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SOVIET-ISRAELI RELATIONS 1947-1955

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ABSTRACT

A full about face or change in policy occurred in the foreign relations of the Soviet Union and the State of Israel during the period of 1947 to 1955. This change of affairs is perhaps better illustrated as from the first Czech arms deal in 1948 to the Czech arms deal in 1955. The first arms shipments under the impetus of the U.S.S.R. through Czechoslovakia were to the Zionist forces in Palestine, while the second, and more well known, was the Czech arms agreement with Egypt.

It is the object of this research study to show how and why the relations between the great power, the U.S.S.R., and the small country of Israel, which probably could not have even come into existence without the rare cooperation of the Soviet Union and the United States, began so unexpectedly favorable and then in only eight years were completely reversed and again by cold calculation rather than through interaction. The importance of the material arises from the crucial position and actions of the State of Israel, located in an area which has not accepted it and has been the center of tension and crisis since the end of World War II.

The approach chosen is primarily chronological with a look at both sides of the foreign relations - first at the U.S.S.R. since in a relationship between a great power and a small country the tone of relations

is more often decided by the attitude of the major power. Then the Israeli actions, policies, and reactions are considered. An analysis of the affairs between the two parties is carried on simultaneously when it is considered necessary.

In a study of this kind, it has been necessary and important to always keep in mind the East-West relations, Soviet-Arab relations, West-Arab relations, as well as Arab-Israeli relations. A second constant factor which must be reckoned with are the internal situations in both countries and especially functions of the Communist Parties in Israel and the Arab States. The geographic proximity of the Middle East to the U.S.S.R. is a third constant factor which had to be weighed. Another and no less constant factor that enters into the analysis and understanding of Soviet relations with any state, but especially with Israel, is Communist ideology.

The study begins May 15, 1947, when the U.S.S.R. announced that it had changed its opposition to the goals of Zionism. This made it possible to show the development of relations between the Jewish Agency and the Soviet Bloc. The terminal point of detailed study is the reaction and institution of the activist policy of the Soviet Union after the Egyptian-Czech arms agreement in September 1955. The work has been subdivided into four chapters which are rough policy turning points. Chapter I covers the pro-Israel period from 1947 until the outbreak of the Korean War in mid-1950. Chapter II deals with the period of mid-1950 until just after Stalin's death in March 1953. This period begins

lukewarm and non-committal but finishes with a harsh set of events resulting in a break of diplomatic relations between the two states. Chapter III covers the period of mid-1953, the resumption of normal relations, until the first of 1955; this was a neutral and variable period. Chapter IV deals with 1955, the crucial year which shows the big change in Soviet Middle East policy and its effects on Israel. This final chapter shows the moves which carried Soviet policy to 180 degrees from what it was at the outset of the study period.

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CHAPTER I

THE PRO-ISRAEL PERIOD

The Soviet Union, from its birth as a Communist-Marxist state following World War I, was against the Zionist movement ideologically. Zionism was considered a reactionary movement as Communism denies that Jews are a separate nationality and have a separate culture. Therefore, the Zionist demand for a national state was wrong. Judaism is a religion and Jews are members of whatever nation they inhabit, and, of course, religion was also considered reactionary. Zionism was also considered economically reactionary as it was held to be bourgeois dominated. This antagonistic attitude towards the creation of a Jewish-Zionist state continued until after World War II when the U.S.S.R. again turned its attention towards the Middle East where Russia historically had longed to penetrate effectively.

The first inkling of a possible favorable attitude towards some Zionist and Jewish groups in Palestine came out in a March 1946 lecture by the Soviet Middle East expert V.B. Lutskiy on "The League of Arab States." ¹ He criticized the Arab League for not working and cooperating

1. A.R.C. Bolton, Soviet Middle East Studies, (London: Chatham House, 1959), Part II, article 7, p. 4.

with Jewish democratic organizations in dealing with the Palestine problem. But the first real official indication of a change in Soviet attitudes toward the Zionists and a Jewish state came on May 15, 1947, when Andrei Gromyko, the Soviet U.N. delegate, showed a willingness to change from his previous position of demanding the creation of a single Arab-Jewish state of Palestine to the alternative of partition in Palestine.² He stressed the failure of the mandatory government which he said was rejected by both the Arabs and Jews, and that due to this failure, Palestine was a very tense "armed camp." Gromyko's argument to justify Jewish national desires included a description of their plight during World War II, "Past experience, particularly during World War II, ... shows that no Western European State was able ... to ensure the defence of the elementary rights of the Jewish people." He also used the historic home angle to support the Jewish aspirations for Palestine. But Gromyko was always careful not to go overboard and completely commit the U.S.S.R. as anti-Arab. The Soviet delegate reiterated the necessity of partition came as a result of the impossibility of implementing a single Palestinian state.

When the U.S.S.R. changed its policy and swung to supporting partition in Palestine, it expressed the new move in a double-barrelled nature. In their appeal to Zionists everywhere, the Communist Parties emphasized exclusively the role of the Soviet Union as the champion of partition and of the Jewish State. The first of these statements was

2. U.N. General Assembly First Special Session 1947 Records,
pp. 127-135.

made before the United Nations Special Commission on Palestine (UNSCOP) on July 13, 1947, by Samuel Mikunis, Esther Vilenska, and Dr. Wolfgang Ehrlich of the Palestine Communist Party Secretariat.³ In slogans directed at Arabs and Muslim communities, the Communists sought to place the onus for making the one-nation plan "unrealizable" on the United States and Great Britain. In November 1947, the Soviet Union was busy wooing left wing Zionists. The Palestine League for Friendship with the Soviet Union acted as the agent which invited several left wing Zionist leaders to Moscow officially as guests for the 30th anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution.⁴

On the Zionist side of the ledger during the period prior to the U.N. partition decision of November 29, 1947, the Jewish Agency delegation at the U.N. was surprised by the Gromyko statement of May 15, 1947. The Jewish Agency negotiations, however, were not fully assured of conclusive Soviet Bloc support due to Yugoslavia's⁵ (a Bloc member at the time) support of the minority report by UNSCOP. Yugoslavia's Muslim minority undoubtedly figured in this country's independent thoughts. However, full support by the Soviet Union and its Eastern European allies was indicated by the favorable attitudes and support that was given the Zionist cause by Poland and Czechoslovakia.

David Horowitz, one of the Jewish Agency delegation leaders, reports the Agency's calculations of why the U.S.S.R. now was favorable towards a

3. Martin Ebon, "Communist Tactics in Palestine", Middle East Journal, July 1948, p. 262.

4. Ibid, p. 263.

5. David Horowitz, A State in the Making, (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1953), pp. 256-257.

Jewish state or partition as: 1) to get the British out of Palestine; 2) a reactionary and feudal régime was common to the Arab states - the Russians had made no dent on this up until then and they might with a Jewish socialist orientated state; 3) there was a likelihood the Soviet Union desired to cooperate with other powers on at least one question of second class importance for propaganda value.⁶

Horowitz said their delegation's assumption of full Soviet support was reenforced by Vyshinsky's statement to a Slav caucus where he said, the Jews had suffered greatly at the hands of Hitler and this must be corrected, "the Jews are entitled to home and independent political existence."

Soviet support of the Zionist cause during the crucial negotiations by the U.N. committees is further noted by Horowitz in his book, A State in the Making. The majority report by UNSCOP which endorsed the partitioning of Palestine was supported in the U.N. by Semyon K. Tsarapkin on October 13, 1947.⁷ Horowitz said when "A sharp tussel broke out over Lydda Airport," our argument for it to be Jewish, "was supported like so many others by Seymon Zarapkin."⁸ Positive encouragement was lent by the Soviet delegates to the Jewish Agency representatives during private discussions outside the U.N. building. Horowitz wrote, the most important political work was done in these meetings especially the talks with the Soviet and American representatives. He described the first meeting between himself and his colleagues and Tsarapkin and Professor

6. Ibid.

7. Middle East Journal, Chronology, Winter 1948, p. 71.

8. Horowitz, op. cit., p. 206.

Boris Stein at the U.S.S.R. Consulate in New York.

"They undertook the examination of our case with characteristic thoroughness inquiring into every detail, every fragment of the broad tapestry of the problem. They were interested in the questions of Jerusalem, frontiers, enforcement of a solution, economic union, our administrative capacities and military strength ... They always did the questioning and we replied. They preferred to demonstrate their replies by action, and this was made manifest in their obstinate espousal of our cause at every stage and in every sector of the U.N. deliberations."

On one occasion during such meetings between the Jewish Agency representatives and the Soviet delegates, Tsarapkin got up, left for a moment and then returned with a bottle of wine and five glasses (for Moshe Shertok, Eliahu Epstein, Horowitz, Stein and himself) and gave the toast, "The Future Jewish State."¹⁰ Horowitz said they were elated as the issue was still clouded and the encouragement was more than could be expected. In fact Shertok, when he retold the incident later that evening to the Jewish Agency Executive meeting said, "What's happened to us in connection with the Soviet Union is a real miracle."

The key moment in the whole Palestine U.N. deliberations came with the U.S. - U.S.S.R. agreement about November 5, 1947. The United States modified its partition resolution in an effort to meet the Soviet criticism. The revised plan would place matters of international peace and security under the Security Council instead of the General Assembly.¹¹ This agreement, the first since the evolution of the Cold War, was a bombshell surprise to the Zionists. Horowitz said of it, the Americans

9. Ibid, pp. 271-272.

10. Ibid, p. 272.

11. Middle East Journal, Chronology, Winter 1948, p. 72.

had made a heavy sacrifice in joining with the Soviet Union against the attitudes of its ally, Great Britain, while the Soviet Union had made the most far reaching concessions. Indeed the Soviet delegates told Horowitz and his associates, "You don't know how big a thing we did for you in these negotiations."¹²

The status of Jerusalem was the last question to be discussed by the Partition Subcommittee on which differences existed among many including the Zionists' demands for the inclusion of the city in a Jewish State. When the Jews acquiesced to the internationalization, the one obstacle remaining was what body would be the guardian authority. The Trusteeship Council was the logical body but the U.S.S.R. was not a member and their opposition was feared. The Soviet Union again surprised the pro-partitionists by consenting to the Trusteeship Council controlling Jerusalem and hinted they might join its membership shortly.¹³

With the full political support of the world's two major powers, the Partition Resolution was adopted by the U.N. General Assembly on November 29, 1947, by a vote of 33-13-7. Had the Soviet Union elected to continue its traditional anti-Zionist policies its block of five votes cast against would have defeated the resolution for the lack of a two thirds majority. (The Soviet Bloc was the U.S.S.R., Ukraine, Bielorussia, Poland and Yugoslavia plus great influence over Czechoslovakia). The question arises as to how far would the U.S.S.R. have gone to aid implementation of partition; would they have consented the

12. Horowitz, op. cit., p. 292.

13. Ibid, p. 297.

use of force of arms ? One can judge only that this would have allowed them even more "play" in the Arab Near East.

