ABSTRACT

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St. Antony's College Hilary, 1991

BRITISH POLICY TOWARDS ISRAEL AND THE ARAB-ISRAELI DISPUTE 1951-1954

The object of this thesis is to undertake a research on British policy towards Israel, with the Arab-Israeli dispute as its principal subject, commencing with the return of the Conservatives to office in October 1951 and culminating at the end of 1954. Far from rigid, the starting-point of this study tends to revert, more often than not, to earlier dates in an attempt to lend greater coherence to the theme under scrutiny. It is suggested, though, that the period concerned is, to the extent that any historical period can be, a cohesively autonomous historical unit meriting detailed research. Although Britain's policy towards Israel and the Arab-Israeli dispute in the years 1948-1951 and 1955-1957 have elicited academic attention, the years under investigation, on their own, have, so far, been rather neglected.

Written from the perspective of a student of British diplomatic history, rather than that of an orientalist, this thesis questions the unidimensional assumption, based mainly upon the literature about the Suez Crisis of 1956 and its origins, that the British, and Eden in particular, were more sympathetic to the Arab States, if not altogether hostile to Israel, in the early nineteen-fifties.

The method adopted in the writing of this thesis is thematic rather than chronological. Six principle themes have been selected, with the introduction and

particularly the conclusion attempting to put the six chapters into a coherent whole. This thesis is based predominantly on the profusion of primary material available in the Public Record Office in London and the more modest quantity of documents in the Israel State Archives in Jerusalem.

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BRITISH POLICY TOWARDS ISRAEL AND THE ARAB-ISRAELI DISPUTE 1951-1954

The aim of this thesis is to study Britain's policy towards Israel, with the Arab-Israeli dispute as its main subject, between the return of the Conservative Party to office in October 1951 and the end of 1954. Far from rigid, the starting-point of this research tends to revert, more often than not, to earlier days to help emphasise a point, clarify an argument, and lend greater coherence to the theme under review. Nevertheless, it is argued that the period in question is, to the extent that any historical period can be, a distinctively autonomous historical unit, insofar as British policy towards Israel and the Arab-Israeli dispute is concerned, requiring academic attention on its own.

Thus, for instance, in September 1951 a new chapter opened insofar as the Egyptian blockade of the Suez Canal to shipping bound to and returning from Israel was concerned when a Security Council resolution called upon Egypt to lift its ban; the Suez Base Agreement of October 1954, in a way, closes this particular chapter. The interest displayed by the international community over Jerusalem became more acute during these years, as Israel announced in May 1952 that it would move its Foreign Ministry from Tel-Aviv to Jerusalem, an announcement which was followed the subsequent year by the transfer itself. During these years the Israel-Jordan frontier was beset, more than any other of Israel's borders, by continuous tension;

by the commencement of 1955, particularly with the Gaza Raid of February that year, the focus of international interest turned increasingly towards the Egyptian-Israeli border. The terms of an Arab-Israeli peace settlement which the Foreign Office in London was in favour of underwent a change of direction in the last month of 1954.

The years 1948-1951 having been thoroughly investigated and the years 1955-1957 being the subject of profound academic interest, the years under consideration in this thesis have not, on the other hand, been investigated on their own on the basis of the primary sources available. Indeed, this work has relied predominantly upon a detailed research of the existing primary material at the Public Record Office in London and the more modest amount of documents at the Israel State Archives in Jerusalem.

Written from the perspective of a student of British diplomatic history, rather than that of an orientalist, this thesis has been prompted by an assumption, founded mainly on the literature about the Suez Crisis of 1956 and its origins, that the British, and Eden in particular, were more favourably disposed towards the Arab States, if not altogether hostile to Israel, in the early nineteen-fifties. This was an assumption, it should be stressed, which derived from the depiction of the period by writers who, with the events of 1955-1957 at the forefront of their minds, appeared to grant the years under consideration scant autonomy, no distinctive character of their own; this period thus became a mere springboard for future events, its singularity absorbed by generalisations in an understandable quest for the needed historical background.

It became clear, though, that the impression thus conveyed was more unidimensional than a thorough research would have warranted. Thus, for instance, although apparently unsympathetic to the Israelis, indeed to Jews in general, Eden was Israel's most consistent supporter within the Foreign Office insofar as the question of arms sales was concerned. Furthermore, by the end of 1953 Eden was prepared to countenance a military alliance with Israel. Unenthusiastic though he was to lend his backing to an Israeli proposal to table a Security Council resolution on the Egyptian blockade of the Suez Canal to shipping *en route* to and from Israel in 1954, once it was decided, largely at the instigation of Churchill, to go along with it, Eden was in favour of drafting a strong and unambiguous resolution against the continued Egyptian ban. To be sure, Eden's interventions on behalf or to the advantage of Israel were motivated by considerations of a largely pragmatic nature, principally related to the internal, parliamentary scene.

Thus, however negatively disposed he may have been to the Israelis, there seems to be no evidence which would indicate that Eden shaped his policies on the basis of any adverse attitude he may have harboured about Israel or its people. Moreover, his alleged sympathy for the Arabs is not easily corroborated by the documentation available for the period in question. Indeed, it was Eden himself who, at the end of 1953, confided in his officials that he was "weary of the fickle friendship of the Arabs" - hardly a manifestation of an overly sympathetic attitude towards the Arabs. Whenever he advocated a policy favourable to the Arabs, Eden did so out of seemingly practical considerations, any expression of sympathy or emotional involvement not readily apparent.

To ascribe to the officials at the Foreign Office in the early nineteen-fifties a hostile disposition to Israel would be more of an oversimplification than to do so in regard to Eden himself. A detailed account of internal deliberations tends to demonstrate that as regards many of the cases reviewed in the context of this thesis the *attitude* adopted by the Foreign Office in London was, on the whole, more favourable to Israel's case than would have been apparent from the policy ultimately decided on.

Thus, although very critical of Israeli reprisal attacks across the Jordanian border, the Foreign Office in London regarded them as a manifestation of the problem besetting the frontier rather than its cause; the solution to it, the Foreign Office stressed, depended on Arab readiness to negotiate with, and accord recognition to, Israel - something the Arab States were believed to be, on the basis of the statements of their own leaders, utterly averse to. Nevertheless, in the wake of the Israeli raid on the Jordanian village of Qybia on the night of 14-15 October, 1953, the Foreign Office refused to introduce into a proposed Security Council resolution which was intended to condemn Israel for the attack a clause calling for peace negotiations, as it feared, most particularly, that by so doing it might incur the wrath of the Arabs.

Further, Egypt's blockade of the Suez Canal to shipping on its way from and to Israel found scant support among officials at the Foreign Office who deemed the Israeli case in this regard as fundamentally right. A diplomatic protest was lodged early in 1951 to the Egyptian Government and Britain was instrumental in passing a Security Council resolution in September condemning Egypt for its ban. However, following the return of the Conservative Party to office, Foreign Office diplomats

argued for a diplomatic lull. They believed that priority had to be accorded to perceived Arab susceptibilities and specially to the British-Egyptian negotiations concerning the future of the military base in the Canal zone; it was thought that raising the issue of the Egyptian blockade would be an unwelcome intrusion which might provoke unfavourable reactions in Egypt as well as in other parts of the Arab world.

When Israel announced in May 1952 that it would transfer its Foreign Ministry from Tel-Aviv to Jerusalem, the view prevailing at the Foreign Office in London was that the British Legation would have to follow suit and move there as well. However, it took the Israeli Government more than a year until the Foreign Ministry was finally established in Jerusalem. By that time, though, officials at the Foreign Office had concluded that the Embassy would have to remain in Tel-Aviv as any other course of action might provoke Arab anger. This decision, it should be emphasised, was not prompted by a *principled* opposition to the Israeli move. The Foreign Office recognised the Israeli-held sector of Jerusalem as belonging to Israel *de facto*, and contended that following an Arab-Israeli peace agreement Israel's presence should be accorded *de jure* recognition. The transfer of Israel's Foreign Ministry to Jerusalem seemed to have been seen as an irritating distraction rather than a challenge to the status that, according to the Foreign Office, *should* prevail in that part of the City.

