation. It is not likely at all that Russia was serious about this demand, but she used it for propaganda with the aim of putting Turkey in the wrong as regards public opinion while she appeared as the supporter of the nationalist demands of the Georgians. Further, the fact that she let two Georgian historians, not officials, to present it, meant that she could go back on it any time without doing any harm to her prestige.

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<sup>36</sup>  
Ibid., pp. 23, 25-26.

<sup>37</sup>  
A.C. Edwards, "The Impact of the War on Turkey,"  
International Affairs, XXII (July 1946), 398-399.

In the meantime, the Potsdam Conference was held. When the question of Turkey came up, Churchill expressed his willingness to recommend free passage of Soviet war and commercial ships through the Straits at all times but declined to accept the claim for Kars and Ardahan which, he believed, would "unduly alarm" the Turks. Stalin argued that Turkey was too weak to defend the Straits and guarantee free passage of Soviet ships. Truman suggested that free navigation in Europe's international waterways, mainly the Danube, should also be guaranteed. Stalin rejected this on the ground that it was not on the agenda of the conference and the communiqué published at the end of the conference had no reference to the talks regarding the Straits. The protocol of the conference, not published until 1947, stated that the Montreux Convention should be revised in order to be adapted to the new situation and that the British, Soviet and American governments should each negotiate with the Turkish government for this purpose.<sup>38</sup>

It is thus apparent that at the end of World War II, the Big Powers were in general agreement that the Straits Convention should be revised. The Convention was out of date because of strategical changes caused by the war, because the League of Nations, which existed no more, was often mentioned in it, and finally, because the Allies wanted to exclude vanquished Japan

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Ibid., pp. 22-23. See also James Byrnes, op.cit., pp. 77-78. Ernest D. Carman, in his book Soviet Imperialism, p. 115, says that the communiqué deliberately did not mention the Straits as Britain and the United States did not want to support Soviet demands there or in Kars, and Ardahan.

as a signatory.<sup>39</sup> The Potsdam Conference, however, reflected disparity of interests which could not be reconciled.

In accordance with the recommendations of the Potsdam Conference, the American Ambassador in Ankara delivered on 2 November, 1945, a proposal to the Turkish government recognizing the sovereignty of Turkey and providing for the opening of the Straits to warships of all Black Sea powers at all times while the passage of warships of other nations would be denied. The Turkish Prime Minister on 6 December expressed his government's approval of the American proposal as a basis for discussion.<sup>40</sup> The Times, however, in a message from its correspondent in Turkey on 27 December, wondered what the position of Turkey would be if she got involved in a war with Russia.<sup>41</sup> Most probably this Times despatch represented the confident views of the Turkish official circles.

As mentioned before, the Montreux Convention was due for renewal automatically on 9 November, 1946. Article 29 had provided for its revision at the end of every five-year period. In 1941, revision was not desirable because of the war, but by 1945 conditions had changed and the need for revision was felt

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"Russia, Turkey and the Straits," The World Today, II (September 1946), 399.

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Harry N. Howard, "Some Recent Developments in the Problem of the Turkish Straits, 1945-1946," The Department of State Bulletin, XVI (January 26, 1947) 143-145.

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Kirk, The Middle East 1945-1950, pp. 22-23, 24.

by all. On 8 August, the Soviet government delivered a note to the Turkish government complaining that Turkey had failed to keep the Straits closed to Axis naval vessels during the war, and adopted the United States proposal of 2 November, 1945, adding that Turkey and the other Black Sea powers as well should have the responsibility of the Straits and that Turkey and Russia should jointly prevent hostile non-Black Sea powers from using the Straits.<sup>42</sup>

It should be remembered, here, that Turkey was no more a great power to be supported by Britain in order to keep Russia out of the Mediterranean, that the Black Sea was surrounded by four littoral states two of which, Rumania and Bulgaria, were Russian satellites, and that therefore, it was logical for Russia to consider any attempt by the Great Powers to deter her from controlling the Straits an attempt aimed at a possible future attack on her. It is apparent, therefore, that the problem was a matter of international politics, especially as Turkey was the dividing line between the Russian and the British spheres of influence.<sup>43</sup> Of course, it is also possible that Russia was aiming at obstructing the flow of Western goods to the countries of the Danube valley.<sup>44</sup>

On 19 August, 1946, the United States government sent their reply to the Soviet government stating that the Soviet note

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<sup>42</sup> Howard, op.cit., p. 146.

<sup>43</sup> "Russia, Turkey and the Straits," op.cit., p. 400.

<sup>44</sup> Richard W. Van Alstyne, "The Question of the Turkish Straits," Current History, XIII (August 1947), 70.

had no reference to the United Nations when the Security Council could deal with any attack or threat of attack on the Straits, and that the responsibility of the Straits should be Turkey's alone. Three days later, a similar British reply was sent. On 22 August, the Turkish reply defended Turkey's allowing Axis vessels to pass through the Straits during the war on the ground that those Axis ships had none of the characteristics which would describe a warship under the Montreux Convention. It also rejected the Soviet proposal for sharing the control of the Straits for being incompatible with Turkish sovereignty and security.<sup>45</sup>

On 25 August, a Tass agency message from Beirut said that the British were establishing military bases with a radar station near the Straits. Few days later, radio Moscow added that British officers were training the Turks.<sup>46</sup> In the meantime, Soviet troop movements near the Transcaucasian frontier and an invasion of Kars and Ardahan by a group of two hundred Armenians were reported. This, in addition to Soviet Black Sea fleet manoeuvres near Transcaucasia,<sup>47</sup> amounted to a war of nerves conducted by the Soviet government along the eastern borders of Turkey in the hope of weakening the Turkish government and wrecking their economy.

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<sup>45</sup> Howard, op.cit., pp. 146-148.

<sup>46</sup> The British Foreign Office confirmed that Turkey, like other countries, was being supplied with radar equipment.

<sup>47</sup> Kirk, The Middle East 1945-1950, pp. 32-33.



With such a background, the second Soviet note was despatched to the Turkish government on 24 September, 1946. The note stated that the Black Sea Straits were of immediate interest to the Black Sea Powers and they should be put under the joint control of Turkey and Russia. The note further explained that the Straits were not international waterways as the Black Sea was a closed sea, and so Turkey should not indiscriminately object to joint Turko-Soviet control over them.

On 9 October, the United States and Britain replied that the exchange of views between Turkey and the Big Three, as recommended by the Potsdam Conference, had been accomplished and that therefore the correspondence should be stopped. The British and American governments further expressed their readiness to participate in a new conference of the signatories of the Montreux Convention for its revision. The Turkish government sent their reply on 18 October. Besides expressing a view similar to that which came in the American and British reply, it repeated the reply of 22 August and added that Turkey could not accept the argument that the Black Sea was a closed sea.<sup>48</sup> The Soviet reply on 26 October agreed that the correspondence should be stopped but disapproved of the suggestion for a conference to discuss the matter.<sup>49</sup>

Thus the exchange of notes came to an end. Russia had

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Howard, op.cit., pp. 148-150.

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Harry N. Howard, "The Development of United States Policy in the Near East, 1945-1951," Department of State Publication 4446 (Washington; November 1952), p. 811.

aimed at securing from Britain and the United States a free hand to deal with Turkey alone in order to make her sign a treaty that would replace the Montreux Convention according to her own interest, but failed.<sup>50</sup>

In the meantime, the Greek communists' war against the Greek government had been revived from bases in satellite states. This added more pressure along Turkey's western borders. Alarmed, the Turkish government put the district of Thrace under martial law and suppressed communist activities in Istanbul.<sup>51</sup> On 17 December, 1946, socialist parties and workers' organizations were suppressed, communist suspects arrested and newspapers banned.<sup>52</sup>

On the other hand, United States interference became more active. In fact, it had been the failure of the Soviet troops to withdraw from Persia on 2 March, 1946, that had given the danger signal. As early as that, the body of the Turkish Ambassador to Washington who had died sixteen months before had been escorted back to Turkey not by an ordinary American naval vessel but by the battleship U.S.S. Missouri, and on 28 August, while the Soviet manoeuvres in Transcaucasia and the reported Armenian movements had been taking place, the U.S. aircraft

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Michael Sokolnicki, The Turkish Straits (Beirut: American Press, 1950), p. 38.

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The Turkish government were more concerned about Istanbul than Ankara because Istanbul had a more mixed population where communism could breed.

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Kirk, The Middle East 1945-1950, pp. 34-35.

carrier, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and seven other vessels had visited the Mediterranean. In other words, the United States was trying to show Russia her limits. When in February 1947, Britain had to stop her financial aid to Turkey because of economic crisis at home, President Truman introduced the Truman Doctrine which extended U.S. economic and military aid to Turkey and Greece and which was passed in the Senate on 22 April, 1947.<sup>53</sup>

As the Truman Doctrine initiated the American "policy of containment" and clearly aimed at limiting Soviet expansion in the Middle East, it was considered by Soviet Russia as an attempt to extend American domination over the area. This may be one explanation for the ultimate refusal of the Soviet government to participate in the Paris Conference which determined the application of the Marshall Plan in September 1947. The Marshall Plan which extended U.S. economic aid to Europe for its economic recovery, was definitely the second step in the American policy of containment. The division of the world into two camps was being given full recognition.

In the light of these developments, the withdrawal of Russia from Persia and Turkey in 1947 may be explained. In September of that year, Stalin's close associate A.A. Zhdanov, represented Russia at the conference which established the Cominform (Communist Information Bureau) as the successor of the Comintern which was dissolved in 1943, and gave a speech in which

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<sup>53</sup>  
Ibid., pp. 27-28, 36.

he spoke of the world being divided into two camps, "imperialist" led by the United States and "anti-imperialist" led by Russia, and stressed the need to combat the "imperialists."<sup>54</sup> While Zhdanov founded the Cominform to organize world communism, he also tightened the hold of the Party on all aspects of cultural life in such a way as to uphold everything Soviet and deprecate Western culture and counter-attack Western propaganda. This amounted to an "ideological declaration of war" against the West and marked the beginning of the "cold war" between East and West.<sup>55</sup> Russia was reversing her forward policy in order to spread communism underhand.

A by-product of the cold war was the emphasis on industrialization and the armament race.<sup>56</sup> While Zhdanov tightened the hold on cultural life, Stalin stressed these two aspects so that the expansionist policy had to be sacrificed while the country was being strengthened for counteracting the Western powers.

Thus two years of Soviet overtures towards Persia and Turkey failed. Although these two years showed that Russian policy was still dominated by the desire for universal communism, it was mainly conditioned by circumstances. The Comintern had been dissolved in 1943 so that its traditional theses governing

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<sup>54</sup> Fainsod, op.cit., p. 114. See also Georg von Rauch, A History of Russia (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1957), p.392.

<sup>55</sup> Rauch, op.cit., p. 401.

<sup>56</sup> Fainsod, op.cit., p. 109.

Soviet action in the foreign field were absent. The timing of the Azerbaijan revolt, for example, was influenced by the evacuation date, as well as by the fact that negotiations with Turkey over the Straits question were at an impasse. Thus although for the purpose of clarity Soviet policy towards Persia and Turkey has been studied separately, yet it must be conceived of as springing from one source and directed into two main directions, with the hope of applying pressure on different areas at the same time so that at least some of the objectives would be attained while the possibility of collective resistance was weakened. As World War II had drawn to an end, Russia had caused complications on Persian soil by creating the puppet state of Azerbaijan, retaining Soviet troops after the deadline for evacuation was passed and using both situations for bargaining with the Persian government in order to obtain oil concessions from the area. As for Turkey, for two years also Russia tried to get territorial concessions along the Turkish eastern border and a privileged position on the Straits, but in vain. Instead of isolating Turkey, she ended up by being the one who was isolated. Russia's need for oil and warm water ports may be justified, but not the methods she used in order to get them. All the forces of Soviet policy - communists and their sympathizers, propaganda, and Soviet military strength, were utilized. In both cases Russia was supporting the nationalist aspirations of a minority group as a pretext for expansion. In both cases she met with resistance. She miscalculated and

the force of Persian and Turkish nationalism, as encouraged and supported by Britain and the United States, won. Russia withdrew from the Middle East and did not come back until she was instigated again by the West.

## CHAPTER III

### SIX QUIET YEARS 1948 - 1953

#### Persia and Turkey

While Soviet policy towards Persia and Turkey during the two immediate post-war years was marked by its forward character, during the next six years Russia reversed that policy so that she limited it to protests against American and British policy and to attempts to establish closer relations with her two neighbours. Adversely, Russia's policy reflected the degree of friendship which existed between her neighbours and Britain and the United States at any given time. As long as Persia's and Turkey's relations with Britain and the United States were smooth, Russia was antagonistic, but whenever there was any conflict, Russia came forward with her friendly appeals to be welcomed by the recipient. However, the Middle East in general was given a secondary position as Russia was busy with the conflict with Tito (1948), the Berlin Blockade (1948-1949) and the war in Korea (1950-1953). This does not mean that Russia's policy during this period was merely stimulated by the world situation. Internal developments in the country itself had a role to play too. Further, it is essential to point out that during this period neither Persia nor Turkey had any direct

problems with Russia and that Persia's main enemy was Britain.

### Persia

It was seen in the previous chapter how the Azerbaijan and Kurdish crises had drawn Persia closer to the United States. Persia who had finally achieved the withdrawal of Soviet troops from her territory, welcomed American aid which was being extended in pursuit of the policy of containment.

Thus Persia had in October 1947, signed a military agreement with the United States by which American technicians were to train and equip the Persian army to the exclusion of non-American aid, unless given with America's consent. In January 1948, the Persian Majlis was considering the purchase of \$10 million worth of arms from the United States. The Soviet government used this opportunity for sending on 31 January a note to the Persian government protesting against the activities of the American military mission in Persia on the ground that it was not really re-equipping and training the Persian army, but was constructing a large air-field for the use of non-Persian aircraft at Qum, 400 miles away from Russia's Caucasian oil fields. The note also complained against other military fortifications, warned that they were incompatible with the spirit of the 1921 Russo-Persian treaty of friendship, and asked that the Persian government should immediately put an end to these activities. The purpose of such a note was to exert pressure on the Persian government in order to turn away from



the United States.

The Persian government and the United States Ambassador in Tehran refuted these charges. The reply of the Persian government, which was sent on 4 February, contained counter-protests against the Soviet government's protection of Azerbaijani and Kurdish "traitors" who had run away to Russia when their respective governments fell a year before. The reply also contained a protest against the provocative broadcasts coming from radio Baku in the Persian language. On 17 February, the Persian Majlis approved the arms deal with the United States which it had been considering.<sup>1</sup> Persia's friendship with the United States and hostility towards Russia were reaffirmed.

Another protest was voiced by Russia through a broadcast from radio Moscow made by a certain professor on 18 March, 1948. The professor accused the United States of trying to control oil in northern Persia and of trying to make Persia a base for attacking Russia, and said that the Soviet government could not allow this to happen on their borders. The Persian government answered that their policy towards the United States was motivated by the desire to maintain the independence and protect the national interests of their country. The Soviet government again replied by reminding the Persian government of the results of their failure to stop Nazi activities in 1941 and refuted the charge of giving refuge to "traitors" as they considered those

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<sup>1</sup>  
Kirk, The Middle East 1945-1950, p. 90. See also Lenczowski, The Middle East, pp. 187-189.

Azerbaijanis and Kurds as nationalists fighting for independence and democracy. The Soviet government despatched another note on 7 April criticising the Persian protest against the broadcast of the Soviet professor on the basis that it was made by an individual citizen who was expressing his own opinion, not by the government.<sup>2</sup> This note also protested against anti-Soviet propaganda and caricatures in the Persian press.

These notes of protest did not have the effect of diverting the Persian government from their friendship with the United States. On the contrary, on 29 July, 1948, Persia signed an agreement with the United States by which she obtained \$16 million credit. The reaction of the Soviet government to this was conveyed by the Soviet Ambassador and Military Attaché in Tehran who repeated the protest that the United States was planning to use Persia as a base for attacking Russia.<sup>3</sup>

While formal protests were taking place, Soviet propaganda activities were also being utilized. Radio broadcasts from Soviet Azerbaijan encouraged the Kurds and Azerbaijanis to rebel. Also several articles containing threats to Persia by referring to Article VI of the 1921 treaty which allowed Russian troops to enter Persia under certain conditions appeared in the

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Cf. the demand of the Georgian historians for the territories adjacent to Kars and Ardahan as a technique used by Soviet Russia in order to be able to refute it later as being given by private citizens, not the government.