After the U.N. passage of the Partition Resolution, the Soviet Union encouraged a tolerant attitude in the Satellite Governments towards Zionism and Jewish emigration to Palestine. Most of the Jews in Bulgaria and Yugoslavia and many of those in Poland, Hungary, Rumania and Czechoslovakia were authorized to emigrate to Palestine (later the State of Israel).¹⁴

An authorized analysis of British official papers by the New York Times' London correspondent in December 1947 emphasized the official British view that the Pan Crescent and Pan York, two Jewish immigrant groups en route to Palestine from Bulgaria, were full of potential "fifth columnists" - mostly hand picked Communists or fellow travellers, with links to the Stern Gang. These were sent to Palestine with the knowledge and full connivance of the Soviet Union and its Satellites.¹⁵

In Barnet Litvinoff's Ben-Gurion of Israel, some light is cast upon what the Zionists thought the Soviet Union was attempting to do by supporting them. "It may be that the Palestine issue was the weakest link in the Anglo-American alliance and Russia was seeking to split the Atlantic Powers via Jerusalem - the official Jewish leaders at any rate were past praying for Russia's help out of humanity alone - but the result was the same."¹⁶ This Soviet support, however, was not without its

14. The World Today, March 1958, Vol. 14, No. 3, p. 121.

15. Middle East Journal, Chronology, Summer 1948, p. 217.

16. Barnet Litvinoff, Ben-Gurion of Israel, (New York: F.A. Praeger, Inc., 1954), p. 175.

problems to Ben-Gurion, then the head of the Jewish Agency and later to be prime minister. Ben-Gurion learned in a talk with Gromyko of Moscow's support of the Jews at the expense of Britain. This is not exactly what Ben-Gurion wanted (a Soviet big brother), and he began wondering what effect this sudden endorsement of Zionism might have in Palestine. He could not assess the new Russian factor. As in the case of Mapai, Ben-Gurion's political party, the Russian support now deprived it of one of the main props of its political credo: the justification for keeping its socialism moderate and western-oriented. After Gromyko's announcement of the Soviet change in policy, Jewish statehood was now acceptable for Jewish Communists and other groups of the extreme left who had long been suffering from the unease of deviationism. ¹⁷ Specifically, this made it easy for Achdut Avoda to get support from this portion of extreme leftists. This also pulled Achdut Avoda further left (this party along with Mapam was dominant in the kibbutzim). Thirdly, this carried Palmach, the Jews' largest and most fully trained armed force, into the camp of Achdut Avoda and Ben-Gurion would not have their fullest support. The trouble from the left was now multiplied by trouble from the right wing terrorist groups, the Irgun Zvai Luimi and the Stern Gang, who were now supported by the General Zionists as the phalanx against socialism. Moshe Sneh, a member of the Jewish Agency executive, now went with the leftists. Litvinnoff wrote, "For two years he had favored an approach to the Soviet Union for help against Britain and open rebellion against the mandatory.

17. Ibid, pp. 175-176.

Not unreasonably he felt his own day was now beginning to dawn."

Dr. Sneh broke completely with the Jewish Agency Executive and came out fully for a pro-Soviet policy. He espoused the belief that the Jewish State could gain more from orientating toward the U.S.S.R. than could be achieved by attachment to London and Washington. In an address to the United Workers Party (Mapam) on January 24, 1948, he said that "the progressives of the world, the forces of real democracy, of real socialism" are grouped around "the fortress ... of these forces, the U.S.S.R."¹⁹ The Communists accepted fully his views and saw in him an influential champion for the U.S.S.R. and opponent of the Western Powers.

During the winter of 1947-48, one of the twin pillars of Zionist support, the United States, began doubting the wisdom of implementing the partition decision by force, and by this time it was obvious that was the only way it could be done. By the time the Palestine Question was referred to the Security Council in mid-February, American concern over a threat to the peace was taking precedence over a desire to create a home for displaced Jews by creating a state for them in Palestine. This concern was implicit in the U.N. American delegate Warren Austin's formulation of the American position before the Security Council on February 24. Austin stated the United States would agree to consultations among the Big Five powers on the possible constitution of an international armed force to preserve the peace in Palestine, but held

18. Ibid, p. 177.

19. Ebon, op. cit., pp. 266-267.

that any action by the Council must be directed solely at keeping the peace and not enforcing partition. The Jewish representative strongly criticized the American statement as jeopardizing the partition plan. When the U.S. made a proposal for a temporary trusteeship government under United Nations' control until a more feasible plan could be developed for Palestine, the Jewish Agency representative, Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver, immediately replied to the American proposal "as a shocking reversal of its position."²⁰ On March 24, Rabbi Silver read a formal statement rejecting any postponement of the establishment of a Jewish State even for a short time.²¹

The Soviet reply by Gromyko rejected the March 19 American proposal and explanation that partition could not be peacefully implemented.²²

President Truman, on March 25, issued a statement on Palestine stressing the urgency of an immediate truce and stated the U.S. willingness to share a responsibility of a temporary trusteeship. On March 30, the United States called for a resolution calling for a truce to be arranged with the Arabs and the Jewish Agency, and another asking the Council to call a special session of the General Assembly to "consider further the question of the future government of Palestine."

Gromyko's reply was a support of the partition decision of November 29, 1947, and he charged the United States with attempting to block the implementation of the partition decision. He also charged the U.S. wanted

20. New York Times, March 20, 1948, p. 2, text of Austin's speech.

21. United Nations Security Council Official Records, 3rd Year, Meetings 36-51, p. 169.

22. Ibid, pp. 171-172.

to make a strategic military base out of Palestine for Britain and the United States.²³ The American resolutions were passed by the Council on April 1, 9-0-2, the U.S.S.R. and the Ukraine abstaining.

On April 5, the Security Council in an informal meeting received the American proposal for a temporary trusteeship agreement but the U.S.S.R. and the Ukraine were not present. The Arabs and the Jews immediately objected to the proposal.

The Security Council concerned itself with attempts to gain a truce during the following weeks for the month of April 1948 was the time of a stepped up Jewish offensive in Palestine in an attempt to secure as much territory as possible before the declaration of the Jewish state scheduled to follow the end of mandatory rule. The Security Council agreed in general on a resolution advocating a military and political truce on April 14. The Arabs accepted the truce proposals but the Jewish Agency objected to all points and offered its own alternative to which the Arabs said no.²⁴ The Council approved a truce resolution slightly amended on April 17 by a 9-0-2 vote - the U.S.S.R. and the Ukraine abstaining.

The Special Session of the General Assembly convened on April 16 and three days later it referred the Palestine Question to the Ad Hoc Political and Security Committee and then adjourned. The Committee began debate on the American proposal for a temporary trusteeship on Palestine on May 1; however, the Jewish Agency completely rejected the

23. Ibid, pp. 248-253.

24. United Nations Yearbook, 1947-48, pp. 259-265.

plan and announced it would declare its statehood at the termination of the mandate at midnight May 14, 1948.

The Soviet Bloc opposed the U.S. trusteeship proposal with the following argument which was put forward with vigor: 1) partition was not a perfect solution but a two-thirds majority of the General Assembly said it was the fairest and most equitable solution; 2) the United States and the United Kingdom were seeking to wreck the decision taken by the General Assembly, placing selfish national interests of both countries ahead of the interests of the population of Palestine and the United Nations; 3) in spite of the obstacles to its realization, the Partition Plan of November 29, 1947, should remain in full force and the U.N. should concentrate on devising ways and means of implementing it vigorously.

The U.S. plan for a temporary trusteeship ended up as a sub-committee work paper and a major reason it stayed that way was the need of armed forces to implement the plan. No other nation volunteered any forces even though the United States tried to get a recognition of the issue that peace was of utmost importance and the partition plan would not keep the peace. A confused state of affairs regarding the American proposal evolved around early May as the United States seemed to lose any real desire to reverse the partition decision and get the trusteeship plan passed, and without a strong sponsor to buck the Soviet negative attitude, other pro-Zionist forces, and general confusion and indifference, the proposals were defeated in committee on May 3.

25. New York Times, May 4, 1948, p. 18.

Earlier, on April 23, the Security Council appointed the Belgian, American and French consular representatives to serve as a truce commission to implement the truce resolution of April 17. The Soviet Union, the Ukraine and Columbia abstained in the 8-0-3 ratifying vote. Attempts to get a real peace and mediation were made throughout the month of May but it was not until May 29 that an agreeable truce resolution passed - agreeable to both parties involved (Arabs and Israelis).

Right after midnight on the morning of May 15, the State of Israel was declared and a provisional government was announced. Any further moves by the United States to reverse the partition decision were dispelled when President Truman recognized Israel de facto only eleven minutes afterwards.

The Communist Party of Israel (from here on the Jewish portion of Palestine will be so called) issued a statement at the time of proclamation of nationhood: "The British Mandate, covered with blood, is dead. The Jewish State arises. The British Mandate has been annulled by the struggle of the Yishuv and with the help of the Soviet Union and the progressive forces of the world." ²⁶ Samuel Mikunis, Israel Communist Party leader, was one of the 31 members Provisional Council of Government announced with the declaration of statehood. The Communists were ²⁷ not represented in the cabinet nor did they press for it.

The Soviet Union followed the American recognition of Israel and

26. Ebon, op. cit., p. 258.

27. Ibid, p. 263.

even outdid the U.S. by granting de jure recognition on May 17. Following the Soviet lead, the East European Satellites followed in quick succession to grant Israel full recognition: Poland on May 18, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia on May 19,²⁹ Hungary on June 2, and Rumania on June 14.³⁰

Meanwhile, in efforts to reach a passable truce resolution, the Palestine Question became entangled in the East-West conflict. Illustrating this conflict were the U.N. proceedings in the Security Council on May 26 when Gromyko commented on a British amendment to a U.S. resolution to invoke Article 39 of the U.N. charter to stop the war in Palestine with Security Council troops. He declared that British "casuistry" was seeking to hinder the Security Council from ending the war, and added that "King Abdullah, who poses as a Middle East Caesar, could not act in such cavalier fashion without the assistance of Britain."³¹

The Soviet Union abstained on the British resolution calling for a four-week truce. The measure was adopted by the Council on May 29, by a 9-0-2 vote - the Ukraine also abstaining.³²

The Soviet Union was giving even greater aid to the Israeli

28. George B. de Huzar and Associates, The Soviet Power and Policy, (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1955), p. 481.

29. Keesings Contemporary Archives, Keesings Publications Ltd., (London: 1946-48), p. 9282.

30. Ibid, p. 9322.

31. Ibid, p. 9282.

32. Middle East Journal, Chronology, Autumn 1948, p. 465.

cause outside the United Nations as was revealed by a British report from the Foreign Office. Although the truce proposal was accepted by both parties, the Arabs and Jews in Palestine, large shipments of arms were being delivered to the Jewish forces in Palestine. The report showed that a small fleet of Curtiss Commandos, Douglas Dakotas, and other transport aircraft had been regularly flying cargoes from the Czech arms factories, amounting to 80 tons a week. The route of the flights from Czechoslovakia was said to be via a gas stop in Yugoslavia, down the Albanian and Greek coasts, and then across the Mediterranean to Israel via the south coast of Crete. The air crews engaged comprised experienced airmen of foreign nationality, recruited as mercenaries and highly paid.³³ These arms shipments were a continuance of a steady flow from Czechoslovakia to the Zionist forces from early spring and were continued throughout 1948 in direct disregard to the arms embargo set forth in the U.N. truce resolution.

Soviet action in the U.N. again was immensely important to the Israeli cause when the Organization made the last great attempt to readjust the November 1947 partition decision in accordance with Count Folke Bernadotte's proposals. Count Bernadotte was appointed to the position of U.N. Mediator by the special session of the General Assembly in April. Illustrating the pro-Israel Soviet Bloc attitude was an incident on July 7, 1948, when the Ukraine S.S.R. delegate was the chairman of the Security Council; Aubrey Eban was recognized as the "representative of the State of Israel."³⁴ Jamal al-Husayni, vice

33. Keesings, op. cit., pp. 9743A-9744.

34. Middle East Journal, Chronology, Autumn 1948, p. 462.

chairman of the Arab Higher Committee, walked out of the meeting in protest, and the British delegate also protested to this recognition by an official in a U.N. body.

When the first reports from the Mediator came to the Security Council on July 15, for consideration and action, the Ukrainian delegate stated that Bernadotte's suggestion for a plebescite in Palestine "would be tantamount to the liquidation of Israel and, of course, could never be accepted."³⁵ The Soviet Union and the Ukraine abstained whenever any paragraph gave or seemed to imply more power to the Mediator. The Russians wanted themselves in on all decisions and not Bernadotte whom they distrusted since his views were not concurrent with theirs.

During the summer of 1948, the Soviet Union and Israel exchanged diplomatic representatives - Mrs. Golda Myerson (now Meir) was appointed the first Israeli minister to the U.S.S.R. and Pavel Yershov went to Israel for the U.S.S.R.³⁶ The appointments were announced on June 25, 1948, and they assumed their posts in the month of August.

The Mediator's full report came up for consideration by the United Nations on September 20, three days after his assassination. Throughout the debates and discussions, the Soviet stand was pro-Israeli down the line as a check on the major actions shows. The Bernadotte Plan would have rearranged the partition with the areas more contiguous and the distribution more in the Arabs' favor than the November 1947 plan.

35. U.N. Yearbook, 1947-48, p. 440.

36. Keesings, op. cit., p. 9418. Also see Middle East Journal, Chronology, Autumn 1948, p. 465.

/. For the details of the full Bernadotte Report and Plan see the U.N. Records for 1948.

