

The Break in Soviet-Israel Relations

THE Soviet Union was the first nation to grant *de jure* recognition to the State of Israel on May 17, 1948, two days after the State was proclaimed. It was also the first state to send an ambassador to Israel. The Soviet Union has now severed diplomatic relations with Israel fifty-seven months after they were established.

We live in a sad world, but there were other and better days in the not-too-distant past worth recalling.

The Soviet Union actually was the third state to recognize Israel. The United States and Guatemala preceded the Soviet Union's action by a few days but theirs was *de facto* recognition while Moscow's was *de jure*. The then Foreign Minister of the U.S.S.R., Vyacheslav Molotov, accompanied official recognition with this note to the State of Israel:

"The Soviet Government hopes that the creation by the Jewish people of its sovereign state will serve the cause of strengthening peace and security in Palestine and the Near East, and expresses its confidence in the successful development of friendly relations between the U.S.S.R. and the State of Israel."

Powerful and great events in Israel and in international forums preceded this recognition. In Israel a small band of Jews stood with their backs to the sea and fought against the military juntas of seven feudal Arab states, equipped with modern British weapons and commanded by British officers. Other Western countries had placed an embargo on arms to the Jews in those tragic days. The Jewish People's Army—the Hagana—fought with weapons obtained from Czechoslovakia and with Messerschmidts brought as contraband from a hidden airfield in Czechoslovakia—hidden from the British Intelligence Service. In Poland, military training fields were built under the sponsorship of the Polish Government and equipped with legal Polish weapons. From these fields came an influx of trained Jewish fighters to help the Palmach and the People's Army. The spirit of the Soviet partisans in the war against the Nazis filled every Jewish warrior's heart in Israel with the same heroism. Kibbutz Negba, which stood firm against the Egyptian

invasion for half a year, was called "Negbagrad" after Stalingrad. The methods of Soviet warfare served as an example and as a symbol for the Jewish fighters.

On the international stage, Great Britain fought vigorously against the establishment of the Jewish State. In the U.S.A., Secretary of State George C. Marshall, a few hours before the Declaration of Independence was proclaimed by Prime Minister David Ben Gurion in the hall of the Museum of Tel Aviv on May 15, called in Moshe Sharett and warned him against the establishment of the State. All this happened months after the decision of the UN on partition of Palestine and the establishment of the Jewish State on November 29, 1947. The only state among the big powers to remain firm in its conviction that the State of Israel had to be brought into being for the persecuted people, as Andrei Gromyko said clearly, was the Soviet Union.

The State of Israel was admitted to the UN and proclaimed its policy as "non-identification." But less than a year afterwards the

Diplomacy, Mapai Style

Excerpts from the speech of Mr. Argov, Mapai Leader of the Coalition in the Knesset, on January 19, 1953.

"We have a long and a bitter account with the Soviet Union, an account with a regime of spiritual annihilation and national suppression."

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"They deprived them (the Jews) of the same rights which they gave to the half-savage tribes and the hands of this regime are dirty with blood, with murder, and annihilation."

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"The horror of this regime reached the peak of its terror in the blood libel against the Jewish doctors who are attached to a Jewish international organization."

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"They (the Jews) were tied to us before the Soviet regime came into being. They will be tied to us also after it ceases."

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Provisional Government of Israel was replaced by the coalition government of Mapai and the Religious Bloc which deserted neutrality and non-identification. The one-sided policy of one-sided identification became more and more evident. The development of its economy in this dependent direction,—based on foreign loans and grants-in-aid from the western world rather than on a healthy internal balance between a basic agriculture and a growing industrialization—followed.

The policy of the present government of Israel resulted in the complete desertion of non-identification and permitted itself entirely to become the tool of one side in the Cold War. In the last few weeks we have witnessed a tremendous campaign in Israel against the Soviet Union, led by official elements. These elements have turned the justifiable condemnation of the anti-Zionist, anti-Israel verdict of the Prague trial into a crusade of hatred against the Soviet Union. This is in full contradiction to the most elementary demands of Jewish-Zionist responsibility. The attack on the Soviet Legation by fascist elements in Israel took place in an atmosphere of hatred and slander. On the other side came the turning point—the serious turning point—in the attitude of the Soviet Union and the countries connected with it toward Zionism and Israel, which expressed itself in the attacks at the Prague trial and later, in Moscow publications.

These are the tragic links in the history of relations between the Soviet Union and Israel up to these dark days of the diplomatic break.

On March 10, 1949, Prime Minister Ben Gurion declared:

"If we will be an enemy of one side, we will be lost."

This timely warning and sensible declaration has been repudiated. It is difficult to find a parallel for the unbridled attacks against the U.S.S.R. which the heads of the government of Israel have permitted themselves to use. They have converted justified condemnation into hatred and villification. They are motivated less by Zionist and Jewish responsibility, political wisdom, concern for Jewish survival and for "The Ingathering of the Exiles" from all countries and regimes, than they are for more subjugation to foreign interests and their own hatred of the Soviet Union.

Not only the Moscow publications against the Jewish Nation (1952 Edition *U.S.S.R. Encyclopedia*), against Zionism, The State of Israel and Jewish philanthropic organizations accused

of being a ring of traitors, preceded the breaking off of diplomatic relations. We must be reminded that in the past few months in Israel, there took place several bombings before the attack on the Soviet Legation in Tel Aviv. A shop dealing in Russian books was blown up in Jerusalem and a bomb was thrown into the Czechoslovak Consulate before the bombing of the Legation. These terrorist acts were possible only in an atmosphere cultivated for and conducive to terrorism.

Now the situation of the State of Israel is of the utmost seriousness, particularly in this period when the blackmail crusade of the feudal Arab countries has become more violent and a policy of appeasement and arms sales to them by Great Britain and United States more evident. In this period the State of Israel has come to a blind wall and to dark isolation because of the disastrous policy of Mapai.

The Jewish people all over the world and all democratic and progressive forces cannot and will not accept as permanent the break between the Soviet Union and the State of Israel. The great historic statement which Gromyko proclaimed before the establishment of the State, the account of friendship and of help, will withstand the trials of our times. The vital historic interests of all our people all over the world cannot be identified with the passing and incorrect policies of the present government of Israel. The breaking off of diplomatic relations will not serve the purpose of strengthening the peace and the progressive forces in the Middle East. Therefore, the State of Israel and the Jewish people all over the world must again return to the policy of non-identification, must resist becoming a tool in the Cold War, must defend the Zionist realization and must stand with all their forces against the campaign of anti-Soviet hatred.

This is a most difficult path, but it is the only path on which the milestones carry signs marked not only "pain" and "wisdom" but also "Jewish survival" and "peace for Israel."



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