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Kirk, The Middle East 1945-1950, pp. 91-92.

Soviet press. Normal trade with Persia also lapsed.<sup>4</sup>

In the first quarter of 1949, Soviet-Persian relations deteriorated still further. In February, Tuda members were arrested and tried, and the party was banned as an alleged plan for a coup d'état in Tehran was announced by the Persian government. In March and April, the Persian government also complained that Soviet troop movements were taking place along the Russo-Persian frontier. As a result of all this, four Soviet consulates in Persia were closed as was also the Persian consulate in Baku.<sup>5</sup>

In the latter part of 1949, the pendulum swung in the opposite direction. On 10 January, the oil crisis between Persia and Britain had become serious when the Persian government had demanded a larger share in the profits of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. The demand had been supported by students' demonstrations in which communists, nationalists and religious extremists participated.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, the United States had failed to respond satisfactorily to the Persian request for the purchase of American wheat when Persia had been suffering of widespread famine which had resulted from crop failure in 1948 and 1949. Persia thus turned to Russia who, taking advantage of the tension, came to her rescue. On 5 October, 1949, the Soviet government sold 100,000 tons of

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<sup>4</sup> Lenczowski, The Middle East, p. 186.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 189.

<sup>6</sup> Kirk, The Middle East 1945-1950, p. 94.

wheat to Persia and also agreed to have a Persian director for the Soviet-Persian Caspian Fisheries which had been treated by Russia as a monopoly since 1927 and the agreement for which was due for renewal in 1952. Also, instructions were reported to have been given to Soviet frontier officers to be more friendly towards Persia.<sup>7</sup>

In the meantime, dissatisfaction with Britain and the United States was growing because of unsatisfactory oil royalties and the hesitation of the United States to finance Persia's development plans. Thus on 4 November, 1950, relations between Persia and Russia were further improved by the conclusion of a trade agreement which was warmly welcomed in both leftist and conservative circles.<sup>8</sup> In April of the next year, when the nationalization of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company was approved by the Persian Majlis and Persia contacted foreign governments to sell them oil, Russia, Czechoslovakia and Hungary (besides Afghanistan) rushed to accept the offer.<sup>9</sup>

When the oil dispute was referred to the Security Council in October 1951, even before Premier Musaddeq appeared before the Council to argue that the Council was not competent to consider the issue as it was an internal matter, the Soviet delegate supported Persia's cause and opposed placing the issue on the

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 100. See also A.T. Bouscaren, "Soviet Policy in Iran," Current History, XXII (May 1952), 271-277.

<sup>8</sup> Kirk, The Middle East 1945-1950, p. 104.

<sup>9</sup> Elwell-Sutton, Persian Oil, p. 294.

agenda of the Council. Also, when on 19 October, France proposed to postpone the consideration of the case until the International Court of Justice had decided on its own competence in the matter, Russia was the only member who voted against the proposal although there were some abstentions.<sup>10</sup>

However, as far as the Anglo-Iranian oil dispute was concerned, Russia did nothing beyond this support of Persia at the Council. It is a misconception that Tuda, and hence Russia, was the power behind Musaddeq. First, there is no proof of how far Tuda was really run by Moscow. Secondly, although Russia could benefit from the national movement, she could not really have stimulated it. Even if we identify Tuda with communism, the Party was really a "channel of expression" for the movement which was spontaneous. The movement included nationalists and religious extremists as well as Tuda members.<sup>11</sup> However, that Tuda did capitalize on the crisis, may be seen from its constant participation in the agitation against the Persian government or the oil company. At the beginning of the crisis in April 1951, Tuda led vigorous riots in the Anglo-Persian oil fields in Khuzistan so that the company had to close its business there. On 8 May, Tuda, although banned by the Persian government,

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The United Nations, Security Council: Official Records, Sixth Year, 559th Meeting, 1st October, 1951, S/PV. 559, pp. 1-2, Sixth Year, 560th Meeting, 15 October, 1951, S/PV. 560, pp. 3-6, and Sixth Year, 565th Meeting, 19 October, 1951, S/PV. 565, pp. 2-3, 12.

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Elwell-Sutton, Persian Oil, p. 190.

addressed an open letter to the Persian Prime Minister asking for recognition, the dismissal of the United States military mission, recognition of Communist China, rejection of foreign military aid, release of political prisoners, lifting up of martial law in the south, and even the nationalization of the Bahrain oil industry. This was followed in the next few months by several riots in which clashes with the police and with the nationalists occurred.<sup>12</sup> For instance, on 15 July, when Averell Harriman, President Truman's foreign policy adviser, arrived in Tehran to discuss the crisis with the Persian government, anti-British and anti-American demonstrations took place led by Tuda. They clashed with the nationalists so that the army and police had to interfere, several people were killed and wounded, the Tuda presses confiscated and martial law proclaimed.<sup>13</sup> However, it is essential to repeat here that originally the strikes in the oil fields were caused by inadequate economic and social conditions in 1946 and the cutting down of workers' allowances by the oil company in 1951.<sup>14</sup>

Thus throughout the dispute Russia remained in the background, interfering neither directly nor through advice.<sup>15</sup> It may be added, here, that the 1921 treaty contributed to Russia's passive attitude as she could draw upon it the minute

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<sup>12</sup> Lenczowski, The Middle East, pp. 192-193, 196-197.

<sup>13</sup> Alan W. Ford, The Anglo-Iranian Oil Dispute of 1951-1952 (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1954), p. 99.

<sup>14</sup> See previous chapter, p. 48, and Elwell-Sutton, Persian Oil, p. 209.

<sup>15</sup> Shwadran, op.cit., p. 109.

Britain used force. On the other hand, this treaty gave Persia a greater bargaining power with the British while the British refrained from sending any armed forces into Persia for the protection of their interests (although they did send them to neighbouring waters) because of fear of Soviet reaction.<sup>16</sup>

In the meantime, the Soviet government was concentrating on the Partisans of Peace campaign which was an off-shoot of the Cominform. The campaign originated in Wroclaw (Breslau) in Poland on 25 August, 1948, at a conference of "intellectuals," and culminated in a congress held at Stockholm in March 1950. This congress issued a skillfully worded peace appeal, known as the Stockholm Appeal, which asked for the promotion of world peace, the abolition of atomic weapons and the establishment of an international body for carrying out this decision. By August 1950, the appeal had attracted the signatures of one eighth of the world's population. Russia was thus appearing as the champion of world peace while she presented the Western powers, particularly the United States, as warmongers and aimed to minimize the effect of the policy of containment which had found expression in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.<sup>17</sup>

The peace campaign later resulted in more specific resolutions such as the appeal sent to the United Nations by the

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J. Frankel, "The Anglo-Iranian Dispute," The Year Book of World Affairs 1952, ed. by G. W. Keeton and G. Schwarzenberger (London: Stevens and Sons Limited, 1952), 66-67, 72-73.

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Donald H. McLachlan, "The Partisans of Peace," International Affairs, XXVII (January 1951), 10-17. See also Raymond G. Cowherd, "The Soviet Peace Offensive," Current History, XIX (September 1950), 129-134.

World Peace Congress which met in Vienna in December 1952, emphasizing the right of dependent people to conduct their own affairs without pressure or foreign interference. The Peace Conference of Asian and Pacific Regions which met in Peking earlier in the year also addressed an appeal to the United Nations asking it to interfere in order to put an end to the suppression of national liberation movements in the Middle East.<sup>18</sup> Although these were not meant particularly to support Persia, yet they did come out at the time when the Anglo-Persian dispute was at its climax.

Russia, on the other hand, was taking advantage of the dissension among the capitalist states which, she believed, was going to lead them to open conflict, while she remained intentionally quiet building up for the future, for the inevitable clash between the capitalist and communist worlds. Marshal Stalin himself expressed this view in an article called "The Economic Problems of Socialism in the U.S.S.R." published in the Bolshevik on 2 October, 1952.<sup>19</sup> This article appeared just before the Nineteenth Communist Party Congress met on 4 October. Speaking on behalf of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, Malenkov, the Secretary of the Central Committee, outlined the main objectives of Soviet foreign policy. This speech, in emphasizing the United States ultimate objective of waging war

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<sup>18</sup> Paul Katona, "Soviet Propaganda to the Colonial World," The Year Book of World Affairs 1955, ed. by G.W. Keeton and G. Schwarzenberger (London: Stevens and Sons Limited, 1955), IX, 160.

<sup>19</sup> Excerpts in Council on Foreign Relations, Documents on American Foreign Relations 1952, ed. by C.W. Baier and R.P. Stebbins (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1953), pp. 105-110.



on Soviet Russia and in reiterating what Stalin had said in the Bolshevik about the inevitability of war among the capitalists and the subsequent need to destroy "imperialism" was only complementary to Stalin's statement. Besides emphasizing the need to promote peace and friendly relations with others, Malenkov also stressed the need to strengthen the defensive might of Soviet Russia in order to deal a devastating rebuff to any aggressor.<sup>20</sup> In the light of this, Stalin aimed to woo the friendship of vulnerable states in order to detach them from relying on the West, at the same time keeping Russia away from any conflict while he concentrated on internal development. From another angle, it may be perceived that the Soviet government emphasized military security because of the growing resistance of the West, the plans for European unity and the rearmament of Western Germany and Japan.<sup>21</sup>

#### Turkey

Soviet policy towards Turkey during the corresponding period was controlled by the same motives and expressed through similar channels. It did not go beyond protests against friendship with the West. In fact, the policy of Russia in general

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., pp. 110-134. See also "The Nineteenth Party Congress and Soviet Foreign Policy," Problems of Communism, II (January 1953), 14-15, and Isaac Deutscher, "The Nineteenth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union," International Affairs, XXIX (April 1953), 149-155.

<sup>21</sup> Rauch, op.cit., p. 423.

during that period was an over-all passive policy. However, although Soviet policy towards Turkey was not aggressive, yet it did not reach the *détente* which its counterpart had in Persia until after the death of Stalin in March 1953.

As in the case of Persia, Turkey's acceptance of United States aid aroused Soviet criticism. Late in 1947, after the announcement of the Truman Doctrine, the Soviet government objected against a Turkish mission which was active in Germany, Italy and Greece, in encouraging Muslim refugees from Russia to settle in Turkey. On the other hand, a demonstration of five thousand university students in Ankara at the end of 1947 in protest against five professors who were accused of being pro-communist showed the extent of Turkish public resentment of their Soviet neighbour.<sup>22</sup>

In September 1948, radio Moscow protested against the activities of Ferenc Nagy, a former Hungarian Premier who a year before had escaped to the United States and now was in Istanbul as a correspondent to an American periodical. The Turkish press said that he was organizing the Balkan refugees into an anti-communist front and radio Moscow accused him of being inspired by anti-Soviet espionage organizations in the United States. The Turkish government's response to the Soviet charges was to expel all foreigners who were involved in political activities against other states, and Nagy left Turkey soon after.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Lenczowski, The Middle East, p. 147.

<sup>23</sup> Kirk, The Middle East 1945-1950, pp. 48-49.

Another protest emanated in Pravda in April 1949, this time against the expedition which was to be organized by an American missionary and a fellow of the Royal Geographical Society of London for the investigation of a report on the discovery by a Kurd of old remains of what seemed to be a ship and which was interpreted as Noah's Ark, on Mount Ararat on Turkey's borders with Russia and Persia. Pravda called this espionage under the disguise of biblical research.<sup>24</sup>

In May of that year, another incident spelled discord. A Muslim Soviet official in the Soviet Embassy in Ankara had been taken forcibly back to Russia and his wife had sought refuge with Turkish officials. The Soviet Embassy in May, claimed to have received a letter from this woman asking for release from Turkish police hold. The Turkish officials refused to hand the woman over. On the 31st of that month, the Soviet Foreign Minister announced that a Turkish diplomatic courier had committed suicide, 150 miles inside the Soviet borders. The coincidence was rather striking and the Turks gave the courier a grand funeral as if they were suspicious whether he really committed suicide or was murdered.<sup>25</sup>

The anti-Soviet attitude in Turkey culminated on 27 April, 1950, in an official communiqué which finally rejected Soviet proposals to put the Black Sea Straits under joint Soviet-Turkish control.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., pp. 49-50.

<sup>26</sup> Lenczowski, The Middle East, p. 147.

The adherence of Turkey to the NATO in October, 1951, aroused Soviet criticism. It meant a victory for the West especially as it was accomplished through American support given in pursuit of the policy of containment. On 3 November, the Soviet government protested that they could not remain indifferent to this move and described the NATO as an aggressive block. Turkey replied that this was a defensive measure taken for security reasons. On 30 November, a second Soviet note said that Turkey's attitude was harming Russo-Turkish relations and that threats to the security of Turkey were only alleged by the Turkish government.<sup>27</sup> However, Turkey's membership in the NATO enabled her to resist Russia firmly.

After Stalin's death, Soviet policy towards both Persia and Turkey became more positive. The Soviet leaders were preoccupied with other issues besides foreign policy. First, there was the problem of succession. Stalin's death left a gap which had to be filled. Collective leadership embodied in the triumvirate of Malenkov, Beria and Molotov, took over. But, events few months later, showed that the triumvirate was not working in harmony and that rivalry among its members led to the dismissal of Beria on 10 July, 1953, and the rise of Nikita Khrushchev to power by his acquiring the position of First Secretary of the Party Central Committee on 13 September. Also, another problem with which the Soviet leaders were preoccupied

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Peter Calvocoressi, ed., Survey of International Affairs 1951 (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), p. 36.

was the serious agricultural crisis. This dated back to before Stalin's death but was acknowledged by Khrushchev in his report to the Central Committee on 3 September and in official statements concerning livestock, crops and the like.<sup>28</sup>

The theme of the policy of the new regime was put forward in Malenkov's address to the Supreme Soviet on 15 March. It was peace and general welfare.<sup>29</sup> To this end, amnesties were granted and light industry and consumer goods emphasized. In following such a line of tolerance and relaxation of tension, the Soviet leaders aimed to eliminate the unpopularity of Stalin's regime. They had to deal with the problems inherited from it in order to avoid dissatisfaction and unrest while they had a breathing space for the consolidation of their authority.

On 30 May, 1953, less than 3 months after Stalin's death, the Soviet government sent a note to the Turkish government to the effect that the Armenians and Georgians in their desire to maintain friendship with Turkey, renounced their territorial claims against Turkey. The Soviet government also informed Turkey that in order to promote peace and security an agreement over the Straits acceptable to Turkey could also assure the security that Russia desired. It is worth mentioning here that this note was despatched only few days after the visit of the

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M. Fainsod, "The Soviet Union Since Stalin," Problems of Communism, III (March-April 1954), 2, 7.

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Text in Denise Folliot, ed., Documents on International Affairs 1953 (London: Oxford University Press, 1956), p. 12.

American Secretary of State, John Foster Dullas, to Turkey.<sup>30</sup> This note definitely showed a change in Soviet tactics, though not necessarily in objectives. In other words, Russia was now using the diplomatic rather than the threatening approach in trying to isolate Turkey from such alliances as the NATO. She was telling Turkey that her intentions were peaceful and that therefore there was no need for the NATO.<sup>31</sup> However, the cold Turkish reply on 18 July aroused Russia's resentment so that she did not hesitate to protest to Turkey against American and British activities in the area. For instance, on 20 July, the Soviet government protested against an expected visit of British and American warships to Constantinople on the ground that such visits were becoming so frequent that they implied a kind of a "military demonstration." Russia was thus telling Turkey that her guardianship of the Straits and her membership in the NATO were incompatible.<sup>32</sup>

In July, Moscow also offered to settle a water dispute along Turkey's Caucasian borders dating back to several years and on 15 September an agreement over this matter was reached.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> "Turkey Under the Democratic Party," The World Today, IX (September 1953), 391-392. See also H.N. Howard, "The Development of United States Policy in the Near East, South Asia, and Africa During 1953: Part I," Department of State Bulletin, XXX (February 1954), 277-278.

<sup>31</sup> The Times (London), 11 August 1953, p. 7. See also G.L. Lewis, Turkey (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1955), p.149.