The terms of an Arab-Israeli settlement that the Foreign Office in London espoused in the early nineteen-fifties were much closer to those presented by Israel than to those advanced by the Arab States. Diplomats in London envisaged a

future peaceful Middle East which included in it a State of Israel within its *status quo* borders, with some minor modifications, enjoying full diplomatic and economic relations with its Arab neighbours. Indeed, the widely-held view at the Foreign Office was that Israel was the more reasonable side, more seemingly desirous of peace than its neighbours, the territorial dimension and the nature of neighbourly relations that its vision of peace entailed deemed more logical and acceptable. The assessment in London was, though, that any peace initiative launched by Britain would inevitably have to involve a strong element of pressure, particularly directed at the Arab States, which would render the whole exercise counter-productive as it was expected to produce an adverse effect in the Arab world.

In the realm of defence, on account of its geographic location, its perceived political attributes and the quality of its armed forces Israel was regarded by the British as an important factor in their defence policy in the Middle East. Although at first the intention of officials at the Foreign Office was to endeavour to integrate Israel as an *active* actor in Britain's defence strategy in the region, with the passage of time, and owing primarily, though doubtless not exclusively, to susceptibilities to Arab opinion, a decision was reached to reserve to it a *passive* role, to be rendered active only in time of need.

Views prevailing among British diplomats as regards the Arab-Israeli dispute in the early nineteen-fifties were hardly monolithic. Whereas Britain's envoys serving in Arab countries were, on the whole, inclined to advocate a pro-Arab-policy, the diplomats in Tel-Aviv tended to entertain an understanding, indeed on occasion sympathetic, attitude towards Israel's basic case. This divergence of views

was acutely reflected in the clash involving Sir John Troutbeck, Britain's Ambassador in Iraq and perhaps the most ardent supporter of the Arab cause, and Sir Francis Evans, the British Representative in Israel, who urged the Foreign Office in London, principally on moral grounds, to resist the former's recommendations that Britain should adopt a distinctively favourable policy vis-a-vis the Arabs. Officials at the Foreign Office were more sympathetic to Evans' stance in this regard, needing though scant persuasion to reject any idea of pursuing a markedly pro-Arab line.

The method adopted in the writing of this thesis is thematic rather than chronological. Six principal themes have been selected, each, in a sense, distinctive in substance as well as in structure. The first chapter dwells upon the images and attitudes entertained by British politicians and diplomats towards Israel and the Arab States, Jews/Israelis and Arabs, both as individuals and as a collective, as well as the images and attitudes prevalent in Israel vis-a-vis Britain and British institutions. An attempt is made in this context to ascertain to what extent images entertained reflected policies advocated. The second chapter deals with the stance taken by British officials in relation to the tension bedeviling the Jordan-Israel border and the policy adopted in the light of, among other considerations, Britain's pledge, under the terms of the British-Jordanian defence treaty, to come to Jordan's defence in the eventuality of war. The third chapter concentrates on the Egyptian ban to shipping *en route* to and from Israel passing through the Suez Canal, a major commercial waterway, and the response of the British, who maintained an eighty-thousand strong military base in the Canal zone. The fourth chapter studies the policy undertaken by Britain as regards the singularly contentious question of

the status of Jerusalem and Israel's decision to transfer its Foreign Ministry to Jerusalem : the latter is followed in detail so as to convey to the reader the extent to which British policy in this respect became, depending on one's point of view, admirably consistent or absurdly impractical. The fifth chapter reveals the terms of settlement which the Foreign Office considered as ideal and the attitudes prevailing among British diplomats, in London as well as in the Middle East, as to whether Britain ought to adopt an active peace policy. The sixth chapter traces the evolution of British thinking regarding the role that Israel should be accorded in the context of Britain's defence strategy in the Middle East, where Britain was the predominant external military power, at a time a Soviet attack was, to a greater or lesser extent, constantly feared. The introduction and particularly the conclusion attempt to put the six chapters into a coherent whole.

BRITISH POLICY TOWARDS ISRAEL AND THE ARAB-ISRAELI DISPUTE 1951-1954

by

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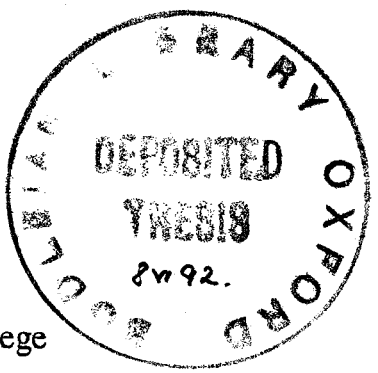

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INTRODUCTION

"'It is very difficult to remember that events now in the past were once far in the future'"
(F.W. Maitland)[1]

The aim of this thesis is to study Britain's policy towards Israel, with the Arab-Israeli dispute as its principal theme, from the return of the Conservative Party to office in October 1951 to the end of 1954. This period, it is argued, is, in a sense, distinctive in its historical cohesiveness, separate, in a way, both from the preceding and subsequent years insofar as British policy towards Israel and the Arab-Israel dispute is concerned. It is contended that the autonomy thus ascribed to this period should eschew the temptation to ignore its singularity or to regard it as a mere preface of future events; a temptation not always resisted by scholars dealing with this area of study.

In his doctoral thesis on British policy towards the Arab-Israeli dispute between the years 1948-1951, Dr Ilan Pappe, for instance, reveals that the Israelis conveyed information to the British about the proceedings of secret negotiations that took place in 1950 between representatives of Jordan and Israel - information that was withheld from the British by their erstwhile ally King Abdallah of Jordan who had grown mistrustful of them. "This reversal of Israeli and Jordanian attitudes towards Britain", asserts Dr Pappe, "was the beginning of military understanding between the two countries culminating in the joint operation in 1956."[2] Thus, the origins of the British-Israeli military cooperation during the Suez Crisis, Dr Pappe seems to argue, could be traced back to 1950. Indeed, in a similar vein, upon being

apprised of the title of this thesis, certain people used to enquire, in an almost instinctual manner, as the research was still in progress, whether this writer was endeavouring to trace the origins of the Suez Crisis of 1956.

The tendency to subordinate historical events to a particularly outstanding episode that occurred in the past, the urge to find out a clearly defined starting-point to it, the desire to be able to delineate a coherent historical process leading to it - these are all understandable, and on occasion justifiable. The peril entailed in this kind of intellectual exercise, though, is that events are denuded of their historical autonomy and individuals are ascribed a role they could not actually assume. The Israeli diplomat forwarding information to the British in 1950 about the secret Jordanian-Israeli negotiations played no role whatsoever in the eventual military cooperation between Israel and Britain. Not only was he entirely unaware that such cooperation was to occur six years ahead, but, more importantly, the events he was involved in shaping bore no relation at all to it. To claim otherwise would be as persuasive as contending that the issuing of the Balfour Declaration in November 1917 initiated a process of cooperation between Britain and the Zionist Movement leading inexorably to the joint military enterprise of 1956. A British official dealing with the Middle East in 1951 would have found the idea of military cooperation with Israel plausible; his counterpart in the latter part of 1954 much less so. Both would have been surprised had they been told that Britain and Israel would have coordinated an attack upon an Arab country. For, whether desirous of, or averse to, cooperation with Israel in the domain of defence, the Foreign Office and the Military in Britain in the early nineteen-fifties conceived of only one enemy they shared in common with Israel: the Soviet Union. Certainly, the

possibility of Britain participating in an armed conflict involving Israel and an Arab state was discussed throughout this period. But these discussions were centred on the possibility of a Jordanian-Israeli war. The role anticipated for Britain, however, on account of its Treaty of Alliance with Jordan of 1948, was as a *foe* of Israel; the scenario envisaged, certainly by 1954, a military onslaught upon it.

Thus, to attempt to trace the origins of the coordinated military venture undertaken by Britain and Israel in 1956 to *any* given moment or *any* particular incident throughout the period under consideration, let alone prior to it, would be according human imagination more leeway than may be deemed prudent. Similarly, to depict these years, 1951-1954, as a single, faceless historical unit with no *raison d'etre* of their own, to render them a stage, as it were, for a future major event, would be to defer to fiction more than strictly necessary.