On September 21, the United States accepted fully the Mediator's plan, as did the British the following day. The Arab League and Egypt rejected the plan on the 21st. On November 18, Britain introduced to the General Assembly's Political and Security Committee a resolution calling for a solution on the basis of the final Bernadotte Plan. The American position was similar except that it stated the November 29, 1947 boundaries should only be altered with the full consent of Israel, but that any territorial addition Israel demanded over and above the November 1947 boundaries must be offset by giving up of land elsewhere. ³⁷

The Soviet delegate, Tsarapkin, with the support of Dr. Lange of Poland attacked the Bernadotte proposals "of exchanging the Negeb for Western Galilee, saying that the Jews were thereby called upon to surrender two-thirds of the territory of Israel." They maintained that the partition resolution of November 1947 was the only solution for settlement and declared their nation's full support for it. ³⁸ On November 25, the Soviets submitted a resolution recommending the immediate removal from Palestine of all foreign troops and foreign military personnel. The Soviets, joined by pro-Zionist Guatemala, took the view that partition was the only just solution. But instead of implementing this U.N. decision, the majority of the General Assembly at the April special session had yielded to pressure from the U.S. and Britain to create a position of a Mediator who had gone beyond his terms of reference. The Russians also charged the Americans and British stand had led

37. Middle East Journal, Chronology, Vol. 3, No. 1, 1949, pp. 81-82.

38. Keesings Contemporary Archives, 1948-50, p. 9651.

to military operations in Palestine and that the Mediator's proposals were in the interests of American and British monopolies. ³⁹ On December 4, 1948, the Russian resolution was defeated by a vote of 7-for, 33-against, and 8-abstaining.

Other United Nations action and debate was concerned with getting a cease fire and peace in the area.

The Security Council censured Israeli authorities for the shoddy investigation of Bernadotte's assassination. On November 13, the U.N. Committee of Seven (the Big Five plus Columbia and Belgium) approved 6-0, the U.S.S.R. abstaining, an order calling on the Government of Israel to evacuate Beersheba and withdraw its forces in the Negeb to positions occupied on October 14. This order was opposed from the outset by Israel. The order further called on Egypt to maintain its forces on a line 15-20 miles north of the Egyptian border. The 40-50 mile area in between would be a U.N. neutral zone. When a resolution calling for the return to the October 14 positions came before the Security Council on November 15, the U.S.S.R. and the Ukraine ⁴⁰ abstained.

The same type of argument was forwarded in the Soviet opposition to the creation of a United Nations Conciliation Commission whose job it was to bring about a peace settlement. The Arabs also opposed the idea ⁴¹ as it would grant the recognition of Israel as an equal state. France, Turkey and the United States were the members of the new commis-

39. U.N. Yearbook, 1948, pp. 166-171.

40. Middle East Journal, Chronology, Vol 3, No. I, 1949, pp. 77-78.

41. U.N. Yearbook, 1948-49, pp. 172-176.

sion which was also opposed by the Soviet Union.

The Acting Mediator Ralph Bunche requested more power with which to handle truce violations and especially to deal with the Israeli policy of fait accompli to hold or secure a position they desired. When the U.S. supported his requests that truce violations would be regarded as breaches of the peace (as defined in Chapter VII of the U.N. Charter) according to the Acting Mediator's judgements, both Israel and the Soviet Union objected. Instead they supported a Ukrainian proposal which lacked teeth. They viewed the subject before the Security Council as not a breach of the peace but "an anticipated or contingent violation of the Acting Mediator's instructions within the framework of the truce."⁴²

The Acting Mediator also proposed that any settlement attempts at this time should be aimed at the attainable - an armistice - and not just for a permanent peace settlement. The U.S.S.R. proposed direct negotiations as a means to reach a full peace settlement. It said it would be difficult to differentiate between a truce and an armistice. The Israelis also desired a formal peace settlement to further the recognition of their state most importantly by the neighboring nations. The Council, however, went for the politically attainable and adopted a resolution calling for an armistice. The vote was 8-0-3, the U.S.S.R.,⁴³ Ukraine and Syria abstaining.

In the December 17, 1948, meeting of the Security Council, the Council rejected the Israeli application for U.N. membership. The

42. Ibid, p. 180.

43. Ibid, pp. 181-183.

government was still a provisional régime, but the U.S.S.R. supported the Israeli application and the Soviet representative Jacob Malik said the Soviet Union would also support the application of a Palestinian-Arab state. On March 4, 1949, the Council approved the Israeli application for membership and the formal acceptance came from the General Assembly plenary session on May 11, 1949, by a 37-12-9⁴⁴ vote.

On December 25, 1948, a report from Prague stated that 600 Jewish men and women, many of them trained for the Israeli Army by Czech officers, were en route to Israel.⁴⁵ The following day the New York Times reported that up to 5,000 men and women were trained in Czech army camps for the Jewish military forces.

When Israeli forces pushed an offensive to secure the Negeb, particularly in the Fuluja area, Egypt brought a complaint against the Zionists. The British presented a resolution calling for a cease fire, cooperation with the Acting Mediator, and moves to relieve the situation. Israel opposed the resolution and in the final vote on December 29, 1948, the pro-Israeli groups abstained. The vote was 8-0-3, the U.S.S.R., Ukraine and the United States abstaining.⁴⁶ This resolution led to negotiations for an armistice between Israel and Egypt at Rhodes on January 12, 1949, under the leadership of the Acting Mediator.

The end of 1948 brought the real end to large scale fighting

44. Keesings Contemporary Archives, 1948-50, pp. 9702D and 9781.

45. Middle East Journal, Chronology, Vol. 3, No. II, 1949, p. 222.

46. U.N. Yearbook, 1948-49, p. 183.

in the Palestine War for it was in the following weeks that Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria came to armistice agreements with Israel. This point of events affords an opportune moment to reflect back over this hectic period of relations (from May 15, 1947, to January 1949) between the Zionists and the Soviet Union. By the Jewish Agency's own admission Soviet support was a complete surprise as the Zionist movement had been anathema to Communism ideologically. Why then did the Reds make such an about face? Firstly, the U.S.S.R. had assumed the historic Russian desire of having a warm water outlet in the Middle East where at the time they had little if any political influence; so it had much to gain and little to lose. The partition of Palestine would provide the Soviet Union an opportunity to share in policing the area; an opportunity to introduce Communist agents among the Jewish immigrants expected to flow from Eastern Europe, a possible chance to capitalize on Arab revulsion of the West's role in creating a Zionist state, a chance to establish the principle of partition as a means of self determination of minorities especially the cases where the Soviets had an interest - the Armenians in Turkey, the Kurds in Iraq, and the Azerbaijanis in Iran - and finally the opportunity to create a fluid situation in which Communism breeds so well.

The sponsorship of the Jewish cause also gave the U.S.S.R. the opportunity to cause confusion between the United States and Great Britain since they were in disagreement over the question. In fact, it worked out to the best expectations of the Soviet Union, for when the Russians and Americans lined up together on the partition, this succeeded in expelling the British but did not enhance British pres-

tige in the Arab world. The creation of Israel had the temporary effect of confusion between the U.S. and Britain and was thought to cause favorable reaction for the Russians in Jewish circles where this faction had important influence on foreign policy.⁴⁷

Yet while the Soviets were using the Zionist movement they were being careful at the same time not to permanently alienate the Arabs. They were consistent in always announcing their preference of a unitary Palestinian state for both Arabs and Jews, although these loud pronouncements were in reality negated by strong, solid pro-Zionist action, especially during the critical moments when the Americans were doubting the wisdom of partition, and even more so with the steady supply of arms and manpower through Jewish emmigration to Palestine from 1947-49.

The Soviet Union reaped the harvest where it had lightly sown from both the Arabs and Zionists. Its de jure recognition of Israel two days after the declaration of nationhood gave it favor with the Jews, while the United States with its almost immediate recognition and reversal from the trusteeship proposal to support a Jewish state took the brunt of Arab hostility. The mechanism of reation in the Arab Middle East was bound to work as it did. The U.S. had been the object of admiration in the Arab world since Woodrow Wilson's pronouncement of the 14 points. To have this great power turn against an area which admired it so was bound to cause great disillusionment and bitterness. On the other hand, little was known of the Soviet Union

47. "The U.S.S.R., the Soviet Jews, and Israel", The World Today, Vol. 14, No. XII, December 1958, p. 525.

other than hearsay and it carried little if any important influence with these countries; therefore, the negative feeling aroused by the Soviet support of partition would be less felt and even forgotten in time.

A lecture inside the U.S.S.R. by a prominent Middle East expert illustrated the Soviet line in 1948. It was one of reaction and propaganda aimed at blaming all tensions, troubles and evil on American and British "imperialism". V.B. Lutskiy said,

"In Palestine, Britain and America are planning to have their separate spheres of influence but their policies are conflicting. As soon as Britain's mandate terminated, the Soviet Union recognized Israel de jure. Truman recognized it de facto as the United States wants to make Israel an American protectorate, but Britain hastened to incite the Arab States to attack Israel..." (48)

There was one disadvantage the U.S.S.R. would now have to share with the Western Powers in dealing with the Middle East. By joining the Middle East game, the Russians had given up their advantage of non-involvement and remoteness - of having no dealings with the Arab states which could be brought against them as a reproach in any future relations.

Israeli reaction to the favorable Soviet change was gladly and openly accepted even though some leaders might have private reservations to being used. Earlier notations from Israeli leaders showed that perhaps Soviet intentions were not to be fully trusted. The Zionists, however, were in no position to criticize such aid. It is obvious now, that Ben-Gurion, the foremost Zionist political leader, favored close relations with Britain from his ideological view, close relations with

48. Bolton, op. cit., article No. 8, pp. 4-5.

the U.S. since American Jewry held the purse strings, and too, good relations had to exist with the Soviet Union since most of the Jewish immigrants had to come from the Soviet Bloc. Also, Israel was indebted to both the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. for its existence. Early Israeli policy, and this was probably acceptable to a large majority of Jews, was explained by Ben-Gurion in a statement to the Knesset in 1948:

"The State is not concerned with internal affairs of other states. We want to live in peace with all. We are compelled to do so because we have hostages in every country and we desire their migration to Israel. This is our orientation and I am not ashamed of it. We shall persist in it. If some should give this orientation the foreign name - neutrality - I shall not be ashamed of that." (49)

The coming of the armistice agreements to end the warring between the Arabs and Israelis did not cause any change in attitudes by the Soviet Union and Israel toward each other. The effect was more to subdue the impact which comes during a crisis to a more quiet state of affairs. The Soviet Bloc continued to help consolidate the state of Israel with positive aid and cooperation. On January 13, 1949, Tass reported that a trade and payments pact was signed in Budapest between Hungary and Israel.⁵⁰ Soon to follow suit on May 21 was Poland who signed an agreement to exchange \$20 million worth of goods in the following year.⁵¹ Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia joined their Satellite brethren in signing trade agreements with Israel in 1949.

49. New Outlook, Vol. 1, No. V, November/December 1957, p. 27.

50. London Economist, Records and Statistics Supplement, March 22, 1949, p. 22. Middle East Journal, Chronology, Vol. 3, No. 2, Spring 1949, p. 222.

51. Israel Government Yearbook, 1950, (Jerusalem: Government Printer) p. 98.

General elections were held in Israel on January 25, 1949. Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion, in his first speech after the elections, outlined a policy of general cooperation with the United States and the U.S.S.R. On March 9, the Israeli Knesset approved a basic principle of the new government program which stated a desire for "...friendship with all freedom loving states, and in particular with the United States and the Soviet Union."⁵²

Ben-Gurion's party, Mapai, Israel's largest, denounced the Israel League for Friendly Relations with Soviet Russia as unneutral (too pro-Communist), and announced it would sponsor a new organization to promote understanding between Israel and the Russians.⁵³ This statement was released on July 13, 1949, and showed the Mapai fear that Israel was not to cross the line of propriety and become too pro-Soviet lest it jeopardize its Western connections.

With its mission seemingly accomplished, - the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine - the Soviet Union seemed to be returning to a traditional policy of being neutral to all non-pro-Soviet forces in the Middle East including the Palestine situation. In June 1949, Lutskiy wrote on "The National Liberation Movement in the Near and Middle East" where he discussed the movement in Palestine, too.