<sup>32</sup> Howard, "The Development of United States Policy in the Near East, South Asia, and Africa During 1953: Part I," Department of State Bulletin, XXX (February 1954), 277-279. See also The Times (London), 11 August 1953, p. 7.

<sup>33</sup> The Times (London), 11 June 1953, p.6 and 16 September 1953, p. 7.

Malenkov, the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, in his address to the Supreme Soviet on 8 August, 1953, made friendly references to Turkey and Persia and to other Middle East countries and criticized the NATO and the policy of the United States.<sup>34</sup>

Soviet attitude towards Persia had become more positive too. In June 1953, Soviet aid to Persia in combating locust had been warmly welcomed by Persia.<sup>35</sup> On 10 August, 1953, both governments announced that they had appointed a commission to settle frontier and financial disputes and to promote friendship between them.<sup>36</sup> Negotiations for the increase in the volume of trade between the two countries and for the repayment of about \$20,000,000. worth of gold and dollars which Persia had supplied to the Soviet occupying forces during the war in Persian currency, were conducted.<sup>37</sup>

Before concluding this chapter, it is worth mentioning that while communist propaganda in Persia found a nationalist channel of expression and scored some success, in Turkey it had neither. It concentrated on criticising American-Turkish relations, especially American military aid. This was not

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 10 August 1953, p. 4

<sup>35</sup> Pravda and Izvestia, 28 June 1953, reprinted in The Current Digest of Soviet Press, V (8 August 1953), 24-25

<sup>36</sup> The Times (London) 10 and 11 August 1953, pp. 6 and 4 respectively.

<sup>37</sup> George Kirk, "The U.S.S.R. and the Northern Tier," The Middle East Forum, XXXI (Summer 1956), p. 5.

effective because Russia's claims upon Turkey were not given up yet and because the Turks feared and distrusted Russia. The Partisans of Peace campaign had a similar fate. Active in 1950-1951, its leaders were accused of communist connections, arrested and tried. Communism was severely suppressed by the Turkish government even after the renouncement of Russian claims. The trial by the Turkish authorities in October 1953, of one hundred and sixtyseven alleged communists, including workers, students, officials, artisans, doctors, army officers and unemployed,<sup>38</sup> highlights this feature of communism in Turkey.

Thus, Soviet policy towards Persia and Turkey between 1948-1953 was characterized by its comparative aloofness. Besides the reasons mentioned above, this may also be due to the decline of Stalin's mental vigour. After Stalin's death, Soviet policy took on a more positive form which was not a departure from his policy but an extension of it.

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Walter Z. Laqueur, Communism and Nationalism in the Middle East (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1956), pp. 215-217. See also Fitzroy Maclean, "The Eastern Question in Modern Dress," Foreign Affairs, XXIX (January 1951), p. 245.



## CHAPTER IV

### ANOTHER FOCUS - THE ARAB WORLD

#### Soviet Policy towards Egypt, Palestine (Israel) and the Levant States Up to 1953

Just as the Soviet government tried to take advantage of the national movements in Turkey, Persia and Afghanistan by trying to decrease the influence of Britain in the area, so they directed their attention towards the Arab World where anti-British feelings were accumulating. However, while they had a direct interest in adjacent Turkey, Persia and Afghanistan, their interest in the physically remote Arab World, which formed a crossroad not for them but for their enemies, was only indirect. Thus unlike their policy towards Turkey and Persia which was characterized mainly by threats, their policy towards the Arab World was limited in the main to directing the Communist Party activities and making propaganda until the end of World War II when it took on a concrete form by supporting the Syro-Lebanese bid for independence and the Egyptian demand for the abrogation of the Anglo-Egyptian treaty of 1936, and by exploiting the Arab-Zionist struggle over Palestine.

Before the war, Russia had no diplomatic representation with these countries and so the burden of propaganda activities

was borne by the Communist Party. However, it must be noted, here, that political agitation and the demand for socio-economic reforms whether before or after the war were not a result of communist propaganda as much as they were a result of internal or external developments in support of the worker. The presence of British and American soldiers, the radio and film, the United Nations Charter, or the statements of such organizations as the International Labour Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization all contributed to the situation.<sup>1</sup> This was equally true of all the Arab countries under consideration.

In tracing the roots of communist penetration, it is necessary to go back to the 1920s. Although the first overt Soviet contact with Egypt took place in 1924 by the establishment of a trade agency called Arcos, with branches in Syria and Palestine,<sup>2</sup> a Communist Party had already been established in Egypt by then. This party was founded in 1920 as a Socialist Party, but renamed itself in 1922 as the Communist Party of Egypt.<sup>3</sup> The Communist Party of Syria and Lebanon was founded in 1930, but that of Palestine had factions in the 1920s and suffered several splits. This latter one was made up of Jews

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<sup>1</sup>William J. Handley, "The Labor Movement in Egypt," The Middle East Journal, III (July 1949), 277, 278.

<sup>2</sup>Kirk, The Middle East in the War, p. 487.

<sup>3</sup>Laqueur, op.cit., p. 33.

and preached anti-zionism, and took on an Arab line both in policy and leadership, after the anti-Jewish disturbances of 1929.<sup>4</sup>

The communist parties being thus established, their propaganda took the form of alignment with the nationalists, as will be seen later in this chapter. This was in conformity with the instructions of the Sixth Comintern Congress of 1928 which advised the Communist Party to align with the nationalist movements temporarily in order to draw the "bourgeois" nationalists away from the West. This suited the Arab World well as there was yet no workers' class there to concentrate on. The communist parties in the Arab World, being the weakest in the world in both extent of membership and organization, could thus benefit from the stronger nationalist force.<sup>5</sup>

In 1927, negotiations between Soviet Russia and Egypt led to the establishment of another commercial agency (Textilimport) in Alexandria for the purchase of surplus cotton. Five years later, the Egyptian authorities closed the offices of this agency after discovering its managers' intrigues in spreading communist propaganda.<sup>6</sup> The offices of the Communist Party which was encouraging strikes in the meantime were also closed but the

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<sup>4</sup>  
Ibid., pp. 141, 73-85.

<sup>5</sup>  
Leo Laufer, "Communist Party Strategy and Tactics in the Arab World," Problems of Communism, III (January-February 1954), 40-43.

<sup>6</sup>  
Kirk, The Middle East in the War, pp. 487-488.

Party was not banned and so, disorganized as it was, continued to function.<sup>7</sup>

During the 1930s, the framework within which Soviet policy towards the Arab countries was to move, appeared in official documents concerning the task of the communists in the Arab World. These documents are of special importance because present-day Soviet policy is still essentially governed by them. In fact, these documents reveal the motives and the long-range aim as related to present-day policy as they have not been renounced by the Soviet government yet.

The resolution adopted by the Communist Party of Syria and Palestine in 1931 listed the "solution of the Arab national question" as the first task of the communists because all the Arab countries were "forced to submit themselves to the dictates of imperialism."<sup>8</sup> In upholding the national movement of the Arabs the resolution said that the issue of "national unification [for the Arabs] is inseparable from their endeavor to liberate themselves from the yoke of English, French, Italian, and Spanish imperialism." The national reformists, like the Wafd Party of Egypt which agreed to sign the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty, were accused of having given in to British imperialist demands as self-preservation for them could be most effective by sharing

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<sup>7</sup> Laqueur, op.cit., p. 36.

<sup>8</sup> Ivar Spector, The Soviet Union and the Muslim World 1917-1956 (Distributed by University of Washington Press, 1956), p. 75.

Ibid., p. 77.

the gains derived from exploiting the masses and landless peasantry. These were called "traiterous counter-revolutionary" elements.<sup>10</sup> Thus the distinction was made between the "national liberation" struggle as opposed to "national reformism" which gave in to imperialism.<sup>11</sup> Because of this distinction, an "all-Arab revolutionary anti-imperialist front of the broad masses of workers, peasants, and urban petit bourgeoisie, a front which relies on the development of the workers' and peasants movement, and which draws from it its strength," must be organized.<sup>12</sup>

The slogan for all the Arab countries should be:

(1) Down with imperialism in the Arab lands; (2) Complete national political independence of Arab countries, and free decision by them of the question of their political system and boundaries; (3) A voluntary federal union of the liberated Arab peoples within the framework of an all-Arab workers' and peasants' federation of the Arab peoples, on the basis of a union of the working class, the toilers of the city, and the peasantry.<sup>13</sup>

As Spector has pointed out, the interpretation of this slogan should be:

by waging a struggle for national liberation under all and any circumstances with greater firmness and consistency, the proletariat at the same time explains to the masses that there can be no lasting victory for national and political independence without an agrarian peasant revolution and the establishment of a workers' and peasants' government, at least in the more developed Arab countries (Syria, Palestine, Egypt, and Algeria). .... Hegemony over the working class cannot be realized without a persistent

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 78.

<sup>11</sup> This is an application to the Arab World of what we have seen in Stalin's writings on Marxism and the National and Colonial Question and in the documents of the Communist International mentioned at the beginning of this work.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 79.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 80.

proletarian struggle for Arab national independence and freedom.<sup>14</sup>

As for the relationship of the Communist Party to the petit bourgeoisie and the national revolutionary elements, the rule should be: "to proceed separately, but to strike together."<sup>15</sup>

In their attempt to infiltrate accordingly, the Soviet government promised the Egyptian government to stop communist propaganda in the country in return for the recognition of their regime. That was on 21 August, 1939, two days before the Non-Aggression Pact with Germany was signed. However, the Anglo-Egyptian treaty of 1936 went into effect at the outbreak of World War II and diplomatic representation with the Soviet government was not carried out.<sup>16</sup>

Measures taken by the Egyptian government during the war included the banning of strikes and trade union activities in July 1940. By this, the first phase of communism in Egypt came to an end and the communist groups which came into being during the latter years of the war had no connection with the party activities which had taken place before 1940. The new communist groups emerged from the "Marxist study circles" which were founded in Cairo and Alexandria in the winter of 1941-1942,<sup>17</sup> and which

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Kirk, The Middle East in the War, pp. 490-491.

<sup>17</sup> Laqueur, op.cit., pp. 41, 42.

were encouraged by the successful Russian counter-offensive in November 1942 after which government suppression of Marxist activities relaxed.

In April 1942, Russia had concluded a trade agreement with Egypt for buying Egyptian cotton in return for fertilizer. The Russian success which began in the autumn of that year and the dissolution of the Comintern on 22 May, 1943, encouraged Egypt in her new rapprochement with Russia still further so that on 31 May she put into effect her recognition of the Soviet regime. The Soviet government appointed a Muslim First Secretary, Abdul Rahman Sultanov, for their Legation in Cairo as a favourable gesture towards the Muslims there. The Egyptian government's hesitation to recognize the Soviet government was thus due, to begin with, to the fact that they were the ally of Britain while Soviet Russia had a friendly pact with Germany until 1941, and to the fact that until the turn of the tide at the end of 1942, they wanted to take into account the possibility of a German victory in the war, not to mention their suspicion of Soviet motives.<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, by 1943 the Egyptian government felt sure of Allied success and, therefore, established diplomatic relations with the Soviet government in order to have their support later in the demand for the abrogation of the Anglo-Egyptian treaty of 1936.

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<sup>18</sup> Kirk, The Middle East in the War, pp. 491-492.

Now that cordial relations with Egypt were established, the Soviet government concentrated on the Levant States where the struggle against foreign rule was becoming serious. In the summer of 1944, the Soviet government recognized the independence of Syria and Lebanon.<sup>19</sup> At that stage, the Communist Party was not yet effective. It represented "an extremely pink kind of communism . . . mainly concerned to stress the glories of the Soviet Union and the great Stalin."<sup>20</sup> Until then, Russia had shown no definite expression of interest in the area. Further, in January 1945, the Orthodox Patriarchs of Antioch, Constantinople, Jerusalem and Alexandria, and the Archbishops of Homs, Tyre and Sidon, were invited by the Soviet government to participate in the election of the new Patriarch of Moscow. In May-June 1945, the tour of the newly-elected Orthodox Patriarch of Moscow in the Levant States as well as other Middle East countries, including Egypt and Palestine, took place. It not only tried to display alleged religious tolerance in Soviet Russia, but also attempted to divert the allegiance of the Orthodox churches there from the Patriarch of Constantinople to that of Moscow.<sup>21</sup> As she realized the great influence of the Orthodox Church over Orthodox Christians, Russia was using the Orthodox Church as an

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<sup>19</sup>  
Ibid., p. 494.

<sup>20</sup>  
Hernicus (sic), "Patterns of Power in the Arab Middle East," The Political Quarterly, XVII (April-June 1946), 104.

<sup>21</sup>  
Kirk, The Middle East in the War, pp. 495-496.



instrument of government. The Church did not only have a centralizing influence within Russia but also constituted a friendly tie with the non-communist Greek Orthodox abroad.

The critical test of Soviet policy towards the Levant, however, came in May 1945 when the Soviet government was confronted with the Franco-Syrian conflict over the independence of Syria and Lebanon. Their treaty of 14 December, 1944, with France and their pledges in support of Syrian independence put them in a critical position. They thus tried to appease both and appealed to the countries which had the initiative for the San Francisco Conference, namely, Britain, France, China and the United States, to interfere and settle the conflict peacefully.<sup>22</sup> But, after Britain and France had drafted an agreement on 13 December, 1945, for gradual withdrawal and regrouping of troops in Lebanon until the United Nations had decided on a plan for the collective security of the region, the Soviet Minister in Beirut, Daniel Solod, called on the Lebanese Foreign Minister on 19 January, 1946, and conveyed his government's disapproval of the Anglo-French agreement.<sup>23</sup> It was also reported in March that Russia had warned the French against armed aggression in Syria.<sup>24</sup> Thus while the British and the French were demanding privileges in Syria and Lebanon, Russia was upholding the national rights of these states and criticizing the Anglo-French attitude.

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 496.

<sup>23</sup> Kirk, The Middle East 1945-1950, pp. 107, 109.

<sup>24</sup> HERNICUS, op.cit., p. 106.

On 4 February 1946, the Syrian and Lebanese governments referred the issue to the Security Council asking for immediate and simultaneous withdrawal.<sup>25</sup> The Council met on the 15th to discuss the issue and Andrei Vyshinsky attacked the Anglo-French agreement as a violation of the sovereignty and independence of Syria and Lebanon and refuted the claim that troops were needed in the area in order to preserve its security by arguing that British troops were there in order to prevent disorders resulting from the presence of French troops and that the French were there because the British would not leave.

The Soviet delegate then suggested an amendment to a United States resolution so that instead of expressing the hope of the Security Council for withdrawal "as soon as practicable," the resolution would recommend immediate withdrawal. The Soviet proposal failed to get the required number of votes and the United States resolution was voted upon, but vetoed by Russia.<sup>26</sup> This was the first time that the veto power in the Security Council was ever used.

While the Soviet government were occupied with Syria and Lebanon, the national movement in Egypt, led by the Wafd Party and pressed by the trade unions, a leftist group of which attended

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<sup>25</sup> The United Nations, Security Council: Official Records, First Year, First Series, Supplement No. 1, pp. 82-83.

<sup>26</sup> Kirk, The Middle East 1945-1950, pp. 109-111.

the World Federation of Trade Unions Congress in Paris in late 1945,<sup>27</sup> was demanding the abrogation of the Anglo-Egyptian treaty of 1936, by which British troops were occupying the Suez Canal Zone, on the basis that it was obsolete and incompatible with Egyptian sovereignty. The communists in Egypt, although realizing that the Wafd Party was anti-revolutionary and would protect private property<sup>28</sup> whenever it was in office, supported the Wafd's policy against Britain and the existing minority government in Egypt. In July, 1946, for example, the communists co-operated with the Wafd Party in its agitation against the British and Ismail Sidqi's government (of the Peoples' Party). The Paris communist paper, Humanité, approved of progressive nationalist forces such as the Wafd while Sidqi's government suppressed the agitation and in one of their papers described the Wafd as the agent of the Third International. When Premier Sidqi's attitude towards the Anglo-Egyptian treaty was that of a compromise and he won the vote of confidence in Parliament on 26 November 1946, widespread demonstrations led by the Wafd broke out and Sidqi hinted that the Wafdists were getting material

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<sup>27</sup> Handley, op.cit., p. 283. Besides the nationalist tension, stimuli of the political agitation of the workers included the unsatisfactory working conditions, the high cost of living, the fear of unemployment, the encouraging success of demonstrations, and the general fall in morale and discipline caused by the war.