This thesis contends, therefore, that the period commencing with the return to office of the Conservative Party in October 1951 and culminating at the end of 1954 is, to the extent that any historical period can be, a cohesively autonomous historical chapter, insofar as Britain's policy towards Israel and the Arab-Israeli dispute is concerned. Not fixed and immovable, the starting-point of this thesis does, on occasion, revert to earlier days whenever such exercise is considered necessary to help illustrate a point or enlighten an argument. This flexibility notwithstanding, the distinctiveness of this period is reflected in its apparent general coherence.

Thus, in September 1951 a new chapter opened insofar as the Egyptian blockade of the Suez Canal to shipping bound to and returning from Israel was concerned when a Security Council resolution called upon Egypt to lift its ban; the Suez Base Agreement of October 1954, in a way, closes this particular chapter. During these years the Israeli-Jordanian border, more than any other of Israel's frontiers, was bedeviled by continuous tension; by the outset of 1955, particularly with the Gaza Raid of February that year, the focus of international attention turned increasingly towards the Egyptian-Israeli frontier. This period witnessed an evolution in British strategic thinking as regards Israel's place in Britain's defence policy in the Middle East, which by the second half of 1954 reached its conclusion. The terms of a peace settlement between Israel and the Arab States which the Foreign Office deemed ideal appeared to have changed direction in the last month of 1954. The interest in the status of Jerusalem displayed by the international community hightened during these years, following Israel's announcement in 1952 that it would transfer its Foreign Ministry from Tel-Aviv to Jerusalem, an announcement which was followed the subsequent year by the move itself.

This thesis has been written, to quote A.J.P. Taylor, "in order to satisfy my historical curiosity."[3] It has been prompted by a desire to answer a simple query: was Britain pro-Arab or pro-Israel? As originally put, this question entailed a certain element of bias, since the impression that this writer had gained, to a large extent by the literature on the Suez Crisis and its origins, was that the Foreign Office, and Eden in particular, had in the early nineteen fifties been better disposed towards the Arab States, if not altogether hostile to Israel. The years prior to 1951

having been investigated and the years 1955-1957 being the subject of intense academic interest, it became clear that this particular period had elicited limited attention *on its own.* Convinced of the distinctive character of the years in question so far as British policy towards Israel and the Arab-Israeli dispute was concerned, and of the need to investigate this period in its own right, the urge to embark on this project was as simple as the query that had ignited it. As it was to become apparent, though, the answer which would emerge would be less simple than the question that had been posed. To begin with, it became necessary to dwell upon main themes rather than follow a simple chronological pattern. For, each theme selected, in a way, provided a singular response of its own. The absolute answer was hard to come by. The temptation for the unequivocal generalisation was tempered by the complexity of the subject. Certain questions raised could be satisfied by simple assertions; the original, basic one, however, could not. Cautiously and with due reservation, a general conclusion could nevertheless be drawn. Thus, dinstinctive as each chapter is in terms of the subject it deals with, there is a common theme which emerges on occasion, whether explicitly expressed or implicitly conveyed, namely that Israel's basic case enjoyed in certain instances considerable support at the Foreign Office. This *attitude*, though, was translated into *policy* only insofar as circumstances were deemed to be propitious or perceived British interests not feared to be placed in jeopardy.

Indeed, this thesis does not confine its attention to the policies that were executed but attempts also to dwell upon the attitudes of policy-makers, whether eventually implemented as policy or not. To some extent it could be argued that Britain's policy towards Israel and the Arab-Israeli dispute in the years under

consideration is characterised more by policies that were discarded rather than implemented.

As has already been alluded to above, the method adopted in writing this thesis is thematic rather than chronological. Six principle themes have been selected. To begin with, the thesis examines the images and attitudes that prevailed among British officials and politicians vis-a-vis Israel and the Arab States, Israelis/Jews and Arabs, as individuals as well as a collective, and, on the other hand, the images and attitudes entertained by their Israeli counterparts in regard to Britain. An attempt is also made in this context to dwell upon the relationship between images portrayed and policies advocated, and the extent to which one reflected the other. The second chapter studies British attitudes towards the tension along the Jordanian-Israeli border and the policies Britain adopted in the light of, among other things, its Treaty of Alliance with Jordan under which it was pledged to come to the latter's defence in the eventuality of war. The third chapter surveys the blockade imposed by Egypt of the Suez Canal, a vital commercial waterway, to world shipping *en route* from and to Israel and the stance taken by Britain, which maintained a large military base in the Canal zone. The fourth chapter deals with the singularly contentious question of the status of Jerusalem, then a city separated by barbed-wire between a Jordanian controlled part and an Israeli-held area, and the views prevailing within the British Government as to its future, as well as with the response to Israel's decision to transfer its Foreign Ministry from Tel-Aviv to Jerusalem. The fifth chapter reveals the terms for an eventual Arab-Israeli settlement which the Foreign Office used to espouse during the years in question, and refers to the internal deliberations that took place as to whether Britain should

pursue an active peace policy. The last chapter of this thesis traces the evolution of British thinking pertaining to the role that Israel should be accorded in the context of Britain's defence strategy in the Middle East, where Britain was the predominant external military power, at a time a Soviet attack was, to a greater or a lesser extent, seriously feared. It also discusses in this respect the considerations shaping Britain's arms sales policy to the region. The Conclusion puts the six chapters into a coherent whole.

A research on this particular topic based on the primary material available has not previously been undertaken.[4] The immediate years preceding it have been well served by three particular works. The *tour de force* by Roger Louis, The British Empire in the Middle East, 1945-1951. Ilan Pappe's impressive doctoral thesis, British Foreign Policy towards the Middle East 1948-1951: Britain and the Arab-Israeli Conflict, which reveals, among other things, how the bitter relationship between Britain and the Zionist Movement which characterised the last years of the Mandate was replaced, in the wake of the establishment of the State of Israel, by a gradually improving relationship, paradoxically under the stewardship of Ernest Bevin, widely regarded as anti-Zionist. And, Avi Shlaim's Collusion Across the Jordan, a comprehensive book which argues that King Abdallah of Trans-Jordan and the Zionist Movement secretly carved up the territory of Western Palestine at the expense of the Palestinian Arabs with British acquiescence.

Based predominantly on the profusion of primary material available in the Public Record Office in London and the more modest quantity of documents in the Israel State Archives in Jerusalem, this thesis has been written from the perspective

of a student of British diplomatic history and not of an orientalist. The focus of attention is upon British policy towards Israel with the Arab-Israeli dispute as its principal subject. As for the approach adopted: whenever possible, the protagonists are allowed to speak for themselves, as their own words are able to do so better than the historian can on their own behalf. To be sure, what they say is studied with a critical eye, clarified whenever necessary, analysed as dispassionately as possible. The object is to comprehend how the diplomats and politicians shaping policy perceived reality, and acted accordingly, and not to impose one's own world view upon them. And to do so by relaying, whenever possible, their own account of how they perceived reality, their own reasons for their consequent actions. The historian has the benefit of being able to discern the detail left out by the diplomat or politician concerned, of being able to grasp the whole picture ignored by him or her; and if deemed necessary, of conveying them to his or her readers. What should not be forgotten, however, is that the protagonist in question, the diplomat or politician under scrutiny, was, both as an individual and as part of a nation, endowed with an unknown future not less than we are.

A legacy left to a student of British diplomatic history of this period by the Foreign Office's diplomats involved in shaping it is, beyond the opinions they entertained and the policies they advocated, beyond the attitudes they adopted and the images they portrayed, an aesthetic one : the intellectual pleasure one derives from reading their letters and their minutes owes as much to style as to content. Language is at the core of the message itself, and as such it relays the message more attractively. The elegance of their language, the coherence of their analysis, the clarity of their thoughts, are their bequest to future generations which, more

than it represents an invaluable historical evidence it constitutes a precious literary expression of a generation of British diplomats who, their failings notwithstanding, left their distinctive mark upon the art of diplomacy - with equal emphasis on the first as on the latter - for us to observe, study and delight in.

FOOTNOTES

1. Quoted in A.J.P. Taylor, "Fiction in History", Essays in English History. (Penguin Books, Middlesex, 1976, Reprint 1984) p.13.