"As regards Palestine, the decision of the United Nations to create two separate states was not put into effect partly because it was obstructed by Britain and America and partly because neither the Arab aristocracy nor the Zionists wished to terminate Western rule". (54)

52. Walter Eytan, The First Ten Years, (London: Weidenfeld, 1958), p. 130.

53. Middle East Journal, Chronology, Vol. 3, 1949, p. 449.

54. Bolton, op. cit., article No. 10, pp. 5-6.

This was the old Stalinist attitude that on any event or action, if you weren't with the Soviets you were against her wishes.

In August 1949, the Acting Mediator recommended to the Security Council to leave a Conciliation Commission in Palestine to work for a final peace settlement. The Soviet response was expounded by Semyon Tsarapkin when on August 8, he opposed Dr. Bunche's recommendations. Instead he told the Council that the United Nations should withdraw from Palestine leaving Israel and the Arab states free to reach a final peace settlement without "outside pressure" or interference. ⁵⁵ The U.S.S.R. opposed the American men who were leading the U.N. groups. It is also conceivable that if the U.N. should withdraw an even more fluid and chaotic situation would evolve and Communism could better infiltrate and advance its cause.

The tiny country of Israel was doing all it could to remain on the good side of the U.S.S.R. without hurting its interests elsewhere. On August 16, 1949, the Israeli Knesset voted to give the Soviet Government and the Russian Orthodox Church direct control over all Russian Orthodox properties in Israeli Palestine. The titles were transferred ⁵⁶ from the Tsarist Government to the Soviet Union on November 21.

The United Nations General Assembly resumed the debates over the internationalization of Jerusalem in December 1949. Australia advanced a resolution proposing the return to the original internationalization status as prescribed in the November 1947 partition resolution.

55. Middle East Journal, Chronology, Vol. 3, 1949, p. 452.

56. Huzar, op. cit., p. 479.

The Australian resolution also included Nazareth as part of the internationalized area. The U.S.S.R. attempted to ammend the draft resolution calling on the General Assembly to dissolve the U.N. Conciliation Commission. The ammendment was proposed on December 6 in the Ad Hoc Political Committee and was rejected on December 7, by a vote of 5-for, 46-against, and 5-abstaining. The Australian resolution was ratified by the Committee by a 35-13-11 vote the same day.

Jordan and Israeli delegates declared themselves against internationalization although Ben-Gurion on December 11, 1948, had accepted full internationalization.

The General Assembly in full plenary session adopted the Australian resolution on December 9, 38-14-7.⁵⁷ The Soviet Bloc supported the resolution as did most of the Muslim, Arab and Catholic countries. The United States and Britain voted against the proposal on the grounds that it was unrealistic and impractical in enforcement and too expensive to support. The Israeli view of the U.N. resolution was described by Litvinoff as, "America and Britain could not prevent the passing of the U.N. resolution in the face of the determined moves by the Russian, the Arab and the Catholic blocs."⁵⁸ Ben-Gurion retorted by defying the vote and moved the capital from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem in another fait accompli move in December 1949.

On April 17, 1950, only four months after its definite stand for an internationally controlled city, the Soviet Union informed the

57. Council on Foreign Relations, The United States in World Affairs, (New York: Harper Bros., 1950), Vol. V, p. 410.

58. Litvinoff, op. cit., p. 217.

Secretary General of the United Nations that in view of the opposition of the people of Jerusalem, Jews and Arabs alike, it was withdrawing its support of internationalization.⁵⁹

Israel gave a quick recognition to the People's Republic of China on January 9, 1950. On March 20, Israel signed a one year agreement with Czechoslovakia calling for an exchange of goods valued at \$12 million. Following up these moves on May 23, 1950, Ben-Gurion appealed to the Soviet Union to let Russian Jews emigrate to Israel. But on May 31, the Prime Minister refused the Israeli Communists' demand that he make a statement, promising not to join a Middle East Defense Command for a cold war against the Soviets. Ben-Gurion did, however, reaffirm Israel's declaration that it was seeking peace with all nations and would stay neutral.⁶⁰

The Soviet Union from mid-1949 to the outbreak of the Korean War generally avoided propaganda that was equivocally in favor of either Israel or the Arabs. The Soviet aim rather was always aiming at lessening Western influence in the Middle East and perpetuating strife so that the Communist Party might gain.

Israel's support of the United Nations' police action in Korea gave Russia a motive to move against Israel, Litvinoff writes in his biography of Ben-Gurion.⁶¹ He felt that this caused the wound between the Arabs and Israel to be probed by the Soviet Union rather than healing

59. Eytan, op. cit., p. 79.

60. Middle East Journal, Chronology, Vol. 4, Autumn 1950.

61. Litvinoff, op. cit., pp. 230-231.

into a peace. He notes the moves by King Abdullah of Jordan and Riad es Solh of Lebanon, to negotiate with Ben-Gurion and after their deaths no more such attempts as proof that peace was possible in these early years if the parties were left alone.

This first period of relations between the Soviet Union and Israel can be considered as one of friendliness, cooperation and active support between the two nations. The period described began on May 15, 1947 when Andrei Gromyko announced the Soviet policy change from anti-Zionism to one supporting the creation of a Jewish state as part of a partition plan for Palestine. The close of the period came in mid-1950 with the U.N. action in Korea which Israel supported with her vote in the General Assembly. The rosy picture of full support by both the United States and the U.S.S.R. of Israel would not reach such a state of affairs again in the foreseeable future, for the Zionist state.

CHAPTER II

FROM KOREA TO STALIN'S DEATH

When the Soviet Union returned to its seat in the United Nations in late summer of 1950, it returned to give primarily a negative performance. The Russians were not about to be absent again when the U.N. was confronted with serious action as she was when the United Nations passed the Korean police action. This was the beginning of a long series of Russian abstentions to show their lack of desire to cooperate with the Western Powers in the U.N. The first chance to illustrate this negative attitude in regards to a Middle East problem came in November 1950.

The Security Council called on Egypt, Jordan, and Israel to use the existing machinery of the Mixed Armistice Commission to settle the disputes then before the Council. The disputes concerned the Israeli expulsion of Arab bedouins from the Negeb into Egypt and a frontier incident between Israel and Jordan. The resolution of November 17 also called on the three parties to make full use of the U.N. conciliation machinery and to give effect to any of its findings regarding the repatriation of the Arab bedouins. The Russian abstention was a show of its anti-Western feelings especially during the Korean War and since the U.N. groups in Palestine were made up of Western personnel it would not

trust their actions and views. The other abstention on the ratifying¹ vote was cast by Egypt who desired a stronger condemnation of Israel.

The Russians tried to remove the United Nations from the Middle East again when they sponsored a draft resolution on December 6, 1950, in the Ad Hoc Political Committee calling for the termination of the Conciliation Commission. The Russians again charged the Commission had proved incapable of discharging its duty of settling the disputes between the parties in Palestine.² The resolution was defeated by 48 nays, 5 yeas, and 1 abstention.

The General Assembly, on December 15, 1950, passed a resolution 48-5 urging Israel and the Arab States to negotiate either directly or through the U.N. Palestine Conciliation Commission to settle their outstanding differences. The resolution also directed the Commission to set up an office for compensation and consultations involving Arab refugees. The Soviet Bloc voted against the resolution while Israel's Foreign Minister Moshe Sharett refused to take part.³ This stand could have been interpreted as pro-Israel or as a continuation of the Soviet attitude of non-cooperation with any Western supported effort.

On the same day, the U.N. was unable to agree on a settlement for Jerusalem since both Israel and Jordan refused internationalization. The Soviet Bloc abstained on the vote on the Belgian resolution to create

1. Yearbook of the United Nations, 1950, (Published by Columbia University Press in cooperation with the United Nations), p. 320.

2. Ibid, p. 329.

3. Middle East Journal, Chronology, Vol. 4, No. II, Spring 1951, p.211.

a U.N. Commission to investigate "the conditions of a settlement which can insure the effective protection, under the U.N., of the Holy Places and of spiritual and religious interests in the Holy Land". The resolution also called on the Commission to study the problem at first hand in consultation with the Israeli and Jordanian Governments and then report back to the General Assembly at the next session. The Soviets said they abstained because a just solution must take into account the interests of the Jewish and the Arab inhabitants. Since now neither Israel nor Jordan would agree to an internationalization of Jerusalem, the U.S.S.R. was therefore⁴ unable to support the Belgian resolution.

An interesting episode in Soviet-Israeli relations arose when on March 13, 1951, Israel presented notes to the Big Four occupying powers, the U.S.S.R., the U.S.A., Great Britain, and France, filing a claim for \$1500 million in reparations from Germany for losses suffered by the Jewish community. One thousand million dollars were to come from West Germany and \$500 million from Soviet occupied⁵ East Germany. While West Germany has since agreed to and paid most of a negotiated sum of about \$700 million, the situation was quite different as to the claims against East Germany. No reply has ever been received by Israel from either the Soviet Union or East⁶ Germany. Internal opinion in Israel was sharply split over reparations

4. U.N. General Assembly Vth Session, 1950, Ad Hoc Political Committee Records, p. 506.

5. Middle East Journal, Chronology, Vol. 4, 1951, p. 345.

6. "German Reparations to Israel", The World Today, Vol. 10, 1954, pp. 264-265.

from Germany. The most active groups against the deal were the Israel Communists. Trouble and sharp disagreement also came from the far leftists Mapam and from the right wing Herut.⁷

A clash occurred between Israel and Syria in the Lake Huleh area in early May 1951; the Israelis had begun a development project in the area which penetrated the neutral zone. On May 8, a resolution was passed by the Security Council calling for a cease fire and adherence to the armistice agreement. The parties complied to the resolution on May 15. On May 18, the Council passed a comprehensive resolution which in addition to the May 8 provisions called upon Israel to suspend work on the Lake Huleh project "until an agreement is arranged through the chairman of the Mixed Armistice Commission for continuing the project."⁸ Both resolutions passed by 10-0-1 votes; the U.S.S.R. abstained on both and did not participate in the debate.

When the Security Council met to consider an Israeli complaint against Egypt for blockading the Suez Canal, the details of the debate bring out some intriguing points. The first meeting held by the Council was convened on July 26, 1951, and the debate closed on September 1 after the Council had passed a resolution calling on Egypt to raise the blockade. The resolution was sponsored by the Western Big Three powers and was introduced on August 16. It recalled that the Security Council resolutions of August 11, 1949, and November 17, 1950, had

7. Litvinoff, op. cit., pp. 230-231.

8. Keesings Contemporary Archives, Vol. 1950-1952, pp. 11524-11525.

urged the parties concerned to take steps that would lead to permanent peace in Palestine. The interferences in shipping passing through the Canal, according to a report by Major General Riley on June 12, 1951, were not in the spirit of the armistice agreement. The report asserted that since the armistice régime was of a permanent character, then neither party could reasonably assert that it was actively a belligerent or required to exercise the right of search for legitimate purposes of self-defense, and "accordingly called upon Egypt to terminate the restrictions on the passage of shipping and goods through the Suez Canal wherever bound, and to cease all interference of shipping beyond that essential to safety of shipping in the Canal and to the observance of international conventions in force." ⁹ On August 27, (debate resumed then) Mahmoud Fawzi Bey of Egypt put forward a counter resolution demanding the ruling as to whether the U.S., Britain, France, the Netherlands, and Turkey were entitled to vote should be referred to the International Court of Justice. He reiterated his contention that all five, as maritime powers, were interested parties and should not be allowed to vote, as they had put forward individual complaints previously. This contention was challenged by France and Britain.