<sup>28</sup> In fact, in the Program of Action of the Communist Party of Egypt, published in 1931-1932, the communists referred to the Wafd as "the party of national treason" which was willing "to fight the U.S.S.R. in the interests of English imperialism." Spector, op.cit., pp. 84-85.

aid from Russia. Although the Wafdists denied that, in their paper, Al-Balagh, they expressed their willingness to befriend Russia and other communist countries in order to have their support whenever the Wafd should have the opportunity to refer the question of the Treaty to the Security Council.<sup>29</sup>

At the Moscow Conference of the Three Foreign Ministers which was held on 24 March, 1947, Stalin and Bevin discussed the Anglo-Egyptian dispute, along with other things. A British government spokesman later said that Stalin had assured Bevin that Russia appreciated the position of the British in the Middle East and would remain neutral towards the Anglo-Egyptian dispute. The Tass agency denied this but reaffirmed that Soviet Russia in adherence to her policy of non-intervention was not going to intervene in the Anglo-Egyptian case.<sup>30</sup>

At the Security Council in August of that year, after Egypt had submitted her complaint against the treaty and the presence of British troops which were encouraging the Sudan to demand a separate state, Andrei Gromyko expressed a view similar to that of the Polish delegate. Both supported Egypt's cause and asked for immediate and unconditional withdrawal of the British troops from Egypt and the Sudan. However, in response to the part of the Egyptian argument concerning the Sudan, they expressed sympathy with the desire for unity with Egypt but also

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<sup>29</sup> Kirk, The Middle East 1945-1950, pp. 122, 122n, 123, 127.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., pp. 130-131.

said that the question should be considered separately. Thus they suggested that the United Nations should bring about self-government in the Sudan as it should be mainly concerned with the interests of the Sudanese, not those of the administering countries. However, they had no concrete plan to offer. The Security Council adjourned on 10 September and the matter was left on its agenda unsolved.<sup>31</sup>

The third dimension in which Soviet policy during this period was directed was Palestine. While the Soviet government were encouraging the Arabs in their national struggle in Egypt and the Levant, their attitude towards the Palestine question proved that they were interested in the independence of the Arabs only in as much as it helped to expedite the diminishing of British influence in the area. When they saw that supporting the Zionists in Palestine would speed that up, they did not hesitate to uphold the establishment of the state of Israel.

Thus, the Communist Party of Palestine was instructed by the Comintern in 1923 to 'support the nationalist freedom of the Arab population against the British-Zionist occupation.'<sup>32</sup> Up to

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The United Nations, Security Council: Official Records, Second Year, No. 59, 17 July 1947, pp. 1343-1345,  
No. 75, 13 August 1947, pp. 1961-1966,  
No. 80, 20 August 1947, pp. 2109-2111,  
and No. 88, 10 September 1947, pp. 2362-2363.

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Martin Ebon, "Communist Tactics in Palestine," The Middle East Journal, II (July 1948), 256.

the end of World War II, the Soviet government continued to regard Zionism as a bourgeois nationalist movement and the tool of British imperialism. In fact, the resolution adopted by the Communist Party of Palestine and Syria in 1931 referred to the Zionists as being "employed" by the "English imperialists . . . to seize and plunder the lands in Palestine."<sup>33</sup> An open letter of the Executive Committee of the Comintern, on 26 November, 1930, referred to Zionism as:

the expression of the exploiting and great power oppressive strivings of the Jewish bourgeoisie, which makes use of the persecution of the Jewish national minorities in Eastern Europe for the purpose of imperialistic policy to insure its domination.<sup>34</sup>

Zionists were accused of trying to appeal to the Jewish petit bourgeoisie by "deceit and by appealing to religious feelings."<sup>35</sup> At that stage, thus, a distinction was made between Jews and Zionists by calling upon the Arabs and the Jews to form a united front against "Zionist usurpation."<sup>36</sup>

The first sign of Soviet support to the Zionists appeared at the United Nations in May 1947. Since Russia could exercise her influence effectively here, she dropped her opposition to Zionism in order to achieve her ultimate goal quickly. At the request of Britain, the General Assembly had met in April in order to set up a committee to study the Palestine question.

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<sup>33</sup> Spector, op.cit., p. 76.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., pp. 100-101.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., pp. 91-92.

Gromyko appeared to favour the establishment of a single Jewish-Arab state as a first alternative and partition next.<sup>37</sup> Behind his attitude was Russia's hope that an independent Israel would be weaker than an Israel or a Palestine under British rule.

During the debate of the ad hoc committee, considering the report of the United Nations special committee on Palestine, the Soviet delegate was keen on terminating the mandate and completing the withdrawal of British troops as early as possible. On 29 November, 1947, the partition proposal was passed at the United Nations with the support of both the United States and Russia. Anti-Communist demonstrations broke out in Damascus, and anti-Jewish demonstrations broke out in other cities of the Arab countries, as a result of which the communist parties in both Syria and Lebanon were banned.<sup>38</sup>

When on 19 March, 1948, the United States proposed a temporary trusteeship of Palestine under the Trusteeship Council as the partition plan could not be implemented by force under the supervision of the Security Council, Russia objected as she did not want the plan to be suspended.<sup>39</sup> Thus Russia's role was decisive in bringing about partition and the creation of the state of Israel. While the United States showed some hesitation or retreat on her former stand, Russia who was determined on

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The United Nations, Official Records of the First Special Session of the General Assembly, I (28 April - 15 May 1947), I, 134, 183 Annex I.

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Kirk, The Middle East 1945-1950, pp. 248, 251. See also Laqueur, op.cit., p. 152.

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Kirk, The Middle East 1945-1950, p. 258.

partition, remained consistent, although before and after partition she did not take a definite stand by one party to the exclusion of the other continuously. Partition did not only reduce British and American influence in the area, Russia hoped, but it also promoted turmoil and unrest which created conditions conducive to the spread of communism.<sup>40</sup> On 17 May, she recognized the three-day old state of Israel.<sup>41</sup>

The favourable attitude of Russia towards Israel at the Security Council soon had a parallel outside when in the same month Czechoslovakia which had recently (February 1948) come under the communist regime, concluded an arms deal with Israel by which arms and aircraft were supplied to Israel. By extending this help to the Jews in Palestine in their war with the Arabs<sup>42</sup> at a time when both sides lacked military equipment, Russia under the guise of one of her satellites made an otherwise doubtful success of the new state of Israel more possible. In December, 1948, Mr. Malik, the Soviet delegate, welcomed Israel's application for admission to the United Nations and on 4 March, 1949, Israel was admitted to the United Nations with Russia voting in favour.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Council on Foreign Relations, The United States in World Affairs 1949, ed. by Richard P. Stebbins (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1950), p. 401.

<sup>41</sup> Kirk, The Middle East 1945-1950, p. 270.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>43</sup> The United Nations Security Council: Official Records, Third Year, No. 128, 17 December 1948, pp. 22-23 and others, and Fourth Year, No. 17, 4 March 1949, p. 14.



In the meantime, Soviet propaganda activities towards the Arabs were augmented. In 1946, an Arabic publication was started in Beirut by the Tass agency and Soviet diplomatic missions supplied local press with news. Radio Moscow also started broadcasts in Arabic covering in 1950 an average of eleven hours a week. These broadcasts took local events as their main concern, thus shifting from the traditional praise of the glories of Soviet Russia which was characteristic of propaganda during the war. The new broadcasts hammered on the backward social conditions, supported the national demands of the people and attacked Anglo-American strategical projects (such as the Middle East command proposals in 1951) while they enhanced their propaganda for the peace campaign.<sup>44</sup>

The Partisans of Peace campaign which had already started had by 1950 shown effects in Egypt, Syria and Lebanon. In Syria and Lebanon, the Partisans of Peace propaganda found ready response during 1950-1951 and the Stockholm Peace Appeal of March 1950, was signed by a great number of well-known Syrian and Lebanese leaders.<sup>45</sup>

In Egypt, the Wafd Party came into power in January 1950 and their organ, Al-Misri, preached neutrality between the Eastern and Western blocs and considered them both imperialistic. Extreme nationalists even advocated a non-aggression pact with

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Moshe Leshner, "Soviet Propaganda to the Middle East," Middle Eastern Affairs, IV (January 1953), 4-8.

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Laqueur, op.cit., pp. 152, 156, 164.

Russia. Pravda, on the other hand, wrote in support of the national aspirations of Egypt, and it was also reported that the Soviet government promised Egypt full support if she followed a policy of neutrality.<sup>46</sup> Egypt's complete neutrality towards the Korean war may be interpreted as an indirect effect of this.

Soviet support of Egypt was tested in August 1951 when the Security Council was discussing Israel's complaint against the Egyptian embargo on Israeli ships and ships passing through the Suez Canal bound to Israel. The Soviet delegate remained silent all through but on 29 August, when Egypt was likely to be defeated, he called for adjournment and hinted at using the veto. The Egyptian Foreign Minister praised the "fair and just" attitude of the Soviet delegate and the leftist press hailed Soviet Russia as Egypt's friend and ally against Western imperialism. During the debate, the Egyptian delegate met with the Soviet delegate three times and it was reported that he was asked not to obstruct the activities of the Partisans of Peace campaign and to support Soviet Russia in the conference on the Japanese Treaty in return for Russia's support of Egypt. However, when the Security Council resolved on 1st September that Egypt should stop the embargo, the Soviet delegate did not use his veto but merely abstained. This may be taken as an indication that any previous Soviet-Egyptian parley was not fully successful.

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<sup>46</sup> Calvocoressi, Survey of International Affairs 1951, pp. 263, 269-270.

And, while earlier in the same year, the Egyptian Minister of the Interior had allowed a number of leftist papers to come into existence, it may be taken as a further sign of Egypt's dissatisfaction at the amount of support received from the Soviet delegate at the Security Council that on 14 September, 1951, when there were demonstrations to mark the anniversary of Britain's entry into Cairo in 1882, the Egyptian government arrested pro-communist agitators.<sup>47</sup>

On 13 October, 1951, the United States, Britain, France and Turkey presented to the different Middle East countries a proposal for a joint Middle East Defence Command<sup>48</sup> which was intended to meet the request for the ending of the Anglo-Egyptian treaty of 1936. The timing of this proposal was ideal

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Ibid., pp. 277-278. See also the United Nations, Security Council: Official Records, Sixth Year, 556th Meeting, 29 August 1951, S/PV. 556, p. 8 and Sixth Year 558th Meeting, 1st September 1951, S/PV. 558, p. 3. During that year, communist support of the nationalist cause could be seen in the propaganda publications which carried themes identical with those exposed by the nationalists. Seven periodicals published in Cairo had the five major themes of condemning King Farouk and his feudalist rule, criticizing the bourgeois parliamentary system of Egypt, demanding the abrogation of the Anglo-Egyptian treaty, opposing plans envisaging alliance with any Western power, and demanding a neutralist policy, or alternately, an alliance with Russia in order to enlist the latter's backing in the struggle against Western imperialism. The periodicals were: Al-Shaab Al-Gedid (Socialist Party), Al-Liwa Al-Gedid (extreme Nationalist), Al-Dawa (Muslim Brotherhood), Rose Al-Yusuf (leftist), Al-Gumhur Al-Misri (fellow-traveller), Al-Katib (Peace Partisans), and Al-Malayeen (Communist). See Laufer, op.cit., pp. 43, 43n.

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Text in Denise Folliot, ed., Documents on International Affairs 1951 (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), pp. 425-427.

for inviting Russian reaction. The plan included Turkey which besides being the traditional enemy of the Arabs was also very friendly with Israel. On the other hand, the embitterment of the Arabs over Palestine had just been reflected in the murder of King Abdulla and the instability and rapid changes which featured in the Syrian political scene. And most important, the Arabs felt no pressing sense of danger from Russia. On the contrary, they were more worried about the presence of British troops on their land, and the "fear of Soviet aggression . . . was fundamentally a Western fear."<sup>49</sup> The MEDO proposal was one for "a command for the defense of the Middle East largely against its own wishes . . ., not a command of the Middle East for its defense in cooperation with the West."<sup>50</sup> The Soviet government thus exploited the situation and reacted on 21 November by despatching notes to the receiving countries including Egypt, Syria, Lebanon and Israel, warning them against accepting the proposal which would be considered an unfriendly act towards Russia.<sup>51</sup> A note was also sent to the four sponsoring powers in protest against such allegedly aggressive plans. This note accused the sponsoring powers of attempting to secure for themselves bases in the Middle East in conformity with the aggressive aims of the NATO, and of attempting to deprive Middle East countries of their independence.<sup>52</sup> By framing

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<sup>49</sup> Hurewitz, Middle East Dilemmas, p. 251.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 95-96.

<sup>51</sup> Folliot, ed., Documents on International Affairs 1951, pp. 429-431.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., pp. 432-433.

it thus, and by the similar notes addressed to the recipients, Russia was telling the countries of the Middle East that the main purpose of such Western moves was not defence or the containment of Russia but the subjugation of the Middle East countries themselves through continued interference in their internal affairs as there was no threat of Soviet aggression.

In December, Israel's reply reassured the Soviet government that she would not join aggressive anti-communist alliances and thus hoped to gain the favour of Russia as she simultaneously asked for permission for Russian Jews to emigrate to the new state. It was reported then that Russia might send a trade mission to Israel and that the latter might buy Russian oil, but Israel denied all this.<sup>53</sup>

In the meantime, guerrilla warfare had been going on in the Canal Zone since October 1951. Thus the arrival of thirtyfour Russian fishing vessels and a tanker at Port Said on 7 and 8 January, 1952, and the warm welcome they received had a special significance. On the other hand, Egypt's export of her vital cotton crop had suffered a sharp decline first because the Wafd government had persisted in trying to maintain the abnormally high prices which had been occasioned by Communist China's entry into the Korean war, and secondly because during the struggle with Britain an attempt had been made to prevent

the shipping of cotton to Britain, normally Egypt's best customer. Egypt was, therefore, left with a large unsold surplus of cotton. In seeking other markets, the Egyptian government thus held discussions with the Soviet government for the exchange of Egyptian cotton for Russian wheat and these culminated on 23 February, 1952, in a trade agreement.<sup>54</sup>

While Russia's relations with the Arabs were thus improving, with Israel they were showing some deterioration. The change in the Soviet attitude towards Israel is partly explained by the fact that Israel's inherent nature and economic dependence upon the United States drew her more towards the West, and by the traditional distrust of Zionism and the fear of a Jewish national revival in Russia, especially after the request of Israel for free emigration of Russian Jews had been put forward in 1951. On the other hand, the decline in the mental health of Stalin which affected the general policy of Russia could account for this change too.

Israel's relations with the satellites deteriorated first. Israel's delegate to the World Federation of Trade Unions' meeting held in Berlin at the end of 1951, disappeared in Prague on his way back. Israel suspected that he was arrested and so protested unsuccessfully in May and June 1952. On 6 December, 1952, the Czech government asked for the recall of the Israeli

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Ibid., pp. 217-218. See also Calvocoressi, Survey of International Affairs 1951, pp. 280-281, 286n.

Minister in Prague, on the charge of going beyond diplomatic limits in encouraging Jewish emigration from the country. On 8 December, the same minister who also represented his government in Warsaw, was requested to leave Poland, and the Israeli Legation was accused of espionage and of encouraging Zionist organizations. In June of that year, Rumania recalled her Chargé d'Affaires in Israel.<sup>55</sup>

Next came the persecution of Jews. During the purge of 1951-1952, about eighty percent of those accused and eleven of the fourteen tried were Jews. In Budapest in 1952, the chief of the Security Police who was a Jew and the leader of the Jewish community were arrested.<sup>56</sup> All this culminated in the Soviet government's accusation of nine doctors, seven of whom were Jews, of attempting to kill Soviet leaders and of being paid by Britain and America in order to weaken Russia. The doctors were put under arrest.<sup>57</sup> The plot may have been "a provocation aimed at Beria" as the arrest of the doctors on 13 January, 1953, appeared simultaneously with a comment in Pravda to the effect that it had not been discovered by the Security Police in time.<sup>58</sup> It may be also said that this incident reflected rivalry among the ruling clique, Stalin's opponents wanting to deprive him of the medical care he needed badly; but, the fact that Stalin himself agreed

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<sup>55</sup> Calvocoressi, Survey of International Affairs 1952, pp. 241-242.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 172.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., pp. 149-150.