2. Ilan Pappe, British Foreign Policy towards the Middle East 1948-1951: Britain and the Arab-Israeli Conflict (D.Phil Thesis, June 1984, Oxford).

3. A.J.P. Taylor, The Origins of the Second World War (Penguin Books, Middlesex, 1964, Reprint 1985) p.7.

4. A serious general review of the Arab-Israeli dispute between 1951 and 1954 could be found in the Royal Institute of International Affairs' Survey of International Affairs respectively for each of the years in question. Britain's policy in the Middle East in these years is covered in Elizabeth Monroe's Britain's Moment in the Middle East 1914-1971, (Chatto, London, 1963), a book written by an orientalist of high repute. A highly readable personal account of Israel's foreign policy in this period is provided by the first Director-General of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, Walter Eytan, in his The First Ten Years. A Diplomatic History of Israel, (Simon and Schuster, New York, 1958). The United States policy towards the Middle East in the years under consideration is followed in The United States in World Affairs, respectively for each separate year, published by the Council on Foreign Relations. Specifically United States policy towards Israel and the Arab-Israeli dispute is engagingly analysed in Margot Singer's M.Phil thesis, Difficult Friends : United States Policy Toward Israel and the Arab-Israeli Conflict 1953-1956, (University of Oxford, Oxford, 28 April 1986), which covers only partly the period under review in this thesis. The Foreign Office and its workings in the nineteen-fifties are studied by the former Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, Sir William Strang, in his The Foreign Office, (George Allen and Unwin, London, 1955). The Foreign Office and the shaping of Britain's policy under Eden's leadership in the years covered by this research work is investigated by Anthony Adamthwaite in his article, "Overstretched and Overstrung: Eden, the Foreign Office and the Making of Policy 1951-5", International Affairs, Vol 64, No 2, Spring 1988.

CHAPTER ONE :

ON IMAGES AND ATTITUDES

The image of the State of Israel that prevailed within the Eastern Department of the Foreign Office[1] at the time of the Conservative Party's victory in the General Election of October 1951 was, as its officials conveyed it to the newly appointed Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden, one of a country that was"comparatively stable politically" but which was beset by "grave and increasing economic troubles". Israel's populace was attributed with the qualities of "determination and discipline" which, coupled with "the skill displayed by her rulers", were believed to indicate that Israel would "somehow avoid collapse". In contrast, the Arab States were deemed to be "all politically immature". Power in those States, Eden was told by his officials,

> is concentrated in the hands of a limited ruling class, who are for the most part reactionary and corrupt and whose irresponsibility and personal rivalries create perpetual political instability and are responsible for a generally low standard of administration.[2]

Following his arrival in Israel at the beginning of 1952, where he was to serve as Britain's envoy for close to three years (first as Minister and from September 1952, when the Legation in Tel-Aviv was elevated to the status of Embassy, as Ambassador), Sir Francis Evans, who had previously served mostly in consular posts in the United States, wrote a fascinating account of his first impressions of Israel which he wanted to share with his Foreign Secretary and his colleagues back in London.

To begin with, he found Israel, and particularly Tel-Aviv, quite familiar. They were, as he put it, "definitely of the West". Drawing upon his United States' experience, he compared Israel with the southern part of California. "The

similarities", he claimed, "are largely physical". The terrain, the climate and in part the architecture of the former reminded him of those of the latter. But it was in the human domain where he encountered similarities which inspired him to articulate, in an exquisitely vivid language, a particularly colourful analogy.

> There is here, as in Southern California, the mingling of many races. For the now almost vestigial Californian Spanish stock there are the dwindling Arabs; for the Mexicans and the East Indians, the industrious cultivators of the Imperial Valley, there are the Yemenites, attacking the barren wastes of the southern desert. For the old and conservative settlers of Los Angeles City and its satellites, there are the commercial and professional German Jews. For the bustling, driving, optimistic 'boosters' of Southern California there are the zealous, enthusiastic, and no less optimistic Russian Zionists of Israel. There is throughout both areas a spirit of adventure, of purpose, of determined and hopeful upbuilding, coupled with an intense - perhaps an inordinate - pride of achievement.

He acknowledged, almost in an apologetic vein, that "these comments are generalizations, but the comparisons are irrestible".

Widening his analogy and applying it to the more general United States scene, Evans maintained that, similarly to that country there was to be found in Israel a "frank and assertive equalitarianism" which manifested itself in the "classnessness" and in the "apparent materialism" of the society. As in the United States, he detected in Israel a "forceful and sometimes ruthless way in which political objectives are pursued", though he added that, "so far at least", there prevailed "a refreshing lack of the corruption endemic in American political life". Indeed, similarly to the Eastern Department, he depicted Israel's political leadership in laudable terms, believeing it to be "strong, of good spirit, and confident of ultimate success." And, looking to the future, he was hopeful that "Israel's Government

during the critical period of the State's consolidation will be stable, moderate, and constructive".[3]

Evans may have further reinforced the contrasting image as between Israel and the Arab States entertained by his colleagues at the Eastern Department when, a year subsequent to the above letter, he stressed "the honesty and general wholesomeness of the principles under which the country is governed".[4] To be sure, Israel was regarded by the British diplomats serving in Tel-Aviv not only as a *sui generis* phenomenon in the context of the Middle East but, beyond it, as "exceptional among Mediterranean Countries".[5] Indeed, Israel conveyed the impression, so they argued, of being "semi-European"; a country which was nevertheless "in a state of rapid transition". For, although its present rulers, Ashkenasi Jews from Poland and Russia, were deemed to be "determined, able, serious and idealistic", and although banking and commerce was mostly in the hands of Jewish refugeees from Nazi Germany, Israel was facing a potentially radical change to its demographic character. The mass of immigrants which had flooded the State since 1948 from Eastern Europe, Iraq, Yemen, and North Africa, "many of whom are poor, uneducated, diseased and backward" had created a "polyglot population" of widely differing "educational standards and idealistic outlooks". The future chartered by the British diplomats in Israel was of a nation whose,

> Links with the West and with the Jews of the Diaspora will become less important and [which] is likely to be tough, nationalistic and much less efficient than the United States or Western Europe, though much more so than the neighbouring Arab States.[6]

But Christopher Gandy, of the Middle East Secretariat at the Foreign Office, believed that "Israel will remain for many years at any rate a psychologically European state", which, in his opinion, would be "able to judge her own interests more or less objectively".[7]

Prior to taking up his new post as Ambassador in Israel in the latter part of 1954, Evans' successor, John Nicholls, whose previous posting abroad had been in Moscow, had formed an image of the state he was to serve in, as the Counsellor at the Israeli Embassy in London, Gershon Avner, reported following a meeting with him, as a free country "which had a very politically conscious population" and where it was possible to "mix freely with the people and talk to everybody without let or hindrance".[8]

The attitude adopted by Foreign Office diplomats towards Israel differed, according to Israel's Ambassador in Britain, Eliahu Elath, depending on whether they belonged to what he termed "the younger generation" or the generation which had been connected with the policies of Ernest Bevin. The former, Elath asserted, had become "accustomed to treat Israel quite simply as a State in esse and not as 'a rebellious colony'". He went on to elaborate thus:

> Among the younger Foreign Office people, even those from a public-school, Tory, environment, there has been noticeable in recent years a growing social consciousness, which has facilitated their approach to Israel [...] these younger men are able to understand - and even to look with favour on - many things about Israel which the older generation found alien and unsympathetic.[9]

Evelyn Shuckburgh, Principal Private Secretary to Anthony Eden from 1951

to 1954, appointed as Assistant Under Secretary responsible for Middle Eastern affairs in the latter part of 1954, may well have been deemed by Elath to have belonged to the Bevinite generation.[10] His attitudes would most probably have been identified by the Israeli Ambassador with that group of Foreign Office officials. For Shuckburgh believed, as he wrote in his diary on 26 June 1955, "that the State of Israel was founded, both from the Jewish and from the Western point of view, on a false premise and in unnatural, impermament conditions".[11] Although there is no explicit evidence indicating Shuckburgh held this view prior to the aforementioned date, an indirect clue is nevertheless provided, making it clear that he had held it over a period of time: The entry in his diary was a comment resulting from a special course Shuckburgh had been attending at Cambridge on Middle Eastern affairs which, as he confided to his diary, had "*confirmed* [my italics] my feeling that the State of Israel...". In other words, he used to entertain a "feeling" which was subsequently confirmed by what he heard in the course. This "feeling" had thus emerged *prior* to the date of the above entry. Whether it could be traced back to the period of this study must remain though an unanswered query.