Since Egypt was not a member of the Council, it could not formally present the resolution. Dr. Tsiang of China suggested that the Council should adjourn for 48 hours to see whether any member wished to sponsor it - this being agreed. The Council met on August

9. Ibid, p. 11699.

29 and no sponsor came forward so the Egyptian resolution accordingly lapsed. At this point, Semyon Tsarapkin of the Soviet Union, who had previously taken no part in the discussion, then asked for a further adjournment until September 1, on the grounds that all methods of settling the dispute were not yet exhausted, and there might be a better solution than the adoption of a resolution which would be a "dictation of terms" to Egypt.¹⁰ On September 1, however, Tsarapkin put forward no new proposals - the Soviet delegate did not even speak - so the resolution was passed by a vote of 8-for (Britain, France, Netherlands, Yugoslavia, Turkey, Brazil, Ecuador and the U.S.A.), none against, and 3-abstaining (U.S.S.R., China and India).¹¹

Tsarapkin's statement about the resolution and his abstention has been taken by some casual observations as being pro-Arab and against Israel. This however was not the case as the record shows: the U.S.S.R. could easily have sponsored the Egyptian resolution and had the Arab nation beholden to it. Probably the real answer lies in the assumption that the Soviet Union was only interested in keeping the Western Powers from gaining influence in the Middle East and she was not ready to commit herself further than abstaining.

The Soviet Union had at worst up to this time, mid-1951, acted neutral towards Israel since their policy change in May 1947. This favorable attitude toward the Zionist group had been directed for external tactics or strategy. This assessment of conditions was brought

10. U.N. Security Council Records, 6th Year Meetings 531-569, 1951.

11. Ibid.

about by reports that the internal attitudes toward the Jewish state was nowhere near as favorable as the government's external attitude. Little mention was made of Israel in the Soviet press even though the U.S.S.R. had played a major role in its creation. A Jewish writer, in a critical article, "Israel Through Soviet Eyes", wrote, "It might have been expected that after the Soviet Union's initial support of the establishment of the Jewish State, the Soviet press would carefully follow the growth of the new republic and greet its achievements."¹² He goes on to show that in late 1950, internal Russia was picturing Israel, the Government, Mapai, and the Israeli Federation of Labor (Histadruth), in harsh slanderous terms. This Jewish writer was concerned with an article in Novoye Vremya by a certain Khozov, who visited Israel, and records in the Soviet journal his remarks. His consistent criticism is always linked to pro-American or pro-British factors. The charge is that Israel is a tool of British and American imperialism as he quotes Israeli Communists charges that airports were being built for use as military air bases by the United States. Khozov claimed that Israeli interests were all ruled or owned by U.S. dollars. The one favorable aspect the Soviet writer pictures is the Communist Party of Israel and Mapam which he believes will not permit Israel to be transformed into "a weapon for American imperialist policy in the Near East."¹³

The large Soviet Jewish community, estimated at three million,

12. N. Kantowitz, "Israel Through Soviet Eyes", Jewish Frontier, November 1951, pp. 9-11.

13. Ibid.

was the concern of both the Zionist writer and the Soviet critic. The Zionist author snides at the Russians for not giving the Soviet people especially their Jewish community, the real picture of Israel, for then, he charges, they would desire to come to Israel. There can definitely be some truth in this feeling but a question arises that many others might also like to leave the U.S.S.R. for other lands and life. The Soviet diehards could never accept the real desire for a large segment of the Soviet peoples to leave the U.S.S.R. so this must be discouraged. On the other hand the Zionists needed the Soviet Jews if they were to build a large dynamic state, since little human manpower proved forthcoming from America and Western Europe, as these Jews were happy to contribute money but not to live in Palestine.

During the autumn of 1951, the United States and its allies were trying to get a favorable response in the Middle East for a Middle East Defense Organization linked to NATO. The Soviet Union responded sharply and on November 21 sent notes to Israel, Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon warning them not to accept the proposal for a Middle East Defense Organization as proposed by the North Atlantic Bloc as this would be considered an unfriendly act towards the U.S.S.R. Israel's reply, released in December, reassured the Soviet Union that it would not join an aggressive, anti-Communist alliance and closed her note with a hope that the Soviet Union would allow Russian Jews to emigrate to Israel.

14. Documents on American Foreign Relations, (New York: World Peace Foundation, 1951), Vol. XIII, pp. 267-268.

15. Documents on International Affairs, (London: Chatham House, 1951), pp. 429-431.

Walter Eytan, then Director General of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, did not consider the Soviet Union was slighting Israel intentionally per se but that in the struggle with the West, the Russians were bidding for the favor of the Arab States, Eytan, as an official of the Government and a member of Mapai, gives an interesting insight on Israeli thoughts at this time about the East-West struggle and Israel's predicament on it. "The United States and the Soviet Union, maneuvering for position in the Middle East outbid one another for the favours of the Arab States," Eytan wrote. ¹⁶ He continues to say that even if Israel joined only a defense organization (to get weapons and commitments for defense), the Soviet Union would see her as one of the nations conspiring for aggression. The dilemma for Israel was what if Egypt joined M.E.D.O. Eytan wrote bitterly that,

"Israel was left under no illusions. The M.E.D.O. would be organized without her - and the Arab States would be supplied with arms while she would not. The three powers had come a long way since declaring their opposition to the development of an arms race the year before."

(He refers to the Western Tri-partite Declaration of May 1950).

Mr. Eytan and Israel were not forced to face this dilemma at this time as Egypt and the other Arab States did not respond to the Western proposal. The Israelis were misjudging the Russians when they believed them to be really interested in currying favor with the Arabs for the primary Russian policy was that of negating the West and any expansion of their influence, and any outright positive support was limited to pro-Soviet groups and interests such as the Communist Party.

16. Eytan, op. cit., p. 132.

Any positive activist policy with other forces was still quite a way off.

The General Assembly opened its VIth Session in January 1952 and was able to pass two resolutions concerning the Palestine Question. The Assembly approved a \$250,000,000 relief program for the Palestine refugees which had the objective of making the refugees self-sufficient. This resolution passed handily with none against and only the Soviet Bloc abstaining. No explanation was given for their votes but it can be assumed that it was a continuance of their policy of non-cooperation with the West in the United Nations and their lack of desire to contribute to this project.

The other resolution, which was adopted, extended the life of the Palestine Conciliation Commission. This subject resulted in controversy and much debate before its adoption. When this subject was under discussion in the Ad Hoc Political Committee, the U.S.S.R. again proposed the abolition of the Commission on the grounds it had failed in its mission. The Russians also opposed the members making up the Commission - the U.S., France, and Turkey. All its objections were directly attributable to cold war feelings. The Soviet proposal was defeated 48-5, with Israel not voting. ¹⁷ Three days later, on January 12, 1952, Israel presented a draft resolution to the Committee which also called for the abolition of the Commission. The Israeli proposal also called for the establishment of U.N. Good Offices Com-

17. U.N. Yearbook, 1951, p. 304.

mittee with its headquarters at the U.N. in New York and not in Palestine.¹⁸ The Good Offices Committee would be composed of the same representatives as the Conciliation Commission, and they would be available to the parties at their request to assist them in achieving a peaceful settlement of outstanding differences. The Good Offices Committee as proposed by Israel would function only during the year 1952. The proposal aimed at Israel's desire for less outside interference in her affairs in the area which coincided with the Soviet resolution but for different reasons. Yet, the Zionist state did not want to offend her Western interests so she included the temporary Good Offices Committee. Israel later withdrew her resolution when it was clear it had no chance for adoption or support from either the U.S.S.R. or the Western Powers.

Afghanistan and Pakistan also presented resolutions on the subject of the Conciliation Commission and were a bit more pro-Arab in their construction than the adopted proposal. The Soviet Union, however, refused to support either of these proposals and persisted in supporting only its own resolution. When the Western resolution was put to a vote, it was adopted 48-5-1 - the Soviet Bloc against¹⁹ and Israel refusing to vote. Israel refused to vote on the resolution as it was submitted as a whole and not by paragraphs as she desired. Israel explained that she was against the first paragraph of the preamble which recalled all the resolutions adopted by the

18. Ibid, pp. 304-305.

19. Ibid, p. 305.

General Assembly vis-à-vis the Palestine Question. Otherwise she would have abstained on the remainder of the resolution.

The VIIth Session of the General Assembly convened in the autumn of 1952 and made an attempt at getting Israel and the Arab States to negotiate directly to resolve their differences. The resolution which was sponsored by eight nations (Canada, Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands, Uruguay, Cuba, and Ecuador) was ambiguous and not specific enough in laying down conditions for resumption of negotiations.²⁰ The resolution called on Israel and the Arab States to resolve their differences by direct negotiations, asked them to refrain from any hostile acts, and requested the Palestine Conciliation Commission to assist in reaching a settlement. Though recalling the earlier U.N. resolutions on the subject, it stated that both sides should enter into the discussions "without prejudice" to their rights under past decisions of the Assembly. Israel agreed to the resolution since this last section was the crux of the matter for her - no prejudice to her rights through past resolutions. The Arabs refused to accept the proposal for negotiations without Israeli acceptance of the earlier resolutions.

The resolution passed the Ad Hoc Committee by a 32-14-13 vote - the necessary two-thirds majority ratifying. When the resolution came before the plenary session six days later on December 18 the resolution was defeated when it failed to receive the necessary two-thirds majority. The vote was 24 in favor, 21 against, and 15 abstaining. The

20. Keesings Contemporary Archives, 1952-54, pp. 12752-12753.

Soviet Bloc changed from abstaining, as they had voted in Committee, to voting against the resolution on the final ballot. Also, seven Latin American countries and Liberia, who had voted in favor earlier, abstained in the plenary session.²¹ The Soviet delegate said that as he had pointed out a number of times, the Commission had been created by American initiative and did not serve the interests of the Middle East but rather made the situation more acute. The presence in the resolution of items praising the work of the Commission had made the whole resolution unacceptable to his delegation. The same day, the U.S.S.R. voted against a Filipino amendment to the eight-power proposal. The amendment was aimed at directing Israel and the Arab States to negotiate on the basis of earlier resolutions and not just "bearing (them) in mind". The other item of importance in the amendment was inclusion of the principle of internationalization of Jerusalem.²² The amendment was rejected on votes of 26-24-10 and 28-20-2.²³ The Soviet Bloc voted on the side of Israel and the Western Powers but probably for different reasons. The U.S.S.R. just refused to accept any U.N. proposition in which it was not represented such as the Conciliation Commission. Eytan gave the Israeli view of the outcome of the resolution in his book The First Ten Years. "This ended the only real effort to put the weight of the U.N. behind the demands for direct negotiations between the Arab States and Israel." In later years,

21. Ibid.

22. U.N. Yearbook, 1952, pp. 252-253.

23. Eytan, op. cit., pp. 104-105.

the U.S.S.R. and its bloc supported the Arabs almost automatically toward any resolution aimed at forcing negotiations, he wrote.

Syria put forward a resolution to refer the Palestine refugee case to the International Court of Justice in December 1952. The resolution called on the General Assembly to state that the refugee problem involved questions of law and would call for legal examination of various rights of the refugees. The resolution would request, in accordance with Article 96, paragraph one of the Charter, the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice. Here was an opportunity for the U.S.S.R. to support the Arab case if it really was motivated to do so as claimed by Eytan. The Soviet Union agreed that the rights of the Arab refugees had been recognized by the General Assembly decisions which could not be revised or annulled. There was, therefore, no need for an opinion from the World Court; so accordingly the U.S.S.R. would vote against the Syrian draft resolution. The resolution was rejected 26-13-19.²⁴

The Czech trial of Rudolf Slansky brought to a head the deterioration of relations between Israel and the Soviet Bloc which had shown signs of development in this direction in late 1951. Stalin was having economic troubles inside the U.S.S.R. and irritations and agitations inside the Satellites. Anti-Semitism was a handy scapegoat and means of taking the peoples' attention from these other situations. The Slansky Trial held in Prague from November 20-25, 1952, accused 14 Czech Communist officials - 11 of Jewish origin - of treason through

24. U.N. Yearbook, 1952, pp. 251-252.

collaboration with Zionists and American imperialists. The trial had a pronounced anti-Jewish character and the State prosecutors made bitter attacks on Zionism and Israel. Israel was accused of aiding and abetting American espionage. ²⁵ A combination of actions and reactions began to quickly spin out as a result of the trial. The press and radio of the East European Satellites attacked and vilified Israel and the Zionist movement while at first relations with the Soviet Union remained correct. Reaction to the Slansky trial in Israel was bitter. Moshe Sharett, the foreign minister, declared in the Knesset on November 24 that the trial was an attempt to discredit the State of Israel in the eyes of Jews behind the Iron Curtain and was pure anti-Semitism. Sharett pointed out that the majority of the 14 accused were Jews and the prosecution had spared no pains to stress their racial origin and attempts had been made to trace their alleged crimes to this primary cause. The Foreign Minister declared the trial had cast "a dark blot on the glorious record of friendship between Israel and Czechoslovakia". He recalled Israel had received valuable aid from that country during the Palestine War. This aid, extended with the full knowledge and consent of the Czech Government, had been paid for in full, and subsequent agreements for commercial interchanges and for the emigration of Czechoslovak Jews to Israel had been carried out "in full daylight" and were "not the outcome of underhand manipulations". ²⁶ The Czech trial also caused political repercussions inside Israel for

25. The World Today, March 1958, Vol. XIV, No. 3, p. 123.

26. Keesings Contemporary Archives, 1952-54, pp. 12686-12687.

on November 25, Ben-Gurion blistered Mapam for their two facedness regarding the Slansky trial. The Prime Minister said,

"At least the Communists here are consistent. They have always toed the Moscow line in its attitude to Israel, as when Russia supported the internationalization of Jerusalem and their switch after she opposed it. But what of you members of Mapam! How can you recognize the anti-Zionist aspects of this so-called trial and yet deny its blatant anti-Semitic features ?" (27)

These were serious statements for the Israeli Prime Minister to make for Mapam were dear friends to him under the skin - they were kibbutz pioneers and members of Palmach. Litvinoff, in his biography of Ben-Gurion, says the Mapai leader was taking the plunge of abandoning the hope, fondly entertained in the past, of building a government of all the Zionist forces of the left wing. This was also a departure from the hope of continuing a foreign policy of equally harmonious relations between East and West.