<sup>58</sup> Fainsod, "The Soviet Union Since Stalin," Problems of Communism, III (March-April 1954), 2.

to the doctors' arrest renders this explanation weak. Another explanation, however, is that the incident reflected the nervousness of the Russian leaders as a result of Dwight Eisenhower's assumption of the presidency, the argument being that the persecution of Jews was meant to be another step in the cold war.<sup>59</sup> It may be added also that, as in any dictatorship, the persecution was an attempt on the part of the Russian leaders to divert the attention of the Russian people from the internal weaknesses of the regime such as the economic problems (admitted later by Khrushchev) and the irritation in Czechoslovakia, Poland, Rumania and Hungary at that time.

On 19 January, 1953, Moshe Sharett, the Foreign Minister of Israel, accused the Soviet government and the satellites of conducting anti-Jewish campaigns. Moscow press replied by accusing the Russian Jews of being agents of the American intelligence services and of helping America to create a fifth column in Russia in return for American support of Israel. The deterioration of these relations reached its climax on 8 February when a bomb was thrown at the Soviet Legation in Tel-Aviv. Israel apologized but the Soviet government retaliated by breaking off diplomatic relations on 12 February.<sup>60</sup>

The death of Stalin in March 1953 brought some change of policy so that his successors in trying to appeal to the public released the accused Jewish doctors. The communiqué published

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<sup>59</sup> Rauch, op.cit., p. 427.

<sup>60</sup> Peter Calvocoressi, Survey of International Affairs 1953 (London: Oxford University Press, 1956), pp. 147-148.



in Izvestia and Pravda of 3 April blamed the former Soviet Ministry of State Security for the arrest saying that the accusations were "false" and that the documentary evidence used was "without foundation" or "any lawful basis."<sup>61</sup> This was a part of the immediate post-Stalinist policy which included release of tension among minority nationalities and the granting of amnesties to prisoners. Specifically, it has been interpreted as a sign of trouble among the ruling clique as Beria seemed to be blaming Malenkov's friend, Sewyon D. Ignatiev, for the persecution and maltreatment of the accused,<sup>62</sup> while he aimed to strengthen his own position.

In July, the Soviet government resumed diplomatic relations with Israel after Moshe Sharett promised not to enter into any aggressive alliance or agreement against Russia.<sup>63</sup>

Thus Soviet Russia supported the Arabs in Egypt, Syria and Lebanon in their national struggle against the British and the French as the interests of both sides coincided. But, in Palestine, where the interest of Russia lay in accelerating the eclipse of Britain, she went to the support of the Zionists, not the Arabs. However, she soon found out that the newly born

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<sup>61</sup> The Current Digest of Soviet Press, V(18 April 1953), 3.

<sup>62</sup> Council on Foreign Relations, The United States in World Affairs 1953, ed. by Richard P. Stebbins (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1955), pp. 112-113.

<sup>63</sup> The Current Digest of Soviet Press, V(15 August 1953), 13-14.

state of Israel was not as weak with administrative, economic and political problems as she hoped it would be and that there American influence was replacing the British. She thus turned to oppose Israel and tried to win the favour of the Arabs. This policy was still in an embryonic stage and it was after Stalin's death that it was intensified. Although the response of the Arab governments was reflected in the suppression of communist activities, yet the success of the peace campaign and the fact that the communist parties were growing were to Russia's advantage, despite the fact that hatred of the West and other factors had a role to play.

## CHAPTER V

### A NEW LINE

#### RE-EMERGENCE OF THE FORWARD POLICY 1953 - 1957

##### From the Emergence of the Northern Tier Policy to the Conclusion of the Czech Arms Deal with Egypt 1953 - 1955

The emergence of a new era in Soviet-Middle East relations is best traced back to the launching of the Northern Tier policy by the United States in 1953. By this policy the latter sought to strengthen the states closest to Soviet borders both by extending to them economic and military aid and by encouraging them to form regional defence pacts in order to be able to defend themselves against potential communist aggression. In response, until the northern belt was fairly completed, the theme of Soviet policy was to try to make friends with those countries which could leave a gap in it. When it neared completion, this cautious policy became bold and definite.

The previous chapters show that since the failure of the Azerbaijan episode, Soviet Russia had been relatively passive in the Middle East, her policy being limited to giving support to the claims of national aspirations in order to win

the favour of the nationalists in return while any Western-sponsored defence plans were being undermined. But, with the development of military blocs in the area, Russia felt that prestige was not enough if, on the practical level, the Middle East was going to be drawn into the sphere of American influence. And so, she started her counter-offensive. Whether it was the Northern Tier policy which finally determined the Soviet reaction is rather doubtful, but that it did determine its timing and its force and direction is quite apparent. With the Northern Tier policy in full swing, Soviet Russia could not have been expected to sit back and watch. Although the plans for the future of the Middle East published in 1931 - 1932 had not been renounced, Soviet infiltration was still on a comparatively minor scale either because of the resistance of the recipients or because of Stalin's preference for a cautious policy while the capitalist world "brought about its own destruction."

For a clearer definition of the Northern Tier policy we have to go back to the American response to Soviet post-war gestures towards the Middle East. That response had taken such forms as the issuing of the Truman Doctrine in 1947, the extension of Point Four economic and technical aid to Persia, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Lebanon and Jordan in the first half of 1951 and the inclusion of Greece and Turkey in the NATO later in the year. However, a gap was left in this policy of containment when the Four-Power proposal for a joint Middle East command in October 1951 failed.

On 1st June 1953, Secretary of State Dulles recommended to fill this gap by what came to be known as the Northern Tier policy.<sup>1</sup> Mr. Dulles defined this policy in the statement which he announced to the American people at the conclusion of his tour of Asia and the Middle East. As far as Middle East defence was concerned, the statement said:

A Middle East Defense Organization is a future rather than an immediate possibility. Many of the Arab League countries are so engrossed with their quarrels with Israel or with Great Britain or France that they pay little heed to the menace of Soviet communism. However, there is more concern where the Soviet Union is near. In general, the northern tier of nations shows awareness of the danger.

There is a vague desire to have a collective security system. But no such system can be imposed from without. It should be designed and grow from within out of a sense of common destiny and common danger.

While awaiting the formal creation of a security association, the United States can usefully help strengthen the interrelated defense of those countries which want strength, not as against each other or the West, but to resist the common threat to all free people.<sup>2</sup>

The first sign of the new direction in American policy was President Eisenhower's approval of Pakistan's request for military aid on 25 February, 1954. Rumours to this effect had started one week before Governor-General Ghulam Mohamed was expected to visit the United States in November 1953. In February, 1954, a treaty of co-operation and mutual defence between Turkey and Pakistan was envisaged, and on 2 April it

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<sup>1</sup> James W. Spain, "Middle East Defense: A New Approach," The Middle East Journal, VIII (Summer 1954), 252-253. Mr. Dulles who took over the office of Secretary of State just at the end of the Korean war wanted to prevent the possibility of another Korea from taking place in the Middle East.

<sup>2</sup> Address by Secretary Dulles, "Report on the Near East," The Department of State Bulletin, XXVIII (15 June 1953), 835.

was concluded, later to become the nucleus of the Northern Tier policy.<sup>3</sup> Before this treaty was finally concluded, the Soviet government voiced their criticisms. On 18 March, they sent a note to Turkey protesting that a pact was being planned in order to form military blocs in the Middle East, that neither Turkey nor Pakistan were threatened by attack, that such Turkish policy had a direct bearing on the security of Russia and that the Turkish government was responsible for any "consequences." The note also added that the projected pact was similar to the 1951 Four-Power proposal, both being connected with the NATO and designed to give British and American troops justification of their presence in the Middle East. A similar note was sent to Pakistan a week later. Just as she hoped to keep Turkey away from the NATO two years before, Russia now hoped to keep Turkey and Pakistan away from the new American defence system. In their replies, however, Pakistan and Turkey rejected the Soviet note and reaffirmed that the pact was defensive.<sup>4</sup>

While Soviet relations with Turkey and Pakistan were thus strained, the Soviet government turned with friendly gestures towards their other neighbours hoping to keep them out of this pact. Their approaches included appeals to the people as well as the governments. The Congress of Soviet Muslim leaders held in Ufa (Transcaucasia) in June 1954, was

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<sup>3</sup> Spain, *op.cit.*, pp. 254, 261. See text in The Middle East Journal, VIII (Summer 1954), 337-338.

<sup>4</sup> The New York Times, 20 March 1954, p. 3; 28 March 1954, p. 6; 5 May 1954, p. 8; and 10 May 1954, p. 10.

given extensive coverage by Moscow press and radio. Religious freedom was admitted by Muslims in various parts of Russia, while the Sheikhs referred to Koranic verses on peace in Arabic, English and Persian. The year 1954 also saw radio Moscow supporting the demands of the newly-formed National Front in Jordan and the firm Egyptian stand in the negotiations with the British over the evacuation of the Canal Zone. Broadcasts also were criticizing Western policy in Persia and accusing the Western powers of being interested not in Persia's welfare but in their own profit derived from exploiting the Persian workers.<sup>5</sup> The fact that in May the Persian government had asked the Soviet government to recall the Second Secretary of the Soviet Embassy in Tehran on the charge of allowing a Tuda member to use the diplomatic bag<sup>6</sup> did not seem to have aroused any ill-feeling on the part of Russia. The Turkish-Pakistani pact and its possible implications for Persia was given priority. To confirm her friendliness towards Persia, Russia went on to conclude a Russo-Persian treaty by which Soviet agricultural implements, vehicles and industrial equipment were given to Persia.<sup>7</sup>

However, as rumours of the possibility of Persia's adherence to the Baghdad Pact spread, Russia's attitude took a different turn. Warnings alternated with friendly appeals. Radio Moscow announced on 9 July 1954, that the Soviet Ambassador

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<sup>5</sup> Katona, op.cit., pp. 163-164, 168, 171-173.

<sup>6</sup> The Times (London), 12 May 1954, p. 5.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 17 May 1954, p. 5.

in Tehran presented to the Persian government a protest against this, reminded them of their guarantees in the 1927 treaty and asked for explanations.<sup>8</sup>

Although Persia's reply rejected the protest, the Soviet government continued to court Persia. On 2 December, they signed an agreement with the Persian government by which both countries agreed on the demarcation of their frontiers, disputes over which had been frequent. The Soviet government also agreed to pay their war debts to Persia and they did pay them in June 1955.<sup>9</sup> This was a last minute attempt on the part of Russia in order to keep Persia from signing the Turkish-Pakistani Pact, known after Iraq's adherence to it in early 1955, as the Baghdad pact.

On 11 October 1955, Persia joined the Baghdad Pact. This evoked Soviet criticisms which were expressed the next day in Molotov's note to the Persian Chargé d'Affaires in Moscow. The note protested that the Pact was aggressive and incompatible with Persia's treaty obligations to Russia and with the maintenance of peace in the Middle East. Again, Persia's reply rejected the Soviet note.<sup>10</sup> All Soviet efforts to keep Persia out of the Northern Tier group crashed.

Persia was not the only target of Soviet gestures in response to the Baghdad Pact. While on one hand the Soviet

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 10 July 1954, p. 6.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 3 December 1954, p. 8, and 2 June 1955, p. 6.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 13 and 17 October 1954, pp. 6 and 7 respectively.



government were playing up Persia, they were at the same time directing their attention elsewhere. Afghanistan was another soft spot. Strategically important for the completion of the American chain of alliances, she was economically backward and had disputes with adjacent Pakistan, both being assets for Russia. By exploiting the dispute over the tribal regions of "Pakhtunistan,"<sup>11</sup> alone, Russia had an excellent chance to woo Afghanistan in order to leave a gap in the northern belt.

With Russia occupied with more urgent issues, Afghanistan had not featured much in Soviet policy for a long time. The latest contact was the modification of the treaty of 1921 and the demarcation of the Soviet-Afghanistan borders in an agreement concluded in 1946.<sup>12</sup> However as rumours of the United States military aid to Pakistan were spreading in late 1953, Afghanistan became an object of Soviet interest. Russian aid to Afghanistan took on an economic form first. On 27 January 1954, an agreement was signed in Kabul by which the Soviet government granted Afghanistan a loan accompanied by Soviet technicians

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These are the tribal regions which lie along the Pakistani borders with Afghanistan. Like Afghanistan, they are inhabited by Pathans. Afghanistan claimed that these Pathan tribes should be in an independent state of their own called Pakhtunistan. The referendum given to them at the time of India's partition was between adherence to India or Pakistan, and as Muslims, the tribes chose Pakistan. Afghanistan argued that that referendum was not fair as it did not give the Pathans the opportunity to vote for independence and so she wanted to give them a new chance.

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Carman, op.cit., pp. 142-143.

to help in construction projects.<sup>13</sup> Two similar agreements followed in April. Although by such policy the Soviet government were trying to keep up the balance upset by the United States aid to Pakistan, yet at the same time they were trying to be friendly in their foreign policy in order to gain popularity at home and establish the new regime, (agricultural reforms, for example) firmly.<sup>14</sup>

The greatest retaliation against Pakistan's Western-oriented policy, however, came in December 1955, during the visit of Marshal Bulganin and Nikita Khrushchev to India, Burma and Afghanistan. In India, the Soviet leaders supported the Indian claim to Kashmir by declaring that Kashmir was an integral part of India. When they visited Kabul on 16 December, they supported Afghanistan's cause by declaring that the Pathan tribes should be given the right of self-determination instead of their being incorporated in Pakistan. By these two statements on Kashmir and Pakhtunistan Russia was giving Pakistan the greatest challenge to her claims in both cases. Her gains at home were in satisfying the desire of the Russians for foreign contacts.

The visit to Afghanistan also led to Soviet offers for a hospital and motor busses, and to the signature of an agreement by which a credit of \$100 million with technical aid was to be

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<sup>13</sup> The Times (London), 29 January 1954, p. 8.

<sup>14</sup> Ivison Macadam, ed., The Annual Register of World Events 1954, (London: Longmans, Green and Co. 1955), pp. 187, 195.

advanced to Afghanistan, political, economic and cultural ties to be strengthened and the treaty of 1931 extended.<sup>15</sup>

The third target at which the Soviet government's response to the Northern Tier policy was aimed, was the Arab world. In the first year or so after Stalin's death, Soviet policy had fluctuated with the effort to befriend the Arabs on one hand and Israel on the other. Thus although Russia appeared to be championing the Arab cause, the facts revealed her insincerity. On 2 December, 1953, when rumours of United States military aid to Pakistan were spreading, the new Soviet Minister to Israel, the first after the resumption of diplomatic relations, presented his credentials in Jerusalem, thus recognizing it as the capital of Israel.<sup>16</sup> This was a part of the conciliatory attitude of Russia which included the release of the Jewish doctors. On the other hand, on 22 January, 1954, when the Security Council was discussing the Syro-Israeli dispute over Israel's diversion of the river Jordan for a hydro-electric project, Vyshinsky, the Soviet delegate, vetoed the British, American and French resolution which gave the Chief of Staff of the United Nations Supervisory Organization in Palestine the power to explore the conditions under which the interests of both sides would be reconciled. This resolution which did not blame

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<sup>15</sup> The Times (London), 19 December 1955, p. 5.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 5 December 1953, p. 5.

Israel but recommended suspension of the work until an agreement was reached, was unacceptable to the Arabs, and Lebanon which was represented on the Council voted against it. Also on 29 March, when the Security Council was discussing Israel's complaint against Egypt's blockade of ships passing through the Suez Canal bound to Israel, the Soviet delegate vetoed the New Zealand resolution which condemned Egypt's action.<sup>17</sup>

In spring, the Soviet government again included Israel as well as the Arab states in their friendly gestures. The Legations of Egypt and Israel in Moscow and those of Russia in Cairo and Tel-Aviv were raised to Embassy status.<sup>18</sup>

In Iraq, however, Nuri as-Said who succeeded Fadil Al-Jamali as Prime Minister, was paving the way for joining the Turkish-Pakistani Pact. King Faisal of Iraq had paid a visit to Karachi, early in March 1954, and spoken of closer relations between the two countries. Also, Iraqi-Egyptian relations were not at all smooth because of Egypt's opposition to military pacts. This fact was exploited on 26 March, when the Soviet government sent a note to the Iraqi government to the effect that the adherence of any Arab country to a Middle East defence pact would be considered by the Soviet government an unfriendly and hostile act.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> The United Nations, Security Council: Official Records, Ninth Year, 656th Meeting, 22 January 1954, S/PV. 656, p. 27, and 664th Meeting, 29 March 1954, S/PV. 664, p. 12.