Beyond the Foreign Office, on the highest political level, Shuckburgh's attitude would have been dismissed out of hand by the Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, a passionate Zionist who considered the establishment of the State of Israel "as one of the most hopeful and encouraging adventures of the 20th Century."[12] Only eight months subsequent to the proclamation of the State of Israel Churchill suggested to the House of Commons that

> "The coming into being of a Jewish State in Palestine is an event in world history to be viewed in the perspective not of a generation or a century, but

in the perspective of a thousand, two thousand or even three thousand years'[13]

To Elath he said, as the former recorded in a letter sent to Israel's President, Chaim Weizmann, that "'the setting-up of our State [...] ranked as a great event in the history of mankind'", adding a personal note to the effect that "'he was proud of his own contribution towards it'"[14]

Churchill himself used to trace his Zionism back to the days of the Balfour Declaration[15], describing himself as "an old Zionist".[16] Referring to the years prior to 1945, the historian Bernard Wasserstein argues that "No British statesman had a more consistent and more emphatic record of [...] support for Zionism as a solution to the Jewish problem than Winston Churchill".[17] Indeed, Churchill's friend, Bernard Baruch, related how, at the beginning of 1946, Churchill had been trying to convert *him*, a Jew by birth and conviction, to Zionism...[18] Churchill's attitude towards Zionism remained as passionate and as explicit in the early nineteen-fifties as ever before. Now, however, with the State of Israel in existence, the images he entertained became perhaps more vivid, more colourful, though as ever imbued with historical resonance. Thus, for instance, in reply to a question posed to him by a journalist while on an official visit to the United States, in June 1954, Churchill stated that "I am a Zionist, let me make that clear. I was one of the original ones after the Balfour Declaration and I have worked faithfully for it". This was merely the introduction. He went on:

> I think it is a most wonderful thing that this community should have established itself so effectively, turning the desert into fertile gardens and thriving townships and should have afforded refuge to millions of their co-religionists who suffered so fearfully under Hitler, and not only under Hitler, persecution. I think it is a wonderful thing.[19]

In a conversation with Elath Churchill referred to Israel's population, as the Ambassador himself later recorded, as "'the sons of the prophets dwelling in Zion'".[20]

Churchill's attitude towards Zionism and the State of Israel was distinctively positive, the images he entertained bordering on the romantic. In this respect Churchill had no equal among British politicians and officials in the early nineteen-fifties. True, British diplomats serving in Tel-Aviv tended to hold a sympathetic attitude towards Israel. Indeed, Evans himself, as his analogy with the United States so singularly demonstrated, portrayed, at least in the aftermath of this arrival in Israel, no less a poetically picturesque image of Israel than Churchill did. But the imagery he conveyed, the sympathy he and his colleagues at the Embassy in Tel-Aviv displayed, were apparently devoid of the same profoundly *emotional* dimension which so pervaded Churchill's attitude. Churchill's images were not descriptive. They were not primarily intended to depict reality. They were expressions of sentiment - vivid, colourful, passionate, perhaps somewhat romantic, but no less genuine and potent on that account.

In contrast to Churchill, Eden has earned the by-now almost universal reputation among historians of being unsympathetic to Zionism and the State of Israel. In his critical biography, David Carlton, refers to Eden's "long-standing anti-

Zionist attitudes".[21] Introducing his readers to his study of the Suez Crisis of 1956, Hugh Thomas stresses the fact that "Eden personally had always been closely identified with the Arab cause in the past".[22] Russell Braddon, in his own contribution to the subject, similarly asserts that "Eden had always been pro-Arab",[23] further alluding to Eden's knowledge of, and sympathy for, the Arabs.[24] Confining himself to the War Years, 1939-1945, Wasserstein contends that "Eden was not a Zionist" and alleges that he did not "have a notable predilection for Jews". He quotes Oliver Harvey, Eden's Private Secretary, saying that "'unfortunately A.E. [Anthony Eden] is immovable on the subject of Palestine. He loves Arabs and hates Jews'". Eden himself, Wassestein tells us, acknowledged to Harvey that "'if we must have preferences, let me murmur in your ear that I prefer Arabs to Jews'".[25]

The evidence available for the years 1951-1954 tends to depict a somewhat more complex, less unidimensional picture of Eden's attitude than that conveyed by Carlton, Thomas and Braddon, or that to be inferred from Wasserstein's account. Among the profusion of documents at the Public Record Office there is to be found an indirect, though it could be suggested rather conclusive, reference revealing Eden's unsympathetic attitude towards Israel. In response to a telegram sent by the Head of the British Middle East Office, Sir John Sterndale-Bennett, in which opposition was expressed to a proposed sale of Centurion tanks to Israel, Eden wrote to his officials at the Foreign Office

> This man is always passionately anti-Israel *he makes me sympathetic to them* [my italics][26]

Apart from this single comment from which it could be inferred that Eden was basically not positively disposed towards Israel, there is to be found a further remark advanced by Eden which could be interpreted as being of an anti-Jewish character. When, in November 1954, Israel made it known to the British Government that it would be interested in discussing concrete measures by which Britain would honour its pledge under the Tripartite Declaration (signed by Britain, the United States and France on 25 May, 1950, it stipulated that the signatories would take action against either the Arab States or Israel should an attempt be made to forcibly alter the existing boundaries) to come to Israel's assistance in the event of an Arab attack, Eden warned his officials that "*the Jews are adept at asking for more* [my italics]."[27]

However, the image that Eden came to entertain of the Arabs in this period, was hardly favourable. Indeed, as he was contemplating by the end of December 1953 the possibility of a military alliance with Israel, Eden confided in his officials that

> *I am weary of the fickle friendship of the Arabs* [my italics][28]

So far as it is possible to ascertain, there is no evidence indicating that Eden shaped his *policies* on Israel on the basis of any negative *attitude* that he might have harboured about it or its people. As a matter of fact, on certain issues, like arms sales for instance, Eden became Israel's greatest advocate within the Foreign Office. His pro-Israeli *stance*, though, did not stem from a pro-Israeli *attitude*; rather, it was a reflection of political considerations, or a corollary of internal

pressures at work, or an expression of a wider objective which indirectly tended to benefit Israel. Motives notwithstanding, there could be little doubt that *without* Eden the Foreign Office would have adopted, in certain respects, a less favourable policy towards Israel than it actually did.

The image entertained by Foreign Office diplomats of Israelis and Jews was itself hardly unidimensional. Among the British diplomats serving in Israel in 1952 the Jews were collectively perceived as "an intelligent, persistent and tough people". And, although

> In the past [...] they had always shown themselves to be ruthless and determined bargainers who give little away, they have often shown themselves to be faithful and reliable once they have made their agreement and given their trust.

"The Jew at his best", they believed, "can be a great and valuable friend".[29] James Wardrop, of the Eastern Department, regarded the Israelis as "a proud and independent people".[30] Evans, for his part, seemed to discern a virture in the Jew which came accompanied by a defect: The Jew, Evans contended, "values and respects tolerance" but at the same time he was "too often intolerant himself".[31] Evans saw the Israelis as "dynamic and in large part efficient and courageous - though in many cases timorous - but also emotional, unstable, impatient."[32]

Indeed, critical appraisals of the Jew and the Israeli were articulated by many a diplomat throughout the early nineteen-fifties. Evans' predecessor in Tel-Aviv, Sir Knox Helm, not known for his hostile disposition towards Israel, thought that the

Jews had a tradition "of never being satisfied."[33] He defined the Israelis as "infinitely touchy and inferiority-complexed".[34] Hubert Pullar, of the Eastern and subsequently the Levant Departments, an official who professed to be favourably inclined toward Israel's case,[35] maintained that "the Israelis are far too obstinate and devoted to their point of view."[36]

Some negative comments were mitigated by explanatory arguments of an historical nature. Thus, Geoffrey Baker, of the Eastern Department, wrote that "in my short acquaintance with Israelis I have already noticed their *mania* [my italics] for self-justification, *born no doubt of centuries of oppression* [my italics]"[37]. Jewish historical experience, however, was also made use of - though in a rather indirect vein - to support much more questionable explanations. In his endeavour to comprehend what motivated Israeli retaliatory attacks against Jordan in the early nineteen-fifties, the British Head of the Arab Legion in Jordan, Glubb Pasha, suggested that

> Perhaps the explanation is that the Jews have a psychological impulse to use force. Persons or nations who have suffered persecution or who have long been slaves, long to inflict the same hardship on others. The Jews, so long scorned and oppressed, have to prove to themselves that they are not inferior to other races and that they themselves can kill, and smash and crush to powder.