Culmination of the Stalinist policy of anti-Semitism and anti-Israel followed quickly on the heels of the Slansky trial when the Soviet Government in late January 1953 levelled charges against a group of doctors, most of whom were Jews, that they had plotted to medically assassinate most of the Soviet hierarchy. This provided the starting point for the Soviet Union itself to promulgate anti-Zionist and anti-Semitic propaganda. ²⁸ On February 9, a bomb was exploded by unknown persons in the courtyard of the Soviet legation in Tel Aviv. Three days later the Soviet Union made this act the grounds for break-

27. Litvinoff, op. cit., pp. 222-223.

28. The Israel Yearbook, 1954-55, (Tel Aviv: Israel Publications Ltd.), pp. 49-50.

ing off diplomatic relations. Most observers accepted this action as part of apparent anti-Jewish developments within the Soviet Union and her Satellites although the bombing incident provided the official reason. World reaction was immediate. Many in Israel and the West feared that this move was a calculated step to enhance their program with the Arabs. Arab governments, however, feared that this move might lead the Western governments to unwittingly play the Soviet game by showing increased sympathy for Jews behind the Iron Curtain, giving additional moral and material support to Israel, and thus corroborating the Soviet propoganda among the Arab peoples.²⁹

Though an anti-Semetic campaign was in full progress inside the Soviet Bloc, this did not mean Soviet support for the Arabs. One had only to remember that in December 1952, in the U.N., the Soviet Union opposed a Syrian resolution to refer the Palestine refugee case to the International Court of Justice. The Russians also voted with Israel and the West to defeat the Arab supported Filipino ammendment concerning the eight-power resolution on Palestine.

Inside Israel, the Histadruth reacted to the break in diplomatic relations by the U.S.S.R. by voting to bar Communists from all official trade union posts, including shop committees and at the same time passed a resolution declaring the Communist Party was "an enemy of the nation, traitorous to the State, and serving the interests of foreign powers."³⁰ The Communists persisted in supporting Soviet

29. Middle East Journal, Chronology, Vol. VII, No. 2, 1953, p. 196.

30. Keesings Contemporary Archives, 1952-54, pp. 12728-12730.

policies even after the break in relations.

Litvinoff gives a personal view about why the Russians broke relations with Israel. It is a view which is flimsy at best but is worth noting since it is the view of an Israeli writer who was close to Ben-Gurion. The doctors' plot charges and arrests in Moscow was the peak of Stalin's anti-Jewish moves, he writes. American Jewish opinion exploded in statements of anxiety for Jewish communities behind the Iron Curtain and criticism against the Communists. Litvinoff wrote that this stung Russia deeply and she reacted against Israel since she could not against American Jews. When the bombing of the Soviet legation provided an excuse, the Soviets broke off relations with Israel. He concludes that this completed the isolation of Israel in 1953 as the U.S., under a Republican administration, was wooing the Arabs to join defense pacts.

Stalin died in March 1953, and in April the doctors in the alleged plot were fully exonerated... This hardly supports the Litvinoff view of Russia being stung - unless he refers to Russia being only Stalin.

31. Litvinoff, op. cit., pp. 223-226.

CHAPTER III

THE VARIABLE AND NEUTRAL PERIOD

The summer following Stalin's death ushered in a period in which the Soviet Union played the role of the sympathetic onlooker in the Middle East, especially when it saw nationalism brewing trouble for the colonial or Western powers. The variable condition or attitude of the Soviet Union included her relations with Israel. On July 6, 1953, Moshe Sharett made a proposal for resumption of diplomatic relations with the U.S.S.R. and Israel promised not to be any party "to any alliance or agreement which has aggressive designs of the Soviet Union."¹ The U.S.S.R. accepted on July 15 and relations were resumed on July 20.

Premier Georgi M. Malenkov stressed the Israeli promise in a review of Soviet foreign relations to the Supreme Soviet on August 8. Malenkov said that this promise would assist the development of cooperation between the two countries but added that the resumption of diplomatic relations did not imply any weakening of the U.S.S.R.'s friendly relations with the Arab countries.² After the

1. The United States in World Affairs, 1953, p. 289.

2. American Jewish Yearbook, 1955, Vol. 56, p. 409.

resumption of diplomatic relations with Israel, several trade agreements were concluded. The export of Israeli oranges and other fruit to the Soviet Union was renewed while the Soviets began to deliver³ considerable quantities of crude oil to Israel.

The Soviet Minister Alexander Abramov presented his credentials to Foreign Minister Sharett in Jerusalem; the Soviet Union thereby formally recognizing the city as the seat of Israel's foreign ministry.⁴

Relations between the U.S.S.R. and Israel for the remainder of 1953 were concerned with United Nations debate and action on two Arab complaints against Israel. The first was the Jordanian complaint about the Israeli attack on Qibya, Jordan. The United States, Great Britain and France submitted a joint resolution, on November 18, 1953, expressing "the strongest censure of that action..." The resolution was adopted by the Council on November 24 by a 9-0-2 vote.⁵ The U.S.S.R. and Lebanon abstained - the latter felt the censure too mild. No explanation was made by the Russians for their abstention, but it is doubtful that it was either pro-Arab or pro-Israeli, but rather a continuation of their abstention from giving U.N. action any credence in the Middle East. It could also have been the Soviet desire, through no action, to leave open to favorable Arab interpretation of a parallel vote while nothing was conclusive in its move.

3. Ibid.

4. Keesings Contemporary Archives, 1952-54, p. 13287B.

5. U.N. Yearbook, 1953, p. 223.

The second complaint registered against Israel was by Syria concerning work on the west bank of the Jordan River in a demilitarized zone. The complaint was submitted on October 12, 1953, but action was not forthcoming until the last half of December. The Big Three Western Powers submitted a joint resolution to the Security Council, referring back to Major General Bennike, Chief of Staff of the U.N. Truce Supervisory Organization in Palestine, the dispute between Israel and Syria regarding the diversion of water from the Jordan River for an Israeli hydro-electric project. The resolution endorsed General Bennike's request to Israel to cease work on the project as long as an agreement was not arrived at, and authorized him

"To explore possibilities of reconciling the interests involved in this dispute, including rights in the demilitarized zone and full satisfaction of existing irrigation rights at all seasons and to take such steps as he may deem appropriate to effect a reconciliation, having in view the development of the natural resources affected in a just and orderly manner for the general welfare." (6)

During the debates, Vyshinsky of the U.S.S.R. criticized the resolution because it gave the Chief of Staff too much power and he insisted that any particular measure could only be carried out with the agreement of both parties. He also said others' criticisms of the West's resolution were valid. Here Vyshinsky was referring to objections by Dr. Charles Malik of Lebanon who maintained that any settlement must have the consent of both parties and of Professor Bokhari of Pakistan who contended that the resolution ignored General Bennike's report that the project

6. Keesings Contemporary Archives, 1952-54, p. 13382.

would give Israel a military advantage. No action was taken on the joint resolution during December. In the continuance of debate of the resolution and the Syrian complaint, the Soviet delegate also said the U.S. was attempting to gain mastery over the economy of the Middle East by using the situation. This was in reference to the Jordan River Development Plan put forward by Eric Johnston of the United States. The joint resolution in its final form was only an attempt to correct or alleviate the tension caused by the situation. It instructed Israel to cease work until an agreement with both sides was reached, asked for a faithful adherence to the armistice and a call for compliance to Mixed Armistice Commission decisions. The resolution came to a vote on January 22, 1954 and was defeated by a Soviet veto - the other Council members voted 7 in favor (Columbia, Denmark, France, New Zealand, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the U.S.), 2 against (U.S.S.R. and Lebanon), and 2 abstaining (Brazil and China).⁷ This was the first time the Soviet Union had used its veto to defeat U.N. action on the Palestine Question. The Soviet Union demanded a resolution which based a settlement on mutual consent even though she knew this was highly improbable at best. This veto was a means of continuing the stalemate and thwarting U.N. initiative especially since the West was backing the moves. A veto was a more emphatic means of showing no-confidence in Western sponsored U.N. proposals.

A series of trials took place in Rumania in which leaders of

7. U.N. Yearbook, 1954, pp. 73-74.

the Rumanian Jewish community, especially leading Zionists, were found guilty of espionage, anti-state activities, and "Zionist" crimes.⁸ The trials began in late 1953 and carried over into 1954. Israel and Rumania exchanged clashing notes with countercharges, but the situation was eased when on July 4, 1954, several of the imprisoned Zionists were released.

Israel again brought complaint to the Security Council against Egypt for blockading the Suez Canal and hindering shipping in the Gulf of Aqaba. On March 23, 1954, Mr. Leslie Munro of New Zealand introduced a resolution expressing "grave concern" at Egypt's failure to comply with the Council's request in 1951. The 1951 resolution requested Egypt to lift its restrictions on shipping passing through the Suez Canal en route to Israel. The New Zealand resolution reaffirmed the 1951 request, called upon Egypt to comply to the resolution on its obligation to the U.N. Charter, and asked the Council to express the view that without prejudice to the provisions to the September 1951 resolution, the complaint relating to the Gulf of Aqaba should in the first instance be dealt with by the Mixed Armistice Commission.⁹ The Western Powers supported the resolution on March 25.

The Soviet attitude as expressed by Vyshinsky said it would be better for the Council to appeal to both parties to settle their dispute by direct negotiations - which was fine in theory with Israel

8. Keesings Contemporary Archives, 1952-54, p. 13820.

9. U.N. Yearbook, 1954, pp. 62-65.

but unacceptable to the Egyptians. The Soviet delegate also said that though the resolution had been supported by various representatives, it had been strongly criticized and with sound arguments by the Arab representatives. He charged that instead of helping the Arab States and Israel to develop normal relations, the adoption of such a resolution would only complicate relations between Israel and Egypt. Vyshinsky reasoned that: 1) It was a false premise to believe you can impose a settlement when the conditions are unacceptable from the start; 2) But that "the principle of free navigation laid down by the Convention of Constantinople of 1888 must, of course, be respected," however, it was up to all the signatory nations and not to a "chance group of States" such as constituted a majority of the Council.¹⁰

The resolution was put to vote on March 29 and was defeated by a Soviet veto. Eight nations supported the resolution while Lebanon joined the U.S.S.R. in voting against it, and China abstained. Following the resolution's defeat, Sir Pierson Dixon of the United Kingdom strongly criticized the Soviet veto as this second such vote "might reduce the Council to impotence" on the Palestine Question as it had done on other issues.