<sup>18</sup> The Times (London), 21 March 1954, p. 8, and 17 June 1954, p. 5.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 27 March 1954, p. 5.

Throughout August and September when riots and demonstrations became frequent Premier Nuri as-Said was severely suppressing the communists and banning leftist papers. On 6 November, 1954, the Iraqi government closed their Legation in Moscow and on 3 January, 1955, broke off diplomatic relations officially without giving any reason.<sup>20</sup> The Soviet note in reply stated that suspension of diplomatic relations showed the unfriendly attitude of the Iraqi government and Nuri as-Said's foreign policy which aimed at drawing the Arabs into Western aggressive blocs.<sup>21</sup> On 12 January, the Soviet Legation in Baghdad was closed.<sup>22</sup> In February Iraq officially joined the Baghdad Pact.

It is worth mentioning here that in May 1955, Russia concluded the Treaty of Warsaw. This treaty formally acknowledged the formation of a defence system which Russia was trying to build around herself since 1943.<sup>23</sup> That this treaty was announced when the American-sponsored defence system was gaining more adherents is evidence that its announcement was meant to meet the Western challenge.

With Iraq definitely siding with the West and Egypt leading the anti-Western Arab nationalists in criticizing this

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 4 January 1955, p. 6.

<sup>21</sup> The New York Times, 9 January 1955, p. 27.

<sup>22</sup> The Times (London), 13 January 1955, p. 8.

<sup>23</sup> Harry N. Howard, "The Development of U.S. Policy in the Near East, South Asia, and Africa During 1955," The Department of State Bulletin, XXXIV (26 March 1956), p. 511.

and advocating neutrality, the Soviet government turned to Egypt and concluded a trade agreement in April 1955, for the exchange of Egyptian cotton for Russian oil.<sup>24</sup> This treaty enabled Egypt to get rid of her cotton surplus. By responding to Egypt's need, Russia was aiming to undermine the effectiveness of the Northern Tier in the West just as her aid to Afghanistan aimed to weaken it in the East. The Baghdad Pact provided the Soviet Government with a "first-class opportunity to take advantage of the Arab opposition to the U.S.-sponsored defense system for the Muslim World."<sup>25</sup>

The significant turn in Soviet policy came few months later when on 27 September Czechoslovakia concluded an agreement with Egypt by which Czech arms were supplied in return for Egyptian cotton, rice and other products, on a purely commercial basis.<sup>26</sup> That it was the Czech not the Soviet government which concluded the agreement is typical of Soviet policy in utilizing the indirect approach as well. Ironically enough, the fact that no other satellite but Czechoslovakia did this brings back to memory the Czech arms deal with Israel in 1948 and helps us recollect the ultimate objective of Soviet policy. Although the agreement was made in the name of the Czech not the Soviet government, the latter officially approved of it in a statement

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<sup>24</sup> The Times (London), 29 April 1955, p. 10.

<sup>25</sup> Spector, op.cit., p. 129.

<sup>26</sup> The Times (London), 28 September 1955, p. 8.

issued on 2 October.<sup>27</sup>

It is often argued whether this deal constituted a Russian offensive or defensive. Supporters of the former point of view say that the Middle East was not likely to have been left out of Soviet policy for long while those who advocate the latter say that the deal was merely a reaction to the Northern Tier policy. A compromise by which the two arguments are given equal importance is often reached. However, the situation in the Middle East itself was the greatest inviting factor. That situation was characterized by tension among the two blocs into which the Arab world had been divided, but more important it was the relations between the Arabs and Israel which accounted for it. President Abdul Nasser explained this by stating that it was the failure of the West to supply him with arms, which he badly needed for defence especially against Israel, which made him turn to the Soviet bloc. The Egyptian President also reaffirmed that the deal did not mean that communist infiltration would now be let loose; on the contrary, the Communist Party continued to be banned and communist activities suppressed.<sup>28</sup>

The Czech arms deal with Egypt was both a challenge and a defeat for the West. Its most significant result was that through it Russia came to the forefront in the Middle Eastern affairs. Soviet policy became concerned not merely with reducing Western influence in the area but positively replacing it by her

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<sup>27</sup>

Ibid., 3 October 1955, p. 8.

<sup>28</sup>

Ibid., and 28 September 1955, p. 8.

own. Russia challenged the Western powers and showed them that the Middle East was not a Western monopoly. She knew how and when to act and thus achieved a great degree of success and popularity throughout the Middle East.

On 10 October, 1955, the Egyptian government announced a Soviet offer to help Egypt and other Arab states in their development projects such as the High Dam project and the Jordan irrigation scheme.<sup>29</sup> On 17 October, after the Soviet Ambassador had met with the Yemeni Acting Foreign Minister, it was announced in Cairo that diplomatic relations between Russia and Yemen would be established and the treaty of 1927 renewed.<sup>30</sup> In November, the Soviet government offered Saudi Arabia "material and moral help" on the Buraimi dispute with Britain, and the Saudi government spoke of establishing diplomatic relations with the Soviet government.<sup>31</sup>

The re-emergence of Russia in the Middle East was not limited to this policy but also took the form of reviving Soviet oriental studies. For instance, Soviet experts on the Middle East were given a special periodical, Sovietskoye Vostokovedenie,

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Ibid., 11 October 1955, p. 8.

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The New York Times, 18 October 1955, p. 2.

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Iverson Macadam, ed., The Annual Register of World Events 1955, (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1956), p. 293. For further information on the Buraimi dispute see J.B. Kelly, "The Buraimi Oasis Dispute," International Affairs, XXXII (July 1956), 318-326, and Alexander Melamid, "The Buraimi Oasis Dispute," Middle Eastern Affairs, VII (February 1956), 56-63.



the first issue of which appeared in April 1955. New books on the Middle East also appeared in abundance. The revival of oriental studies, stopped since the purge of the 1930s, was not only academic but also reflected the revival of interest in the Middle East<sup>32</sup> and the importance attached to that area in the new Soviet policy.

Moreover, this revival found expression in encouraging the exchange of visits with Middle Eastern governments and peoples. Soviet cultural missions and sports clubs visited Egypt, Syria and Lebanon. Syrian delegations to Russia in July 1955, included a parliamentary group, a scientists' mission and a women's delegation. Egyptian government officials such as Hasan Al-Bakuri, the Minister of Waqf, visited Communist China while Fathi Radwan, Minister of Communications, visited Hungary and Czechoslovakia. In July also, Chinese Muslim pilgrims visited both Mecca and Cairo. The Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch and that of Alexandria paid a visit to Moscow in the summer of 1955. The significance of these visits lies in the fact that they had been almost altogether neglected until then.<sup>33</sup>

The re-entry of Soviet Russia into the Middle East at last was accomplished but on a scale much larger than ever before. Arms were not the only thing Russia had to offer as economic and technical aid came along and cultural visits were encouraged. With all this Russia approached those countries

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<sup>32</sup> Laqueur, op.cit., p. 262.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., pp. 263-264.

which were still outside the Northern Tier and which needed help most. Afghanistan was supported against Pakistan, Egypt against Iraq and the West, and the Arabs in general against Israel. This support came at a time when there was a breach among the Arabs led by Egypt in opposition to Iraq, when Israeli-Arab tension was at a bad stage and when the British were moving their troops from the Suez base. The timing as well as the content and direction of Soviet intervention were very skillful<sup>34</sup> and Russia won the sentiments of the nationalists throughout the greater part of the Middle East.

Outside the Middle East, Soviet policy during 1955 was characterized by its conciliatory character. Thus, the treaty with Austria after 10 years of negotiations, the visit of the Soviet leaders to Yugoslavia, the evacuation of military basis in Finland, the compromise over the admission of new members to the United Nations and the participation in the United Nations specialized agencies such as the UNESCO and the ILO, showed a relaxation of tension. This has been interpreted as a consequence of the growing strength of the free world and the failure of Soviet foreign economic policies which gave assistance only to the satellites and refrained from supporting the United Nations

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"The Middle East: Background to Russian Intervention,"  
The World Today, II (November 1955), 468.

specialized agencies. The "new look" in aiming to destroy the Western defence systems outside or inside the Middle East was intended to give the impression of peaceful intentions.<sup>35</sup> That the "new look" did not constitute a departure from Soviet traditional policy was revealed in a statement made by Khrushchev in October 1955 to the effect that those who thought that there was a change in Soviet policy from that drawn up by Marx, Engels and Lenin (some sources also said Stalin) were deceiving nobody but themselves.<sup>36</sup>

From the Czech Arms Deal to the Eisenhower  
Doctrine, 1955-1957

The Middle East was by now divided into two blocs, the Baghdad Pact countries and the non-Baghdad Pact countries. Although Soviet policy was mainly concerned with supporting the former group, the latter was not altogether neglected. This in essence was an application of the principle of "peaceful co-existence" advocated by the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, held in February 1956. The resolutions of the Congress advocated this principle which aimed at "improving relations, strengthening confidence and developing co-operation

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<sup>35</sup> Francis O. Wilcox, "The Soviet Challenge and the United Nations," The Department of State Bulletin, XXXIV (26 March 1956), 495-497.

<sup>36</sup> Allen W. Dulles, "Free World Defense Against Communist Subversion," The Department of State Bulletin, XXXII (17 October 1955), 603.

with all countries." Wars became "preventable" instead of "inevitable" as the former congresses ruled. All "anti-war forces" therefore were to form a "united front" and "struggle for preserving and consolidating peace." The recommendations of the Congress in the field of foreign policy specifically were: a) to work for peaceful co-existence among all countries "irrespective of their social systems," b) to strengthen friendship and co-operation with the communist countries including Yugoslavia, c) to consolidate friendship with peace-loving India, Burma, Afghanistan, Egypt, Syria, Indonesia and support those who refused to be drawn into "aggressive blocs," d) to promote friendship with the neutral countries of Europe, and e) to improve relations with the Western world.<sup>37</sup> By emphasizing the promotion of trade and cultural contacts, the new policy amounted to a shift from the formal aspects to the more diplomatic approach. The Congress in general formulated the counter-offensive to the Western defence systems.<sup>38</sup>

Thus, when at the request of the United States, the Security Council met on 26 March, to discuss a United States resolution which suggested that the Secretary-General, Mr. Dag Hammarskjold, should visit the Middle East and explore possibilities of relaxing tension there, M. Sobolev, the Soviet

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Resolutions of the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1956), pp. 9-14.

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"The Soviet Communist Party's Twentieth Congress," The World Today, XII (April 1956), 142-143.

delegate first accused the West of planning "armed intervention in the affairs of the Arab States," but on 4 April he voted for the resolution.<sup>39</sup>

This policy is further illustrated by a Soviet Foreign Ministry statement on the Middle East issued on 17 April. This statement called upon both Israel and the Arabs to stop their attacks across the borders in order to facilitate the United Nations task. It stated that any settlement of the conflicts of the area should take into consideration the wishes of the parties concerned and that it should be achieved without outside interference. It expressed the willingness of the Soviet government to co-operate with the United Nations in strengthening peace in the Middle East, and blamed the increased tension on the development of military alliances which violated the United Nations principles and threatened peace.<sup>40</sup> On the same day, Foreign Minister Molotov and Deputy Prime Minister Mikoyan attended a reception held at the Israeli Embassy in Moscow to celebrate Israel's Independence Day, and some observers interpreted this as a move to improve Soviet relations with Israel.<sup>41</sup>

This was soon followed by the visit of Marshal Bulganin and N. Khrushchev to London. At its conclusion both governments

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<sup>39</sup> The United Nations, Security Council: Official Records, Eleventh Year, 720th Meeting, 3 April 1956, S/PV. 720, pp. 3-4 and 722nd Meeting, 4 April 1956, S/PV. 722, p. 11.

<sup>40</sup> The Times (London), 18 April 1956, p. 8.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 17 April 1956, p. 8.

expressed their willingness to do their best for the maintenance of peace and security in the Middle East and thus to co-operate with the United Nations in its efforts to carry out its resolution on Palestine. Both governments also agreed that definite steps for this purpose should be undertaken soon, with due consideration for the national aspirations of the people concerned.<sup>42</sup>

Friendly appeals to the Arabs had been going on all the time. On 10 February, the Soviet government concluded an agreement with the Egyptian government by which they would help in establishing a nuclear laboratory in Cairo for "work concerned with the peaceful utilization of atomic energy." Soviet experts would advise in planning the laboratory and Egyptian experts would receive training in Moscow. Soviet machinery and equipment would also help in geological research.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, on 23 March, the British Foreign Office confirmed reports which had said that Egyptian officers were being trained by Soviet officers in Poland and that Czech officers were training Egyptian officers in Cairo.<sup>44</sup> The Egyptian response to the Soviet gestures had already been seen in the fact that by mid-May two-thirds of Egypt's cotton was sold to Communist China, Eastern Germany and Czechoslovakia, and also in the official recognition of Communist

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 28 April 1956, pp. 4, 6.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 11 February 1956, p. 6.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 24 March 1956, p. 6.

China on 16 May.<sup>45</sup>

With Yemen, the Soviet government concluded a trade agreement in March. Yemen agreed to export coffee, tobacco and farm products, and the Soviet government agreed to give agricultural machinery and road-building equipment in return. The Soviet government also offered technical assistance.<sup>46</sup>

Recognition of new Arab states was also another attempt at friendliness. On 15 March, diplomatic relations between Russia and the Sudan were established at Embassy level. On 15 June, Russia recognized the independence of Tunisia and Morocco, and Marshal Bulganin informed the Prime Ministers of both states of the desire of his government to establish diplomatic relations with them.<sup>47</sup>

These friendly gestures were not limited to the Arab world. Assistance to Afghanistan, was given in an agreement signed on 1st March. Russia agreed to supply materials for building two hydro-electric stations in Afghanistan, three vehicle repair factories, irrigation works, a physics and chemistry laboratory, airfields at Kabul and Bagram and a motor road across the Hindu Kush Mountains. The agreement also provided for Soviet technicians to help both in carrying out

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<sup>45</sup> Ivison Macadam, The Annual Register of World Events 1956, (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1957), pp. 285-297.

<sup>46</sup> The Times (London), 6 March 1956, p. 8.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 16 March 1956, p. 8 and 16 June 1956, p. 6.

the projects and in training local personnel.<sup>48</sup>

In June, a number of visits exchanged with Middle East countries marked the climax of these friendly appeals. The Yemeni Crown Prince and Foreign Minister, Seif al-Islam Mohamed al-Badr, paid a visit to Moscow from 11-15 June. The communiqué issued at the conclusion of that visit extended trade relations established earlier in the year, spoke of Soviet offers of aid for the economic development of Yemen, and announced the establishment of diplomatic relations by which representation would be exchanged through Cairo. The main Soviet achievement from this visit, however, was the promise of the Yemeni Prince not to join aggressive military alliances.<sup>49</sup>

While the Prince of Yemen was still in Moscow, the new Soviet Foreign Minister, Dimitri Shepilov, set off on a tour of the Middle East. He first visited Egypt, 17-22 June. The communiqué issued at the conclusion of this visit spoke of friendly relations between the two, of mutual interest in the political, economic and cultural fields, and of co-operation for the strengthening of peace and security.<sup>50</sup> In the course of this visit Shepilov repeated that Russia was a faithful and reliable

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<sup>48</sup> Manchester Guardian cited in Keesing's Contemporary Archives, 1955-1956 (London: Keesing's Publications Limited) X, 14791.

<sup>49</sup> The Times, (London), 25 and 26 June 1956, pp. 7 and 9 respectively.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 23 June 1956, p. 6.



friend of the Arabs, willing to support them in their struggle against imperialism in all its forms. Before he left Cairo, he extended an invitation to President Abdul Nasser to visit Moscow.<sup>51</sup>

From Cairo, Shepilov went to Damascus. There, an agreement to increase economic and cultural co-operation was reached. Before he left Damascus for Beirut, Shepilov announced that President Quwatly had accepted an invitation to visit Russia.<sup>52</sup> Syria's recognition of Communist China soon after may be interpreted as a response to this move. Another outcome of the Soviet attitude was the conclusion of a cultural agreement in August.<sup>53</sup>

Shepilov's visit to Beirut led to the raising of the status of the diplomatic missions of the two countries to that of Embassy. Shepilov also announced that President Chamoun had accepted an invitation to visit Moscow, and both governments agreed to develop their economic and cultural relations.<sup>54</sup>

The visits to the Arab countries did not mean that Israel was neglected at all. The Soviet government tried to appease her by signing on 19 July an agreement for the exchange of Israeli citrus fruits for Russian oil for a period of two years.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 18 and 19 June 1956, pp. 10 and 8 respectively.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 26 June 1956, p. 8.