Glubb concluded this enlightening exercise in social psychology by stressing

> that the Jews suffer under a sub-conscious urge to smash and kill defenceless people, as a compensation for all they have suffered.[38]

The Head of the Levant Department, Paul Falla, who thought Glubb's explanation merited serious reading by his colleagues at the Foreign Office, argued that "*there may well be some truth* [my italics]" in it.[39]

The Jews as a people were seen by some British diplomats as a single unit, wielding power in a coordinated mode, somewhat reminiscent of the image depicted in the Protocols of the Elders of Zion. Thus, the Head of the British Middle East Office, Sir Thomas Rapp, dwelling upon a scenario whereby an Arab-Israeli war might erupt, referred to the consequent difficulty in apportioning blame to either of the warring sides. He stressed that

> this will be particularly true if the Jews decide to try conclusions with the Arabs, as their deception plans, *not to mention their influence with the world press, radio, etc, will successfully mask their deliberate aims* [my italics][40]

Insofar as the Arab-Israeli dispute was concerned, Rapp argued that Britain was bound to side with the Arab States as

> our vital interests [...], generally speaking, lie decisively with the Arabs rather than the Jews, *notwithstanding any fears of 'the whole publicity machine of world Jewry', of which Frank Evans suffered the full fury in New York* [my italics. The reference here is to Evans' previous posting in New York][41]

In contrast to Rapp, though, Evans argued against abandoning Israel to curry favour with the Arabs. Should Britain throw the Israelis over, Evans envisaged that

> The first reaction of the Israeli Government would probably be to turn entirely to the United States for support. *To this end they would mobilise the whole*

> *publicity machine of world Jewry in a campaign against what would be described as British perfidy* [my italics][42]

Emphasising Israel's sense of vulnerability and his own personal estimate of the necessity of achieving peace with the Arabs, Evans urged his Government to pursue an active peace policy, as he feared otherwise a resumption of hostilities between Israel and the Arab States. He argued that a campaign mounted by Britian subsequent to such a war aimed at persuading world opinion to compel Israel to withdraw from its present borders would probably fail "given the vacillations of United States policy and *the political influence of world Jewry* [my italics]"[43]

The perception of the Jewish people as an organic unit was apparently more widely shared. Based on his own experiences in Britain, Elath, for one, commented "how the goyim [gentiles] accept, almost without thinking, the unity of the Jewish people."[44] The question under consideration, though, is not merely related to the perception of the Jews as a cohesive, single entity. It is more than that. It is about the irrational conception of the Jews, wielding power in a concerted manner, world-wide, paralysing any opposition; an almost mysterious force being mobilised from Israel, its present nerve-centre, in the different directions of the globe, with devastating effect. This is nothing but a manifestation of an old-fashioned anti-Semitic image; an image which, it should be noted, was not confined to a single diplomat who, in urging a favourable policy towards the Arabs, was inclined to deploy arguments of a dubious character. After all, Rapp apart, Evans was one of Israel's most consistent advocates among British diplomats - if not the most consistent of them all. Perhaps, then, the charitable explanation is that distorted

perceptions, however irrational their root, however misconceived their image, take time to vanish.

Some British ministers and officials used to refer, on occasion, to the Israelis, either as individuals or as a collective, by the term "the Jew" or "Jews" when apparently unnecessary. Selwyn Lloyd, Minister of State at the Foreign Office, was one such case. When, for instance, he wrote to Eden from New York at the end of 1953 about proceedings at the United Nations, he stressed the fact that "*the Jews* [my italics] here are so far behaving well" - the reference being to the Israeli Delegation at the United Nations. He then went on to relate to Eden that he had had "a very friendly talk with the Jordanian Minister yesterday, *and the Jew* [my italics] is coming to see me this afternoon."[45] - in this instance he was apparently alluding to Abba Eban, Israel's Permanent Representative at the United Nations. Shuckburgh's diary abounds with the terms "the Jew" and "the Jews". He dwells upon an episode, in August 1954, revealing that Eden criticised his officials at the Foreign Office for accepting General Glubb's exaggerated prediction of intended Israeli manoeuvres that happened to coincide with Israeli reprisal attacks against Jordan; as a result of which Schuckburgh confided in his diary that "no one ever wants to condemn *the Jews* [my italics]"[46]

This peculiar habit may have been a lingering custom dating back to the times of the British Mandate in Palestine, when the population there used to be referred to, quite naturally, as "Jews" and "Arabs". And although there existed now a sovereign entity by the name of Israel whose population was widely known as Israelis, some ministers and officials, for whom the pre-1948 scenario was still almost

palpably close, could have, quite innocently, found it somewhat difficult on occasion to adapt their idiom to the prevailing political reality. It is, though, noteworthy that Churchill or Evans, known for their sympathetic disposition towards Israel, appeared to have failed, based on the evidence available, to follow this particular habit, referring to the terms "Jew" or "Jews" only when the context rendered it seemingly necessary. The same would apply in the case of many of the officials at the Foreign Office who, at least as reflected in the Foreign Office files, tended to adhere to the same idiomatic custom as Evans or Churchill. It could nevertheless be argued that Selwyn Lloyd or Shuckburgh - to mention only two - found it more difficult to adapt their political idiom to the post-1948 conditions than Churchill or Evans did.

In contrast to the image formed of the Jew and the Israeli, that of the Arab was, on the whole, unidimensional, absolute and negative. Gandy, who advocated the adoption of a pro-Arab line, argued that "Middle Easterners as a whole (by which he meant essentially Arabs and certainly not Israelis whom he considered as psychologically Europeans) were "more accessible to emotional appeals than Northern Europeans". They would, therefore, "often reject policies that are in their interest in favour of attitudes dictated by emotion." Furthermore, "Being short-sighted, they are prone to neglect national for individual or sectional interests."[47] The Parliamentary Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, Arthur Dodds-Parker, put it more bluntly: "The Arabs are rather more capable than most people of cutting off their noses to spite their faces."[48]

The British diplomats serving in Arab countries were particularly scathing,

entertaining the most unfavourable images of the Arabs. Rapp, for instance, described the Arabs as "fickle and feckless people."[49] The British Ambassador in Iraq, Sir John Troutbeck, perhaps the most ardent exponent of the Arab cause among British diplomats in the Middle East, suggested, for his part, "that we must accept as one of the facts of life that the Arabs are intolerable".[50] Writing about the excessive use of flattery by the United States in Arab states, Sir John Gardener, Britain's Ambassador in Syria, commented thus: "I see Knox Helm [then serving as British Ambassador in Turkey] in his reply has also mentioned the dangers of American flattery: in Turkey there is perhaps something to flatter, *but there seems no excuse at all for flattering Arabs* [my italics]".[51] Geoffrey Furlonge, who in his capacity as Ambassador in Amman espoused a pro-Jordanian line in regard to the border tension with Israel, suggested at the end of 1953

> a New Year's Resolution - 'In our dealings with the Arabs, we will refrain from beating our heads against brick walls'[52]

To which the Assistant Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office retorted:

> Then we should have <u>no</u> dealings with the Arabs![53]

Arabs were regarded by some British diplomats as children, to be treated as such. Troutbeck, for one, related to Bowker how "my last American colleague once described the Arabs as being like fractious children"; upon which Troutbeck commented: "I think this is very true"[54] Rapp, for his part, maintained that

> We cannot regard the Arabs as politically adult, however much we may have to talk and act as though they were. They possess, as is known, *the obstinacy*

> *of children* [my italics] and the same delighted reaction to praise. If they have to be chided, and not to bear resentment, it must not be on issues where they are convinced of moral right being on their side, otherwsie they have all *the feelings of children* [my italics] accused of doing something they have not done.