This veto indicated the possibility of a more pro-Arab stand but was not a down-the-line support of the Arab case as the Vyshinsky statement indicated on the principle of free navigation. The Israeli view toward these two Soviet vetoes was that Russia intended to deprive

10. U.N. Security Council Records, 9th Year Meetings, March 29, 1954, paragraph 56, p. 10.

the U.N. and the West of influence in the Middle East and subsequently promote general conditions of instability and anarchy favorable to Soviet interests.¹¹

The Jewish expectations of lasting, sound, friendly relations with the Soviet Union which arose from interpretations by both official and public opinion of the Malenkov speech had largely but not entirely vanished by mid-summer 1954. Reason for some optimism on the part of the Israelis was the expanded trade relations between them and the Soviet Bloc in 1954. The Israel Government Yearbook reported a marked expansion of trade between these parties. Israel doubled her fuel purchases from the Soviet Union which consisted of 270,000 tons of fuel oil and 120,000 tons of crude oil. The Russian purchases of citrus fruits amounted to 14,000 tons - the third largest purchaser of Israeli citrus.¹² The U.S.S.R. also bought oils and bananas.¹³ The U.S.S.R. in 1954, excluding the Satellite trade, was the fifth largest purchaser of Israeli exports.¹⁴ In late 1954 and early 1955, trade pacts were signed with Rumania and Bulgaria, while pacts already existed with Poland and Hungary.

A more lenient attitude by the Russians was also shown toward the emigration of aged relatives of Israeli citizens. This attitude was rapidly followed by the East European states.

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11. American Jewish Yearbook, 1955, p. 473.
 12. Israel Government Yearbook, 1955, p. 192.
 13. "Israel After Seven Lean Years", The World Today, 1955, Vol. XI, p. 244.
 14. The Israel Yearbook, 1954-55, p. 50.

Soviet policy vis-à-vis the Arabs and Israel vacillated to fit the tactical situation and this was the most striking feature of their policy in 1954. The Soviet Union was interested in negating any Western influence in the area with whatever negative moves were necessary, but their view of important components in the area varied. For in 1954, the Soviet expert on Egypt, Mrs. L. Vatulina, characterized the Nagib-Nasser government in Egypt as "madly reactionary, terrorist, anti-democratic, demagogic". Communist criticism of the Egyptian government became even more violent following the execution of Muslim Brotherhood leaders and the arrest of Communist militants throughout the winter of 1954-55.¹⁵ Meanwhile in their attitude towards Syria, the Soviet Union became much more favorable as the Communist Party became represented in the parliament with the election of Khalid Bakhdash, and with the growing influence of the Party in the country. This type policy was not to be changed until the spring of the coming year, 1955, as events moved rapidly to change the picture.

15. The World Today, Vol. XI, 1955, p. 521.

CHAPTER IV

THE CHANGE TO THE PRO-ARAB POLICY

The year 1955 was a year of major changes and effects in the Middle East for Western interests, the Soviet Union, the Arab States, and Israel. This was the year when proposals and policies went beyond the talking stage and had dramatic effect. The Anglo-American hope and steady drive to create a defensive alliance across the northern tier of the Middle East at last saw reality with Iraq joining Great Britain, Turkey, Iran and Pakistan to form the pact. The first step was the signing of the Turco-Iraqi Treaty on February 24, 1955, and this had a three-sided effect - on the U.S.S.R., Israel, and Egypt. Iraq was the only Arab State that agreed to join the Western sponsored organization. The effect of this was felt directly by Israel since Iraq was an avowed foe and it was about to receive extensive military aid from the United States and Great Britain. Egypt's premier position among the Arab States was seriously challenged by Iraq's move and the Nasser government even felt isolated from the Asian section of the Arab World. The Soviet Union as expected was not happy with being encircled by nations allied to its enemies and were determined to limit Middle Eastern membership as much as it could.

The U.S.S.R. extended pressure on to Israel not to join such an alliance. Eytan said the Soviet Union was determined that "Israel, at least, should not join any such system". It need have had no fear for when letters were sent to countries inviting them to join the pact, "Israel was again left out in the cold," he continues.¹

Shortly after Ben-Gurion returned from the Negeb to assume the defense portfolio, the Israeli military forces made a large scale attack on Gaza on February 28, 1955. The severe action coupled with Iraq's move to join the Western sponsored alliance raised the Middle East tension temperature to new highs. When the Egyptian complaint against Israel was brought before the Security Council in March 1955, the Soviet Union said tension which was obvious in the area was caused by attempts to form military blocs in the area.² On March 29, a resolution sponsored by the United States, France, and Great Britain was adopted unanimously. It condemned Israel for the Gaza raid and instructed that nation to prevent such actions. A second resolution was passed unanimously instructing Egypt and Israel to cooperate with the Truce Chief of Staff and instructed the parties to incorporate his recommendations to ease frontier tensions.³ The Soviet Union itself was experiencing a change in leadership and was making moves to gain the confidence of the Western Powers that it wanted to coexist peacefully with them and to picture itself to the world as being a stalwart for peace while the West was organizing

1. Eytan, op. cit., p. 136.

2. United Nations Yearbook, 1955, p. 32.

3. Ibid, p. 33.

alliances in the area. This alone would dictate its support of these two resolutions. It may also be conceivable that the Soviet Union was not ready for the Middle East to blow up so it wanted to calm the situation at least for the present.

On April 17, a note was released by the Soviet foreign ministry about the situation in the Middle East. The note published in Izvestia referred to the creation of the Northern Tier Pact and began by stating, "the situation in the Middle East had greatly deteriorated of late", and closed with a declaration that the Soviet Union would in the interests of peace do everything to develop closer relations with the countries of the Middle East. This statement, though little noticed at the time of release, actually signalled a changing of Soviet policy toward the Middle East. Most of the Soviet dealings with the countries of this region had been from afar and mostly reaction to eliminate or limit Western influence in the area.

The Bandung Conference in April 1955, gave the U.S.S.R. a view of Nasser who was moving for an independent position. The Soviet reaction was favorable and ideas and means for helping him through an active policy became embryonic from then on until the policy was fully born in September. Nasser had requested arms and military aid from the West especially after the Gaza raid. When this was refused, he began to look elsewhere for his country's needs.

As late as September 8, 1955, the Soviet delegate in the Security Council expressed condolences to both Egypt and Israel over losses in

4. "Soviet Policy in the Middle East", The World Today, 1955, Vol. XI, No. 12, p. 520.

frontier incidents and took the position of supporting a Western supplement to the resolution of March 30, which called for a cease fire and order and tranquillity.⁵ All through 1955, there were numerous frontier incidents which followed this pattern: the Arabs committed a number of small violations by irregulars; the Israelis, when they responded, made large scale organized attacks by military or para-military units who committed large scale destruction and killing. Examples of these raids were: the Gaza raid on February 28 when 39 were killed and 30 injured; the Khan Yunis attack of August 31 when 36 were killed; and the Lake Tiberias attack of December 11-12 when 49 were killed.⁶

In late August, rumors began about a Communist-Egyptian arms deal. The Israeli ambassador in Moscow, when he asked for information, was told the reports were inventions and that no negotiations were in train, nor had the U.S.S.R. even considered selling arms.⁷ There was, however, a revealing postscript: the Soviet Union, he was given to understand, regarded the sale of arms needed for the defense of the purchasing State or for internal security measures as a normal transaction.

On September 27, Czechoslovakia and Egypt made known a transaction for arms "on a commercial basis". Egypt mortgaged her future cotton crops for bomber and fighter aircraft, heavy weapons of most modern types including tanks, and warships.⁸ The shipments were

5. U.N. Security Council Official Documents, Xth Year Meetings, 700th Meeting, September 8, 1955, pp. 21-22.

6. U.N. Yearbook, 1955, pp. 32-35.

7. "Soviet Policy in the Middle East", op. cit., pp. 525-526.

8. Israel Government Yearbook, 1956, (Jerusalem: Government Printer, 1956), p. 237.

accompanied by technicians and experts from the Soviet Bloc. Soviet leaders had some misgivings as to the impression which their policy would make in the West. The fact that Czechoslovakia, not the U.S.S.R., was chosen to carry out "the commercial transaction" points this up. The statements of Arab leaders were reported in full in the Soviet press, but Israeli criticisms were generally censored. Also, anti-Western polemics ceased on the eve of the summit conference in Geneva. The Soviets wished to shelve the new policy that had proved so promising, and there was no desire either to see the Soviet Middle Eastern offensive become the subject of close international scrutiny. The purchase of arms from Czechoslovakia by Egypt was tantamount to purchasing from the Soviet Union. The Soviet move was partly to offset Iraq's enhanced prestige for joining the Baghdad Pact and to gain favor when the United States maintained its refusal to build up Egypt as requested. This assistance to Egypt was given for nearly the same reason that Israel was supported in 1948: that it appeared to be the factor most likely to upset the situation in the Middle East and improve the situation for Soviet interests.

To Israel, the arms deal with Egypt was a shock and posed a serious threat. It had itself in the past relied heavily on arms purchases from Czechoslovakia. The Israelis were not deceived about where the arms agreement really emanated from. The Prime Minister, Moshe Sharett, in a speech to the Knesset said the history of the arms deal was rather more complicated. Egypt had not returned to Czechoslovakia

9. "Soviet Policy in the Middle East", op. cit., p. 526.

to ask for arms nor had Czechoslovakia offered these. The initiative
had come from the Soviet Union.¹⁰ The Prime Minister, also on Sep-
tember 18, declared that the supply of arms to Egypt had cast " a deep
shadow over the entire scene of Israel's foreign and defense affairs."
He claimed that the arms agreement implied a military and political
link-up between Egypt and the Soviet Bloc, and he appealed to the West-
ern Powers for arms and declared a desire for a security pact with the
Western Powers, particularly with the U.S.A. Sharett stated the neces-
sity of more than just a security guarantee or pact - Israel needed
arms.¹¹

On October 19, Sharett, again in a Knesset foreign policy debate,
said that he had asked the Soviet ambassador to Israel to outline his
country's Middle East policy but received no answer. The Israeli Prime
Minister stated that if war should result from the present crisis "it
would be perfectly clear who struck the match that started the confla-
gration."¹²

Ben-Gurion resumed the Israeli premiership in November 1955 and
derided the Communist assertion that the arms deal was a mere commercial
transaction. He said he had too much respect for the political under-
standing and realism of the Czech Government to believe that it was
unaware of the use Egypt would put the arms being supplied her. "But,"
he added, "in fairness to the Prague Government, I am bound to say that

10. Ibid.

11. Keesings Contemporary Archives, op. cit., 1954-1956, p. 14485.

12. Ibid, p. 14486.

they acted not entirely of their own volition but also by the decision and initiative of the Soviet Union." The Israeli Prime Minister also criticized Britain for selling to Egypt arms which were denied to Israel, and the United States for supplying arms to Iraq. Ben-Gurion in his policy statement also declared the Government of Israel "will not lend its support to any aggressive trend or alliance directed against any State whatsoever."¹³ This was to placate the neutralist minded left wing parties.

Israel continued to pressure the United States and Great Britain into giving her arms. Moshe Sharett, again foreign minister, on November 10, 1955, said it would take arms from wherever it could get them if necessary.¹⁴

During the final month of 1955 and in January 1956, the Soviet Union at last found itself free to commit itself directly supporting Egypt and Syria more and more. This was not feasible earlier as the Soviet Union was involved in summitry, but after the Geneva meetings Russia knew how far the United States would go before it would fight; so it was free to fully pursue its new activist Middle East policy.

The Israeli army attack upon Syrian army positions on Lake Tiberias on the night of December 11 and 12, provided an opportunity for the U.S.S.R. to commit itself fully behind the Arabs. The U.S.S.R. joined the rest of the Security Council in criticizing Israel on December 16. In further Council debates - on January 9, 1956 - the U.S.S.R.

13. Ibid, p. 14520.

14. Council on Foreign Relations, The United States in World Affairs, (New York: Harper Bros., 1955), Vol. XI, pp. 173-175.

submitted its own version of censuring Israel for the Lake Tiberias attack. The Russian resolution omitted the Syrian requests for U.N. expulsion and economic sanctions but included a demand for Israel's compensation to the families of those Syrians killed in the raid. This last point was not part of the Western resolution which expressed severe condemnation of Israel and was unanimously adopted on January 15¹⁵ 19.