<sup>53</sup> Macadam, The Annual Register of World Events 1956, p.301.

<sup>54</sup> The Daily Star (Beirut), 29 June 1956, p. 4.

<sup>55</sup> The Times (London), 20 July 1956, p. 8.

Viewed in their larger context, these visits formed a part of the several contacts carried on by the Soviet government and which stem from the resolutions of the Twentieth Congress. In other words, Russia was going to "continue to wage an ideological struggle against 'imperialism' and to compete with the West to secure the allegiance of the uncommitted countries." With Mikoyan in India in March, Bulganin and Khrushchev in England in April, the French Premier and Foreign Minister, the Premiers of Denmark, Sweden and Belgium and Air Chiefs of several countries in Moscow and President Klementi Y. Voroshilov in Finland in May, the Yemeni Prince and the Shah of Iran in Moscow and Shepilov in the Arab world and Greece in June, President Quwatly in Moscow in October, and similar other contacts, Soviet policy continued to aim at expanding its influence in Asia and maintaining the status quo in Europe.<sup>56</sup>

In the corresponding period, Soviet policy towards the Baghdad Pact bloc also saw some relaxation. While in February the third Soviet note in protest against Persia's adherence to Baghdad Pact had been sent to the Persian government, and Soviet notes had gone to the Turkish government against the United States' use of Turkish territory for balloon launchings over Russia,<sup>57</sup> and while in March the Persian government had asked for the recall of the Soviet Assistant Military Attaché in Tehran on a charge of

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<sup>56</sup> Macadam, The Annual Register of World Events 1956, pp. 193-194.

<sup>57</sup> The Times (London), 6 February 1956, pp. 7, 8.

espionage,<sup>58</sup> the talks held between the Soviet Ambassador and the Persian Foreign Minister on 9 April were interpreted as a friendly gesture, and so were the Soviet press hints that Turko-Soviet relations could be improved and that Soviet economic aid to Turkey might be extended.<sup>59</sup>

Furthermore, while Shepilov was on his tour of the Middle East, the Shah and Empress of Persia visited Russia, and President Voroshilov reassured them of Russia's friendly attitude towards Persia. An outcome of this visit was that the Soviet government agreed to transfer their rights in the Kaviri-Khurian Oil Company to Persia as a measure of further strengthening Soviet-Persian friendship.<sup>60</sup>

Another country of the Baghdad Pact bloc which received Soviet friendly gestures was Pakistan. On 15 June, when there was a serious food crisis in Pakistan and gifts from the United States were received, a Soviet gift of rice was announced. On 27 June, Pakistan and Russia concluded the first trade agreement between them. Each extended most-favoured-nation treatment to the other, Russia obtained Pakistani jute, jute-products, hides, leather, cotton and wool, and supplied Pakistan with Soviet

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Ibid., 2 March 1956, p. 7.

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George Kirk, "The U.S.S.R. and the Northern Tier," The Middle East Forum, XXXI (Summer 1956), p. 6.

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The Times (London), 26 June 1956, p. 9 and 30 July 1956, p. 7.

industrial equipment, chemicals, petroleum and petroleum-products in return.<sup>61</sup>

In the meantime, Egypt was negotiating with the United States, Britain and the International Bank for aid in financing the High Dam project at Aswan. Any aid on this enormous project which was to form the nucleus for vast development schemes in Egypt would have had a great significance. It is no wonder, therefore, that Russia appeared ready to help. Whether she really did offer any aid or whether Egypt used her only for greater bargaining power with the West is a matter on which later events threw some light. The fact remains, however, that Russia was careful to make no commitments. The Egyptian Embassy in Washington announced on 17 October 1955 a Russian offer of aid for the project.<sup>62</sup> This, however, was unconfirmed by Russia. Again when Shepilov was in Cairo in June 1956, rumours to this effect spread but there was no reference to the project in the communique issued at the conclusion of the visit.<sup>63</sup>

In July, negotiations for this project reached a critical stage when the United States withdrew her offer to Egypt on the 18th and was followed by Britain and the International Bank. This

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<sup>61</sup> Keesing's Contemporary Archives 1955-1956, pp. 15007, 15010.

<sup>62</sup> The Times (London), 18 October 1955, p. 8.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 20 June 1956, p. 9 and 23 June 1956, p. 6.

offered a chance to test the authenticity of the reports about Soviet aid. On 21 July, Shepilov told news correspondents in Moscow that Russia wanted to help Egypt economically but he did not make any particular reference to the High Dam. Asked whether his government would finance the project after the Western withdrawal, he said that it was not vital to Egypt at the moment and that Egypt had the more important problem of industrialization to deal with first.<sup>64</sup>

Furthermore, while reports in Cairo said that Kisselev, the Soviet Ambassador to Cairo, reaffirmed on 22 July his government's willingness to help in financing the project,<sup>65</sup> the Soviet Embassy Press Attaché denied any special reference to the High Dam project and said that the Ambassador had only repeated the Soviet Foreign Minister's statement on economic aid to Egypt in general. In answer to reporters' questions Kisselev said that the Soviet government would finance the Dam if asked, but there was no indication that the Egyptian government had really asked for Soviet aid.<sup>66</sup>

With Egypt's nationalization of the Suez Canal Company on 26 July, immediately after the High Dam controversy, Soviet support of Egypt and the Arabs rose to its climax. Russia was

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<sup>64</sup>  
Ibid., 23 July 1956, p. 7.

<sup>65</sup>  
Ibid., 24 July 1956, p. 8.

<sup>66</sup>  
Ibid., 25 July 1956, p. 9.

given a new chance for undermining the West. Her policy of peaceful co-existence wanted to cultivate friendly relations with the West, it is true, but not at the expense of any vital concessions. On 31 July, Khrushchev in a speech in Moscow upheld the Egyptian government's action as a sovereign right and saw no justification of the "alarm" and "excitement" with which the West had received the news. He said that only the interests of the Suez Canal Company were affected, not those of Britain, the United States or France. He then declared his government's support of all countries which were fighting against "imperialism" and condemned the Western Powers' apparent intention to use force against Egypt.<sup>67</sup> Pravda and Izvestia also supported the nationalization act, the former expressing warm sympathy for Egypt and the latter criticizing Israel's threat of war against her peace-loving neighbours.<sup>68</sup> Izvestia, however, might have been trying to placate the Arabs as Israel had just received Soviet oil.

In reply to the British invitation for a conference to be held at London on 16 August to discuss the issue, the Tass agency issued a Soviet note on 9 August accepting the invitation but with reservation and counter-proposals. The Soviet note stressed Egypt's right to nationalize the Suez Canal Company and said that the act did not affect freedom of navigation in the canal as that was guaranteed in the 1888 Convention which Egypt adhered to and respected. It pointed out that the conference

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 1st August 1956, p. 7.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 4 August 1956, p. 5.

should not revise the decision of nationalization as that was an internal affair and stressed that Soviet participation in the conference did not necessarily commit Russia to any decisions which might affect Egypt's right to nationalize the Company. The note also commented that the conference should have been held at the end of August in order to allow for adequate preparations and that it should have included twenty-two more states, namely, the Arab states as successors to the Ottoman Empire which was a signatory of the 1888 Convention, Eastern European states as users of the canal and successors of Austria-Hungary, and the Chinese Peoples' Republic as a user. It further criticized British and French troop movements in the Mediterranean as a threat to peace and security. The note concluded that the conference should not be considered as an international body authorized to make decisions on the issue and that Russia accepted the invitation only in order to find a fair solution and to promote peace.<sup>69</sup>

At the conference, the Soviet Foreign Minister, Dimitri Shepilov, repeated the arguments included in the 9 August note. He supported the Egyptian government's proposal of 12 August for a wider conference including all signatories of the 1888 Convention and users of the canal. He divided the case into two phases, namely, the act of nationalization which he considered a purely internal affair which should not be interfered with, and freedom of navigation through the canal which he suggested

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Ibid., 10 August 1956, pp. 8, 10.

could be guaranteed in an agreement supplementary to the 1888 Convention to be concluded with Egypt's participation. Shepilov also denounced the United States' plan which suggested international control over the canal. He considered that plan to be incompatible with Egypt's sovereignty over which he expressed great concern, and interpreted it to mean a transfer of the canal from domination by one power to domination by several powers.<sup>70</sup>

At the Security Council in October when the issue was discussed in response to an Anglo-French request, Shepilov renewed the attack and repeated the same arguments. On the 13th, an Anglo-French resolution was presented to the Security Council and voted upon in two parts. The first one which constituted the six principles agreed upon by Britain, France and Egypt was passed but the second which asked for the support of the 18-Power proposals to set up a Suez Canal Users' Association for running the canal in co-operation with the Egyptian authorities was condemned as being incompatible with Egypt's sovereignty and vetoed by the Soviet delegate.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>70</sup>

Ibid., 18 August 1956, p. 11.

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The United Nations, Security Council: Official Records, Eleventh Year, 743rd Meeting, 13 October 1956, S/PV 743, p. 18.  
The six principles agreed upon were:-

- 1) Free navigation for all.
- 2) Respect of Egypt's Sovereignty.
- 3) The insulation of politics from the operation of the Canal.
- 4) Egypt and Users to fix the tolls.
- 5) A portion of dues to go to development of the Canal.
- 6) The settlement of disputes by arbitration.

The United Nations, Security Council: Official Records, Eleventh Year, Supplement for October, November and December 1956, pp. 19-20.



On 15 September, immediately after the resignation of the Company's pilots, Russia sent 16 pilots to work in the canal as a further measure of support.<sup>72</sup> This sympathetic attitude, however, did not prevent Mikoyan, the First Deputy Prime Minister, from declaring in Moscow on 15 October that freedom of navigation through the Suez Canal should be guaranteed to all states including Israel.<sup>73</sup> Relations with Israel deteriorated seriously only after the Israeli attack on Egypt on 29 October, which was followed by the Anglo-French attack two days later.

The joint attack on Egypt at the beginning of November, occurred when Russia was having serious trouble in Hungary. It thus provided Russia with the opportunity to pick on the West at a time when she needed that opportunity most. Soviet official circles, press and radio criticized the attack bitterly and Shepilov described it as an act of "gangsterism".<sup>74</sup> President Voroshilov and Premier Bulganin sent letters to Prime Minister Nehru and President Sukarno calling for a conference of Bandung Powers to be held in order to ask for the withdrawal of the British, French and Israeli troops from Egypt.<sup>75</sup> Radio Moscow announced that a protest had been sent to Britain and France accusing them of establishing a "naval blockade" in the Eastern Mediterranean and of violating the 1888 Convention.<sup>76</sup>

The Soviet bombshell, however, was dropped on 5 November

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<sup>72</sup> The Times (London), 17 September 1956, p. 8.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 16 October 1956, p. 10.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 2 and 12 November 1956, pp. 6 and 10 respectively.

<sup>75</sup> The Daily Star, (Beirut), 2 November 1956, pp. 1, 4.

<sup>76</sup> The Times (London), 5 November 1956, p. 8.

in the notes sent to the British, French and Israeli Prime Ministers, to President Eisenhower and to the Security Council. In his letter to Ben-Gurion, the Israeli Prime Minister, Marshal Bulganin accused Israel of being a tool in the hands of Britain and France, condemned the aggression and recalled the Soviet Ambassador from Tel-Aviv.<sup>77</sup> In his note to Sir Anthony Eden and to Guy Mollet Marshal Bulganin said, "We are full of determination to crush the aggression and re-establish peace in the Middle East through the use of force." He appealed to the governments, the trade unions and to the people of both Britain and France for the cessation of hostilities and accused Britain and France of being motivated by the desire "to reestablish colonial slavery of the peoples of Egypt ...". He also hinted at the use of rocket weapons against both of them saying:

In what position would Britain have found herself if she herself had been attacked by more powerful states possessing every kind of modern destructive weapon? And there are countries now which need not have sent a navy or airforce to the coasts of Britain, but could have used other means, such as rocket weapons.<sup>78</sup>

The oblique reference to rocket weapons, like the offer of aid to the High Dam project, are typical of Soviet propaganda which does not commit itself but leaves a way out. This is often interpreted to mean that Russia was unwilling to get involved in a war. However, the fact remains that by threatening to crush the aggression she did take the risk although America's response

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<sup>77</sup>

Ibid., 6 November 1956, p. 10.

<sup>78</sup>

Ibid.

reduced its effect.<sup>79</sup>

Marshal Bulganin's note to President Eisenhower proposed joint intervention of Soviet and American armed forces in co-operation with the United Nations in order to check the Anglo-French aggression. A letter to this effect was also sent to the Chairman of the Security Council. This letter also suggested that the United Nations should immediately ask the three aggressors to put an end to hostilities within 12 hours and to use forces of United Nations members against them if they did not comply.<sup>80</sup> In the meantime, however, the General Assembly which had been meeting in an emergency session had called for a cease-fire<sup>81</sup> and decided, the Soviet delegate abstaining, to establish an international police force for the area.<sup>82</sup> The attitude of the Soviet delegate towards the establishment of the international police force showed that Russia was not keen on having order in the area. Of course it is possible that he found the idea of neutral supervisors unsatisfactory in case the police force meant a guise for United States influence.

Other forms which the Soviet reaction took were demonstrations, threats of despatching volunteers and later the demand

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For the American reply see p. 144.

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Ibid.

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The United Nations, General Assembly: Official Records, Plenary Meeting 562nd, 1st November 1956, First Emergency Session, A/PV. 562, pp. 34-35. Text in the Plenary Meeting 561st, 1st November 1956, First Emergency Session, A/PV. 561, pp. 11-12.

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The United Nations, General Assembly: Official Records, Plenary Meeting 563rd, 3 November 1956, First Emergency Special Session, A/PV. 563, pp. 55, 71.

for compensation to Egypt, not to mention the press campaigns. On 5 November demonstrations, mainly of student and factory workers, took place in front of the British, French and Israeli embassies in Moscow and petitions were left in the three embassies protesting against the aggression on Egypt. These demonstrations, the first of their kind, were apparently arranged with government approval as they were very orderly and as the police did not interfere but stood by and watched.<sup>83</sup>

On 10 November, the Tass agency announced that many Soviet volunteers had offered to go to Egypt to fight the aggressors. It also added that Soviet official circles would not stand in the way of volunteers who wished to go to Egypt if Britain, France and Israel did not withdraw in compliance with the United Nations resolution.<sup>84</sup> Two days later, the Egyptian Ambassador in Moscow announced at a Swedish Embassy reception that more than 50,000 Soviet volunteers had offered service in Egypt.<sup>85</sup> On 15 November, however, the Syrian Minister in Bonn, stated that on behalf of all the Arab states which had diplomatic missions in Bonn, namely, Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Iraq and Yemen, he could say that there were no Soviet volunteers in the Middle East and that the Egyptian government had decided that there was no need for them now that the cease-fire was in effect.<sup>86</sup> Further,

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<sup>83</sup> The Times, (London), 6 November 1956, p. 10.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 12 November 1956, p. 12.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 13 November 1956, p. 13.

<sup>86</sup> The Times, (London), 16 November 1956, p. 10.

an Egyptian Foreign Office Spokesman said in Cairo that Egypt had not officially asked for Soviet volunteers and that the appeal had been made to the whole world, not to Russia only, and that now Egypt wanted to comply with the United Nations resolution.<sup>87</sup> This was followed by a statement from Ali Sabri, President Abdul Nasser's Political Advisor, saying that Egypt would ask for Soviet and other volunteers only if hostilities broke out again.<sup>88</sup> This anxiety on the part of Syria and Egypt to emphasize within few days of the offer that the Egyptian government did not ask for Soviet volunteers showed that Egypt did not want to aggravate the situation nor did she want to displease the United States whose support was still being sought.