In this context, Rapp advised that care had to be taken "to avoid antagonising the Arabs except when they are more than usually foolish."[55]

According to certain diplomats with experience in Arab States, Arabs were simply ungrateful. Sir Alec Kirkbride, Britain's first envoy in Jordan, was quite explicit in this regard: "I omit gratitude", he wrote, "as more than can be expected from an Arab."[56] Gardener, in Damascus, underlined for his part "the general gracelessness of the Arabs."[57]

In their endeavour to forge a regional alliance to defend the Middle East against a possible Soviet attack, the British were weary they might not be able to count on Arab support. As John Barnes, Britain's Ambassador in Lebanon, explained,

> The Arabs [...] *by reason of their defects of character which are familiar* [my italics], are only too likely, wittingly or unwittingly, to play the Russian game."[58]

Barnes, it should be noted, did not elaborate on what he meant by the Arabs' "defects of character". Indeed, he appeared to believe that the officials at the Foreign Office would not necessitate such clarification in furtherance to his words since, as he stated, these were "familiar". John Tripp, of the Levant Department, was more enlightening: the Arabs were "*confirmed opportunists* [my italics] and

likely to change their tune [the reference being to the Soviet Union] the moment someone else 'plays the piper'"[59]

Within the Military there were those whose input in this regard was more balanced. The British Defence Co-ordination Committee Middle East, for instance, articulated the following view of the Arabs:

> Individually they can be brave and intelligent: in several countries there is a fair supply of men with good technical aptitude. Unfortunately, there is a great instability in their character both as individuals and nations.[60]

Although the image portrayed of the Israelis tended to be more positive than that of the Arabs, there were occasions when British diplomats would draw direct comparisons between Israelis and Arabs, unfavourable equally to both. Baker, for one, believed that "the Israel mentality is just as irrational as that of the Arabs."[61] More than two years after having arrived in Israel, Evans had formed an opinion of the Israelis as being "at least as intractable and impervious to reasonable argument as the Arabs"[62]. Upon completion of his duty in Israel, Evans argued that the insistence of Israelis of being in the right

> is harder, almost, to figure than the fierce intransigence of the Arabs, of whom a less enlightened standard of international behaviour is expected.[63]

A striking feature emerging from the portrayal of the Arabs was the apparent contradiction between the distinctly negative image entertained by British diplomats serving in Arab countries and their advocacy of a pro-Arab policy. The

latter, it would seem, was not founded upon a sympathetic attitude towards the Arabs or a positive appraisal of their character. Indeed, some of the most prominent diplomats accredited to Arab states appeared to have had nothing but contempt for the Arabs. And yet they urged their Government to adopt a favourable policy vis-a-vis the Arab States essentially on account of a purely pragmatic reasoning as to which side could be expected to serve British interests better, the Arab Countries or Israel. Troutbeck explained this in a particularly candid vein. In a previously partially quoted passage, he stated:

> I suggest that we must accept as one of the facts of life that the Arabs are intolerable.

then went on to add that

> *unfortunately, we need a good many things out of them* [my italics][64]

British diplomats in Tel-Aviv consistently conveyed to officials back at the Foreign Office in London the profound respect and admiration with which Britain - its institutions, traditions and political system - was held by Israelis, despite some acute divergences in policy between the two countries. Sir Knox Helm, in a double-edged manner, summarised it thus:

> Though one cannot like many of her features Israel is a fact and she is our foster child. And strangely enough she has a great respect for her foster-mother and in many ways models herself on her.[65]

A more detailed and illuminating analysis of this phenomenon was provided by the British Embassy in Tel-Aviv which, some seven months subsequently and following Knox Helm's departure, argued that

> Close as are the ties with the United States, Israel's ties with Great Britain are even closer. Historically, she owes her existence to Great Britain. Over 25 years of British administration have left behind a strong British tradition in many fields, particularly, legal, military, administrative, commercial and press. It is difficult for those who have not seen Israel since 1948 to realise how strong this tradition still is and how extraordinarily little it has been affected by the bitterness engendered during the last years of the Mandate, a bitterness which is now almost entirely dissipated. This heritage is coupled with an admiration for Britain's recent evolution towards democratic socialism, a widespread respect for British methods and the things which Britain stands for, and an eager desire to learn and apply what is best in British civilisation.[66]

Evans himself further stressed that

> Britain and British political philosophy represent to the discerning leadership of this people something substantial, something stable and tolerant.[67]

Evans' deputy at the Embassy, Anthony Moore, maintained that, close as the relationship between Israel and the United States were, "Today I should say that the United Kingdom is more popular in Israel than are the United States". He went on to explain that

> Apart from the British influence inherited from the Mandate, one reason for this is that the Israelis feel that we in England are faced with problems not dissimilar to their own, and that our methods of tackling them have value for themselves."[68]

Evans concurred with Moore. He believed that many Israelis and particularly "the governing group" harboured an ideological prejudice against the United States. The majority of those who were "at present politically effective" identified themselves with "the British concept of social democracy". American materialism and individualism was regarded by them, and more so by the more left-wing elements, as "evidence of a reactionary outlook." Indeed, even the General Zionists, the party which advocated a free-enterprise economic system, preferred "British commercial standards and methods to the American."[69] A few months before he was to terminate his tour of duty in Israel, Evans emphasised once again

> the strong attachment of the Israelis to the political and parliamentary traditions and habits of the United Kingdom and their keen desire to emulate them and, where necessary, adapt them to the requirements of Israel.[70]

British visitors to the country were similarly impressed by the respect with which Britain was held there. Lance Molyneux, MP, for one, related to Eden his experiences of a trip he had made, on his own initiative, to Israel, stressing to him the Israelis "almost pathetic admiration for things British."[71]

Avner recalls that many Israeli diplomats, including the Foreign Minister himself, Moshe Sharett, had a profound emotional and cultural affinity to Britain, admiring its political system and having much affection for its traditions.[72] Avner's predecessor at the Israeli Embassy in London, Moshe Keren, for instance, while contending that Britain had become by 1952 a second-rate world power, nevertheless believed that Britain was the most cultured, the most restrained and

the most measured of all nations.[73] Some officials of the Israeli Foreign Ministry had been brought up in Britain and had pursued their academic studies in British universities; two prominent examples being: Abba Eban, Permanent Representative at the United Nations and Ambassador in Washington simultaneously, who had studied at Cambridge and subsequently been elected as a Research Fellow at Pembroke College, and Walter Eytan, the Director-General of the Ministry, who had obtained his degree at Oxford where he later taught.[74]

David Ben-Gurion, who served as Prime Minister until he resigned from Government at the end of 1953, more often than not suspicious of British intentions, had a deep admiration for the courage and strength of the British people as displayed during the Second World War years. He told Evans, as the latter recorded, of his stay in London in the summer of 1940 "and of the profound impression that had been made on him then by the unshakeable courage of the British".[75] Those who knew Ben-Gurion testify to his equally strong admiration for Britain's political system and culture.[76]

This last sentiment, as British diplomats in Tel-Aviv made clear, was widespread among Israeli politicians. Indeed, the former head of the *Irgun Zvai Leumi*, the underground organisation which had fought against the British presence in Palestine, and who served as leader of the right-wing Herut Party in the Knesset in the early nineteen-fifties, Menahem Begin, told this writer that the divergence of views and the difficult events of the past notwithstanding, his admiration for the

democratic system prevailing within Britain itself remained unaltered in the early nineteen-fifties.[77]

However much he may have admired Britain's democratic institutions, Begin was deemed to be by the British Government in the early nineteen-fifties *persona non grata*, his entry into Britain being consistently refused. Thus, in 1952 the Passport Control Department instructed that

> Every step should be taken to ensure that in no circumstances this man arrive in the UK.[78]

When a request was relayed to the Foreign Office in October 1954 to issue an entry visa to Begin so that he could arrive in Britain early in 1955, the response was equally negative. Falla recorded that the *Irgun Zvai Leumi* had been responsible "for the worst terrorist outrages in Palestine during the last years of the Mandate". And although Britain's avowed policy was to maintain friendly relations with Israel, Falla feared that

> it would not improve our relations with the present Israel Government if we were to permit M Begin to visit this country, since his efforts in opposition have not been of assistance to the moderate Government of M. Sharett.