Relations between Israel and the U.S.S.R. were marked by the growing interest of the U.S.S.R. in the area and of its moves to forge closer ties with the Arab States. Nikita Khrushchev, in an address to the Supreme Soviet on December 29, 1955, said,

"The activities of the State of Israel are deserving of censure. From the outset of her existence, Israel began threatening her neighbors ... Clearly such a policy fails to meet the needs of the State of Israel, since behind the back of those who implement it stand imperialist powers known to all." (16)

The press and officials of the U.S.S.R. expressed themselves in the same vein as the following excerpt from a Soviet journal published in January 1956: While supporting the resolution by the U.S.A., Great Britain, and France, amended by Iran, which repeatedly expressed severe condemnation of Israel, the Soviet delegation drew attention to the fact that the resolution was too weak to prevent further aggression by Israel against the Arab States. The Soviet delegation stressed that it disagreed with the resolution statement charging Syrian authorities with interference in Israeli Lake Tiberias activities. "The feelings of the Soviet people

15. Middle East Journal, Chronology, 1956, Vol. X, p. 190.

16. Israel Government Yearbook, 1956, p. 249.

were reflected in N.S. Khrushchev's speech at the December session¹⁷ of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R."

The Foreign Minister of Israel made a strong verbal protest to the Soviet ambassador in Tel Aviv about Khrushchev's references to Israel in the December 29 speech. The Israeli press stated that the Government of Israel took particular exception to Khrushchev's remarks about Israel. It was understood that Sharett had warned the ambassador that Khrushchev's remarks could be construed as direct¹⁸ encouragement to the Arab States to attack Israel. On January 2, 1956, both Ben-Gurion and Sharett spoke during a major Knesset debate on foreign policy. They denounced the Soviet Union as "the factor¹⁹ principally responsible for the new Palestine crisis."

The actions and expression of attitude by the Soviet Union toward the Middle East in late 1955 illustrated the new activist Middle East policy which aimed at identifying the Soviet Union as a friend and supporter of Egypt firstly and Syria more and more. This policy change had an obvious effect on Soviet-Israeli relations - a full 180 degree change from the pro-Zionist policy of 1947-49. This new pro-Arab policy, however, was not fully rigid or idealistic any more than was the pro-Zionist policy. The Soviet Union always left doors and avenues open which could change the policy as necessary to gain the utmost for Soviet interests. While overtly and in world

17. International Affairs, (Moscow: Znanye Publishing House, January 1956), No. 1, p. 101.

18. Keesings Contemporary Archives, op. cit., p. 14680B.

19. Middle East Journal, Chronology, 1956, Vol. X, p. 185.

headlines, the U.S.S.R. was now directly supporting the Arabs against Israel, trade and cultural relations between the Soviet Union and Israel remained operative if not cordial. The Soviet Satellite system also offered the U.S.S.R. a means of following a many pronged policy. A paradoxical situation existed in the relations between Israel and the Satellites. Poland and Hungary moved closer in their relations during 1955-56, while Czech and Rumanian relations worsened due to the Czech arms agreement with Egypt and the stoppage of Jewish emigration from Rumania and the refusal of Rumanian authorities to release some Jewish leaders who were imprisoned for Zionist activities. Cultural relations moved well during this critical period between all the Soviet Bloc and Israel. These relations included scientific and literary exchanges. An example was a presentation of five microfilms of Hebrew manuscripts in the Lenin National Library in Moscow to the Israel Manuscripts Institute in September 1955. These exchanges continued on into 1956. In November 1955, Israel and the Soviet Union agreed to increase trade, with Israel taking 400,000 tons of Soviet crude and fuel oil for an exchange of citrus fruit.

20. Israel Government Yearbook, 1956, pp. 250-251.

21. The Zionist Yearbook, 1956-57, pp. 98 and 112.

22. Ibid, p. 102.

Before concluding, it is necessary to look at the constant factors on both sides which influence the relations between one another. First - the easiest - Israel, by its own choice and from the factors leading to its creation, has taken a neutral position in the East-West struggle. It owed a debt to both the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. for support of its creation. The Soviet Bloc furnished both arms and manpower (Jewish immigrants) which was a major part of its support, if not the deciding support during its early days. Secondly, the Soviet Union and its Satellites have been among Israel's best customers commercially. Another and influential factor in Israel's desire for friendly relations with the U.S.S.R. is the large internal minority which includes at least three major political parties (the Communist Party of Israel, Mapam, and Achdut Avoda). This group desires friendship with the Soviet Union from an ideological viewpoint. These parties are Marxists with various shadings and attitudes toward Zionism. The fourth and one of the most vital and intimate factors for Israel desiring to be friendly with the Soviet Union is the large Jewish community - some three million - in the U.S.S.R. Israel wants the Soviet Government to allow any of those who desire to emigrate to Israel. For it is from this part of the diaspora that the Zionists must get their immigrants if Israel is to grow to be the powerful and dynamic state its leaders hope it to be. Jews from the U.S. and other Western nations have not responded in any large number to emigrate to Israel but have given quantities of money as a means of contributing support to the

Jewish State. Ben-Gurion and other Israeli leaders have repeatedly linked Israel's foreign policy and "security" with the Jewish peoples abroad. Eytan writes of the Jewish diaspora in the Soviet Bloc. "Israel has never given up hope that one day things may change and the Soviet Union will allow its Jews to come (to Israel) if they want to..."²³ Nothing else (the prohibition to Soviet Jewry emigrating) has thrown such a cloud over Israel-Soviet relations, he wrote further. Ben-Gurion has often linked Israel's best relations to those nations who allow their Jewish communities to aid the State of Israel either with money or emigration to it.²⁴

The remaining factor influencing Israel's attitude toward the Soviet Union is its daily contemporary dealings with that nation and its natural reactions. If the Soviet Union aids the Arabs with arms which might be used against her or takes a stand in international political circles which are anti-Israel, Israel is bound to react to these moves. But even if Russia was all sweet reasonableness and came through with permission for large scale Jewish emigration to Israel, the Zionist leaders would still need to be neutral as they need the economic help from American Jewry and could not afford to alienate them. Israel must have this financial aid as it is not yet able to support itself, especially if immigration and defense costs are to continue at a high rate. Israel's relations with the Soviet Union are bound to have most of their foundation among these afore-

23. Eytan, op. cit., pp. 189-190.

24. Ibid, p. 149.

mentioned factors, but as stated before, in small state-big state relations, the tone is most often set by the latter.

The policy of the U.S.S.R. towards Israel is conditioned by five constant factors which influence this policy in proportion to their importance at a given time. The five factors are: 1) the Communist ideological view of Israel; 2) Soviet-West relations; 3) Soviet-Arab relations; 4) the geographical proximity of the Middle East to the U.S.S.R. (Israel is an integral part of this region); and 5) the Jewish minority of some three million in the U.S.S.R.

If the Soviet Union had run its policy towards the Zionists according to ideological acceptance only, it never would have supported the Jewish cause in 1947-48. Zionism has always been ideologically wrong according to Communist dogma. While the U.S.S.R. supported the establishment of separate, independent, "democratic" Jewish and Arab states, the Great Soviet Encyclopedia says, but if this nation were to change its "anti-democratic" policies and become the democratic and independent state the Soviet delegation proposed at the U.N., then real friendship is possible between the Soviet Union and Israel. ²⁵ Dogma to be followed literally is only for the last stage of development when society is ready to be really Communist, so if Israel were at least moving in the "right" direction this state would be ideologically acceptable.

Soviet-West relations are probably the biggest and most influential factor in any present or foreseeable policy of the U.S.S.R. toward

25. The Mizan Newsletter, November 1959, Central Asian Research Group, pp. 5-8.

Israel. It was this factor which undoubtedly influences the Soviet Union to support the Zionist cause in 1947-48 and then just as impersonally change in 1955 to supporting an Arab enemy of Israel - Egypt. The U.S.S.R. aimed at removing British influence from the Middle East. When it was obvious Israel had consolidated its position by defeating the Arabs, the Soviets saw a chance to cash in on Arab animosity towards the United States and Great Britain since the Arabs were disillusioned with the West; so they shied away from Israel and stayed aloof. Again this factor - the East-West struggle - was the moving factor which prompted a change in Soviet policy in 1955. The West at last had succeeded in building an alliance including an Arab country, and Russia had to negate this gain through another approach.

Soviet-Arab relations are conditioned much the same as Israeli relations with the Soviet Union. The U.S.S.R. may support or oppose the Arab States in accordance to what serves Soviet interests. The only down-the-line support which will not waver is to those interests allied without reservation to the Soviet cause, such as the Communists in these countries. Syria was a good example, for it was not until the Communists began to gain in influence and Khalid Bakhdash was elected to parliament in 1954 did the U.S.S.R. show any real favor to this country. Surely, the Soviet hierarchy was not happy with Nasser's outlawing of the Communist Party in Egypt, but due to other circumstances a move to forge better relations with this country dictated such a policy.

No one can deny the geographical importance of the Middle East, of which Israel is an integral part, to the U.S.S.R. This geographical

proximity links up with the old desire of Russia to have the Middle East, at least on the Mediterranean, under its control. This factor is also of strategic importance to the Soviet Union. This reason alone makes it necessary to insure as far as possible that the nations of the area are not allied to an antagonistic force. This would be a threat to the underbelly of European Russia.

The fifth constant affecting the relations between the two nations is the large Jewish minority in the U.S.S.R. This group should have been no problem if all was what should be in the great socialist fatherland. In the early days of the Soviet State, Communist ideology precluded any social, racial or religious prejudice inherited from capitalism, but this has not remained true nor was it probable considering the strong history of anti-Semitism in the Ukraine and Russia. It became evident to Stalin that all the Jews were not like many of the assimilated leaders of the revolution (who were Jews), but yearned to retain Yiddish and other elements of their culture. He created the semi-autonomous state of Birobijan, but in a socialist framework and not a capitalist one. The failure of the Soviet Jews to live successfully in this region meant only one thing to Stalin's dogma - the Jews wanted to be Russians and not different. The interest shown by Russian Jews in the Zionist plan was unacceptable and defiance to the régime.²⁶ When the U.S.S.R. changed its attitude to support the creation of a Zionist State, this did not mean its Jews would have the choice of emigrating. Life in the U.S.S.R. is supposed to be the best under a

26. "The U.S.S.R., the Soviet Jews and Israel", The World Today, 1958, Vol. XIV, No. 12, p. 521.

socialist state. When troubles in the Republics and the Satellites needed a distraction, anti-Semitism was a handy scapegoat for Stalin. ✓
If at a later date, it will be to the advantage of Soviet interests to allow great numbers of Soviet Jews to emigrate to Israel, it may be assumed the U.S.S.R. will make the decision as it made the decision to support Israel's creation. Khrushchev himself has said, "I am sure a time will come when all Jews of Russia, who want to go to Israel will be able to do so."²⁷ This is a handy lever to have readily at hand with which to upset the Middle East as long as Israel holds out for the ingathering of the diaspora.

A conclusion can be made that the Soviet Union has carried on its policy towards Israel as part of a calculated foreign policy without any qualms of hurting or alienating any party. In fact, there is strong belief, with good reason, that the U.S.S.R. considers the Palestine Question an artificial conflict created before World War II from the following steps: Britain came to the area and the Jews and Arabs were living happily together, then Britain played one off against the other and more especially used Zionism as a weapon against the Arab national movement.²⁸

The Soviet Union was able in its 1947 support of a Zionist State to create a fluid situation which has always been more conducive to Communism. It was also successful in its propaganda effort to cast nearly all the blame of a Jewish State on the U.S. and the latter catching

27. Zionist Yearbook, 1958-59, (London: Zionist Federation of Great Britain and Ireland), p. 97.

28. The Mizan Newsletter, pp. 5-8.

the bulk of Arab animosity. The British were removed from Palestine. A chance was offered for sending in Communist and fellow traveller agents among the East European Jews it allowed to emigrate to Palestine and they could hope to have a state (Israel) in the Middle East beholden to it. This was quite a harvest for such a meager sowing. The 1955 change in policy gave the Russians an opportunity to work the Arab side of the street - though at Israeli expense - and with more force and effect since the Soviet Union was now pursuing an activist policy and it was being felt in the area much more than it had earlier in the decade. Any change of policy or relations between Israel and the U.S.S.R. is possible and likely to be as abrupt as the decisions of 1947-48 and 1955 which were nearly diametrically opposite.

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