On 8 December, the Soviet government announced that the Anglo-French decision to withdraw automatically cancelled the decision to send volunteers.<sup>89</sup> Apparently, the Soviet offer of volunteers was only superficial as it came after the ceasefire was already in force. It was meant more for propaganda and the Arabs welcomed it as an indirect weapon against the West, and for moral support.

The third way in which the Soviet government championed the Arab cause in the Suez crisis was the demand that Egypt should be compensated for damage done during the attack. This

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<sup>87</sup> The Daily Star, (Beirut), 16 November 1956, p. 1.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 20 November 1956, p. 4.

<sup>89</sup> The Times (London), 10 December 1956, p. 8.

came on 5 November in letters from Marshal Bulganin to Eden, Mollet and Ben-Gurion.<sup>90</sup>

It would be futile to attempt to prove the effect of the Soviet reaction on the cessation of hostilities but an estimate is possible. Although we might say that the West did not really take the Soviet threat seriously, and that the force of the American reply<sup>91</sup> undermined the effect of the Soviet threat, or that the United Nations, the Labour Party in Britain and world public opinion had the greatest pressure, we cannot rule out the effect of the Soviet note. In fact, it was all these factors combined which stopped the fighting.<sup>92</sup>

As for the motives behind the Soviet notes, many explanations could be given to them. As apparent from their

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Ibid., 16 November 1956, p. 10.

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The American reply said that the Soviet proposal for joint Soviet-American intervention was "unthinkable," that the issue was already before the United Nations, and that the Soviet note was meant to divert attention away from Hungary. It added, "it would be the duty of all United Nations members to oppose any such effort [as] the introduction of new forces." The Times (London), 6 November 1956, p. 10.

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It is worth mentioning here that the United States Ambassador to France said on 10 December, 1956, that he did not believe that the attack was stopped because of "moral illusion" because in spite of all criticism the attack had continued. Nor was it because of the suspension of oil supplies which was not yet seriously felt. "The only new element that had come in," he added, "was those Soviet threats which were very strongly phrased." The Daily Star, (Beirut), 12 December 1956, p. 4. Of course, there is the possibility that he made that statement because he wanted to keep relations between France and the United States friendly.

evasiveness and the statement of the Soviet Foreign Ministry Official, M. Ilyichev, in reply to reporters' questions that "we" in the notes meant "we with the other members of the United Nations,"<sup>93</sup> they seem to have aimed at diverting world opinion from the atrocities in Hungary, as the American reply said, at encouraging the Egyptians to resist still further, and at winning the sentiments of the Arabs. Of course, it is also possible that they hoped to increase the opposition in Britain against the British Prime Minister and all over the world against Britain.

In the meantime, there was a remarkable rapprochement between Russia and Syria. While the joint attack was still taking place against Egypt, President Quwatly went ahead with his visit to Moscow, in response to Shepilov's invitation in June. On 3 November, at a farewell reception held in Moscow for President Quwatly, President Voroshilov reaffirmed that Russia was ready to give full assistance to Syria in her struggle against "imperialism." He also condemned the attack on Egypt, and using it for propaganda against the Baghdad Pact, said that the attack was the result of that pact and that it proved that the pact aimed at destroying Arab unity.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> The Times (London), 6 November 1956, p. 10. For the notes referred to here, see p. 140 above.

<sup>94</sup> The Daily Star (Beirut), 4 November 1956, p. 1.

On 11 November, official British sources announced that both Syria and Egypt had during the past twelve months received a large quantity of Soviet arms, amounting to the value of £ 150,000,000 in the case of Egypt and to the value of £ 20,000,000 in the case of Syria.<sup>95</sup> On 28 November, Premier Sabri al-Assali of Syria denied a United States statement which said that Syria had received a recent shipment of Soviet arms.<sup>96</sup> The relations between Syria and Russia aroused many comments which in most cases accused Syria of falling into the arms of Soviet Russia. However, the case until the end of 1956 may be summarized in a quotation from the Annual Register of World Events of 1956. It says:

The fear that Syria had been converted into a Soviet satellite or base was unfounded. A considerable quantity of military equipment had been received from the Soviet bloc before the crisis, in accordance with negotiations believed to have been concluded in April, and during the crisis itself deliveries increased; but throughout it was ground arms that were mainly supplied, with no considerable delivery of aircraft. A certain number of technicians and instructors were received, but they were neither numerous nor accompanied by 'volunteers.' Soviet political influence was considerable but not complete.<sup>97</sup>

In the two months following the United States Presidential elections, the United States government had had time to take stock of the general Middle East situation and formulated the Eisenhower Doctrine which was announced in January 1957. For

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<sup>95</sup> The Times (London), 12 November, 1956, p. 10.

<sup>96</sup> The Daily Star (Beirut), 28 November 1956, p. 1.

<sup>97</sup> Macadam, The Annual Register of World Events 1956, p. 302.



the purpose of this study, the most important feature of that Doctrine, was the clause which offered the despatch of American armed forces to and with the consent of those countries which needed protection against possible communist aggression.

This Doctrine was criticized by the Soviet government throughout January, but the main attack came in Shepilov's speech to the Supreme Soviet on 12 February. Shepilov followed a new line in propaganda when he criticized the Doctrine as a United States attempt aimed at "completely ousting Britain and France from the Middle East." He also accused the United States of seeking atomic bases for launching aggression. In that speech and in letters sent to the United States', British and French Ambassadors in Moscow, Shepilov also offered proposals by which a joint Four-Power declaration would be made for the maintenance of peace in the Middle East. The six principles proposed as a basis for the declaration were the settlement of disputes by negotiations; non-intervention in the internal affairs of Middle Eastern countries; abolition of foreign bases, of arms deals and of attempts to include the Middle East in military blocs; and the extension of economic aid without political or military terms which might be incompatible with the sovereignty of the Middle Eastern countries.<sup>98</sup> "These proposals would mean the dissolution of the Baghdad Pact, the dismantling of American bases, and the abandonment of the Eisenhower Doctrine."<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> The Times (London), 13 February 1957, p. 6.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

Thus no sooner had the Soviet policy which was marked by its increased friendly appeals to the non-Baghdad countries and to Egypt and Syria who took the leadership of the Arabs in opposing Western imperialism and advocating positive neutralism had gone underhand than the United States government came out with the Eisenhower Doctrine and its implications for the Middle East. The question was now whether the Soviet government were going to withdraw as they did after the announcement of the Truman Doctrine in 1947, or to accelerate their speed and enlarge their scope of action. The tone of the immediate Soviet criticism of the Doctrine, and the ensuing events which included the despatch of three submarines to Egypt in June and the conclusion with Syria of an extensive loan agreement including huge supplies of armaments after the visit of the Syrian Prime Minister to Moscow in August, indicated that Russia was willing to meet and even surpass the challenge. She had already made up her mind to enter the Middle East and now she was not going to withdraw.

## CONCLUSION

Any study of post-war Soviet policy towards the Middle East is incomplete if it is not considered in terms of the following factors, namely, the past experience of the countries concerned, the changes in local conditions and the impact of Western policy, as well as Soviet plans for the area and pertinent developments on the Soviet home scene and the international world.

Soviet overtures towards the Middle East started as soon as the Bolshevik regime was accomplished. One aspect common to the whole area then was the fact that the countries were underdeveloped and that they had suffered one kind of imperialism or the other. The immediate neighbours of Russia in particular were being swept by nationalist movements aimed to overthrow any remnants of colonial rule. As early as 1917, Russia exploited these conditions by backing up the nationalist movements not only by propaganda such as the Baku Conference in 1920 aimed at, but by positive policy which took the form of treaties of friendship and mutual non-aggression with Turkey, Persia and Afghanistan. At that stage, of course, Russia's friendly appeals were also conditioned by the fact that she had to concentrate on developments at home in order to establish the new Soviet regime firmly.

Russia's policy towards the Arab world in the pre-war period was not as concrete as that towards her immediate neighbours. Only in the early 1930s did the framework of Russian policy towards this area take shape in the programs adopted by the communist parties in Syria, Lebanon and Palestine. Support of the nationalist movements in order to overthrow the dominant foreign powers in the area, namely, Britain and France, along with the encouragement of revolutionary elements, was the theme. Zionism, in particular, was to be opposed as the instrument of British imperialism.

The roots of Soviet policy towards the Middle East established so early, were given a remarkable opportunity for development by World War II. Russia came out of the war not only victorious but strong while the world situation was in a state of uncertain flux. Thus when towards the end of the war British and American oil companies asked for oil concessions in Persia, Russia came out with a similar request, but when Persia rejected these requests Britain and America complied and Russia did not. If originally the demand for oil was meant to exclude British and American influence from the area, the persistence in the demand after the latter's withdrawal certainly went beyond that. Russia meant to maintain and, if possible, to extend her influence in Persia especially as the troops which had been in occupation of the northern zone according to the tripartite agreement of 1942 were due to evacuate soon. The stay of troops was prolonged beyond the date stipulated by the agreement and

this situation was used to establish the puppet republics of Azerbaijan and Kurdistan along the northern borders, although under the pretext of supporting Kurdish and Azerbaijani nationalist aspirations.

Russia attempted to use her post-war power to exercise pressure over Turkey. There, her demands centred on a revision of the Montreux Convention in favour of a Straits regime in which Russia would play the decisive role, as well as the revision of the 1925 treaty of neutrality and non-aggression, pending territorial concessions in the provinces of Kars and Ardahan. In both Persia and Turkey Soviet propaganda machinery was employed as well as threats and pressures. In both Russia failed. Persia and Turkey supported by Britain and the United States resisted and won. The United States soon came out with her aid programs for the Middle East and Russia withdrew to concentrate on communist propaganda in the "cold war" as prescribed in the newly-formed Cominform.

Russia's relations with the Arab world in the meantime were crystalizing. However, except on the northern peripheries of the Middle East, the whole area had no past experience with Russian imperialism. On the other hand, it suffered a long period of Western imperialism, mainly British. When Russia came into the scene after World War II, the area was already psychologically set against the West. Even those parts which

were liberated by then were willingly or unwillingly tied to the West whether by military bases or oil concessions, not to mention the particular grievances in Palestine.

In the Arab world, Palestine alone was a sufficient cause of embitterment against the West. Zionism had been continuously criticized by the Russians until its support meant a quicker method for the elimination of British influence from the area. But, although the Russians were as much to blame for the creation of the state of Israel as the British and the Americans, to the Arabs it was Britain and the United States which planted and nourished the Zionist seed in the heart of the Arab world. Outside Palestine, Russia officially supported the nationalist claims of the Arabs against the British and the French both in Syria and Lebanon, and in Egypt.

Closely related to the past experience of the Arabs is the changed national scene. Since the loss of Palestine and largely because of it, the Arab national awakening was enhanced. It found expression in a different category of rulers, intelligentsia and masses, conscious of the need for social and national reforms with stress on sovereign and national rights. While these changes were crystalizing, Western policy came out with its defence plans, the first of which was the Middle East command proposal in 1951. The defence that this policy was seeking was directed against an enemy of the West, not the Arabs. At least, to the majority of the Arabs Russia and communism were so remote that they constituted no serious danger. Their main cause of

anxiety was coming from their neighbour, Israel, more than from any other direction.

Thus when Russia came forward to champion the cause of the nationalists, she was welcomed. Her plans for the Middle East were given the opportunity to be executed widely after the Western defence plans were starting to be more effective in the application of the Northern Tier policy. Russia had withdrawn from the Middle East after the abortive attempts in Persia and Turkey to concentrate either on other areas or on developments at home, while she waited for another opportunity. That opportunity was given to her not in the bordering countries, but beyond, in the Arab world.

Irrespective of the conditions which invited Soviet re-entry into the Middle East, that re-entry had the same ulterior motives. However, unlike Soviet infiltration elsewhere (Eastern Europe and the Far East) this re-entry was characterized by the absence of armed forces. Besides the support of the nationalists which gave them psychological satisfaction, its outstanding features were social and cultural contacts and military and economic aid which gave material satisfaction.

Support of the nationalists first took the form of upholding Egypt's claims in desiring the termination of the Anglo-Egyptian treaty of 1936 and of upholding the Arab cause in Palestine. However, in the latter case, the way Soviet policy vacillated with its criticisms of Israel and its friendly appeals showed that Russia was interested in keeping

a balance among the major disputants in the Arab world and not in contributing to the overruling of one party by the other. However, as the support of the nationalists developed, it took the form of vigorous propaganda campaigns directed against the West. It accused the West of attempting to keep the Arab world under its domination and of using it in aggressive military blocs against Russia at the expense of its own independence.

The second feature of the new entry was the remarkable increase in social and cultural contacts. This was accompanied by the relaxation of the anti-religious attitude in Russia in order to make it more effective.

Military aid was the climax of the policy in support of the nationalist cause. It was given, through Communist Czechoslovakia to Egypt, a leading Arab country and an anti-Baghdad Pact state. Military aid was not a new element in Soviet policy towards the Middle East. It was given to Israel, also through Czechoslovakia, in 1948. However, the difference between the two situations was in the fact that in 1948, that aid was given to a non-Arab state fighting against the Arabs and supported by the West. In 1955, it was given to an Arab state, an enemy of Israel, oriented away from the West! That signified a blow to the West and the greatest support of the Arab cause. Initiated in late 1955, military aid was to increase in volume and spread in scope to include Syria and Yemen later, and to be accompanied by the despatch of Soviet technicians to the Arab countries and the training of Arab missions in the communist world.



The economic agreements were made for a long period in order to allow for continued contact, so that any covert propaganda would have time to bear fruit. Also this aid was not given in the form of grants but loans, although with nominal interest and repayment on easy terms. Russia was thus taking into consideration both the pride and the ability of the people and was treating them as respected equals. On the other hand, as in the case of military aid, technicians came and ideas were expected to infiltrate.

Here, Russia's policy was not limited to the Arab world but also spread outside to the other non-Baghdad Pact countries of the Middle East such as Afghanistan who was "uncommitted" and who was unfriendly with "committed" Pakistan. The Baghdad Pact bloc was not left out altogether, but threats alternated with friendly appeals in order to reduce the effectiveness of the commitment by showing that there was no threat of aggression from Russia.

It is appropriate at this stage to project this policy into the future. Economic aid involves a risk for Russia. It means reducing the conditions that would otherwise have been more conducive to the spread of communism. However, of the two alternatives, it seems that Russia is choosing what she thinks to be the lesser evil. Economic aid aims to make the economy of the East dependent on Russia instead of the West, and this is being done at a time when the West is estranging the "uncommitted" states by ignoring their nationalist demands.

Russia is thus fighting the West with its own weapons and is winning more friends.

It is often claimed that to believe that Russia will stop there is utter naiveté. The truth, however, is that the initiative lies more with the countries that are the object of this policy than anywhere else. Soviet plans have been there for two decades but they could not be executed until conditions in the Middle East made that possible. This does not mean that Russian infiltrations is thoroughly effective there. President Abdul Nasser who is taking the lead in the favourable response to the Soviet gestures is not committed to any pacts with Russia. Communism has been and still is suppressed in Egypt and Syria. The tendency in the West to stamp every extreme nationalist as a pro-communist is baseless. Not every anti-Western is a pro-communist and not every anti-communist should necessarily be pro-Western. Russia and the nationalists are allies against a common enemy, the West. This alliance is only temporary on both parts. Russia's aims go beyond the establishment of strong nationalist states which might turn to be anti-communist, and the nationalists appeal to Russia only in order to develop their own strength as independent and sovereign states and, may be, get a greater bargain with the West.

In her policy towards the Middle East, Russia will shift from one aspect to another, conditioned by theory and circumstances. We have seen her withdraw in the case of Turkey and Persia because of circumstances. Today, circumstances are inviting her to stay.

Russia has succeeded in turning the dissatisfaction of the area with the West into satisfaction with her. Her future in the Middle East depends on how far she will be allowed to go. This in turn depends a great deal, although not entirely, on whether the Western policy is more considerate of the nationalist cause or not. The motives and considerations which condition Western policy in the area do not lie within the scope of this study. However, the fact is that the Middle East does not need a doctrine for defence against Russia as much as one for rescue from backwardness and poverty, one that will lead to industrialization and progress without unnecessary infringements on sovereignty and independence. Success of communism as a doctrine is not likely, and only if the "uncommitted" become so desperate as to commit themselves to Russia will the latter really have them in her orbit.

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