Beyond that, he anticipated that

> public opinion in this country would no doubt be entirely against his being admitted.[79]

Falla's superior was adamant that Begin should not, under any circumstances, be allowed into Britain. His language was similarly explicit.

> I hope we shall firmly repel this viper from our bosom. One should not dwell on the past, but there are limits to forgiveness or expediency.[80]

Thus, whereas the image entertained of the Israeli and the Jew seemed to have been, generally speaking, complex, multi-dimensional, a mixture of negative and positive, a combination of admiration and criticism, a blend of respect and irrational fear, that of the Arab was, on the whole, a distinctive manifestation of contempt, an acute expression of disdain. More often than not, though, images entertained did not correspond to policies advocated. Thus, British diplomats, like Troutbeck for example, could espouse an emphatically pro-Arab line while portraying the Arab in a singularly negative manner. In contrast, and constituting a *sui generis* phenomenon in this context, the images depicted by Churchill invariably reflected, beyond pragmatic considerations, his *emotional* attachment to the Zionist cause. In Israel, however British policy was perceived, beyond the adverse or favourable impression it conveyed, there seemed to have prevailed an almost instinctual, unaltarable admiration for the political institutions and cultural traditions which Britain was deemed to have been endowed with. In this case, policies perceived to have been adopted by Britain did not seem to have affected one way or another the images and attitudes which Israelis had formed of the British way of life. It was possible to object to the former and want to emulate the latter. The former was, after all, variable; the latter was, in a way, permanent.

FOOTNOTES

1. The Eastern Department dealt with Israel, the Arab States - with the exception of Egypt, which fell under the responsibility of the African Department - and with the question of the Arab-Israel dispute. Following an internal reorganisation at the Foreign Office, in September 1953, the above functions were transferred to the newly-created Levant Department, leaving the Eastern Department responsibility over Saudi Arabia, Yemen and the Protectorates.

2. FO 371 91200, Eastern Department Memorandum on Middle East Policy written for Anthony Eden, 29 October 1951.

3. FO 371 98785, ER 1011/1, Evans to Eden, 19 February, 1952.

4. FO 371 104733, ER 1011/1, Evans to Eden, 13 February, 1953.

5. FO 371 98786 MONTHLY REPORT FOR AUGUST.

6. FO 371 98257, E1056/80, Memorandum prepared by Chancery, British Embassy, Tel-Aviv, "Israel and her relations with the Arabs and the West", 9 June, 1952.

7. FO 371 98251, E1054/2, Gandy, FO Minute, "The Re-establishment of British position in the Middle East", 8 March, 1952.

8. Israel State Archives, 2385/21A, Avner to Walter Eytan, 25 August, 1954 [Henceforward referred to as ISA]

9. ISA, 2440/3A, Elath to Moshe Sharett, 12 November, 1953.

10. He contended, with the benefit of hindsight and perhaps taking into account the latter's record vis-a-vis Israel in subsequent years, that Shuckburgh had been particularly hostile to Israel. Indeed, he went on to recall that between the two of them there used to exist a tense relationship. Personal interview with Eliahu Elath, Jerusalem, 30 May, 1989.

11. Evelyn Shuckburgh, Descent to Suez, Diaries 1951-1956. (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1986) p. 264.

12. FO 371 11070, VR 1072/68, Churchill to Sharett, 23 April, 1954.

13. Speech delivered on 26 January, 1949. Printed in F.B. Czarnomski (Ed.) The Wisdom of Winston Churchill (George Allen and Unwin, London, 1956), p.196.

14. The meeting between Elath and Churchill took place on 14 September, 1950. Elath's letter, dated 17 September, is quoted in Martin Gilbert, 'Never Despair' Winston Churchill 1945-1965 Vol VIII (Heinemann, London 1988) p.557.

15. In a speech he delivered at the Lord Mayor's Banquet at the Guildhall, for instance - a speech which incidentally was being televised live -, on 10 November, 1952, Churchill spoke of "'Those of us who have been Zionists since the days of the Balfour Declaration'" Quoted in Gilbert, Churchill Vol VIII, p.775.

16. Gilbert, Churchill Vol VIII, p.663. In a letter to Israel's President, Chaim Weizmann, dated 19 November, 1951, Churchill spoke of "'The wonderful exertions which Israel is making in these times of difficulty [...which] are cheering to an old Zionist like me.'"

17. Bernard Wasserstein, Britain and the Jews of Europe 1939-1945 (Institute of Jewish Affairs, London. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1979), p.83.

18. Gilbert, Churchill Vol VIII, pp.210-211.

19. The full text of Churchill's statement, delivered on 28 June 1954, is to be found in FO 371 111072, VR 1072/145.

20. Gilbert, Churchill Vol VIII, p.1097. The conversation was held on 24 February, 1955.

21. David Carlton, Anthony Eden, (Allen Lane, London, 1981), p.403.

22. Hugh Thomas, The Suez Affair (Penguin, Middlesex, 1970), p.112.

23. Russell Braddon, Suez: Splitting of a Nation (Collins, London, 1973), p.40.

24. Braddon, Suez, p.32. A contemporary Conservative Member of Parliament, Sir Robert Bootley (later Lord Boothby), known for his pro-Israel views, stressed that Eden, "who had read Oriental languages at Oxford, was by nature and temperament an Arabophil" Lord Boothby, My Yesterday, Your Tomorrow (Hutchinson, London, 1962), p.59.

25. Wasserstein, Britain and the Jews of Europe, p.34.

26. FO 371 110816, V1192/475; Eden wrote his comment on the sideline of the incoming telegram. His remark is undated. The telegram is dated 17 November, 1954.

27. FO 371 111107, VR 1091/260, Eden, FO Minute, 29 November, 1954.

28. FO 371 111065, VR 1057/1, Eden, FO Minute, 25 December, 1953.

29. FO 371 98257, E1056/80, Memorandum prepared in Chancery, British Embassy, Tel-Aviv, 9 June, 1952.

30. FO 371 96972, JE 1194/11G, Wardrop, FO Minute, 13 March, 1952.

31. FO 371 98785, ER 1011/1, Evans to Eden, 19 February, 1952.

32. FO 371 111066, ER 1071/117, Evans to Eden, 8 December, 1953.

33. FO 371 82633, ER 1892/1, Helm to Furlonge, 2 May, 1950.

34. FO 371 91393, EE 1201/2, Helm to Furlonge, 1 January, 1951.

35. ISA, 40/14A, Mordechai Gazit to Elath, 14 January, 1953.

36. FO 371 104738, ER 1018/34, Pullar, FO Minute, 13 July, 1953. Following his first encounter with Pullar, the First Secretary at the Israeli Legation in London, Mordechai Gazit, commented that Pullar's academic upbringing in Oxford notwithstanding, he was easier to deal with than most other Foreign Office officials. Gazit, though, was not particularly impressed by Pullar's intellect. ISA, 40/14A, Gazit to Elath, 23 June, 1952. Indeed, many years subsequently, with the benefit of hindsight, Gazit remained unimpressed by Pullar's intellectual prowess. Personal interview, Jerusalem, 27 June, 1989.

37. FO 371 104790, ER 1091/442, Baker, FO Minute, 27 October, 1953. Following his first meeting with him, the Counsellor at the Israeli Embassy in London, Moshe Keren, professed to have been positively impressed by Baker who, he added, was different from his colleagues at the Foreign Office in that it was possible to conduct with him an open and lively conversation. ISA, 40/14A, Keren to Foreign Ministry, 23 January, 1953. Gazit, for his part, was similarly positively impressed by Baker. He concluded, after having met him for the first time, that Baker was not prejudiced as regards Israel and that he understood that Israel was a *sui generis* phenomenon in the Middle East. ISA, 40/14A, Gazit to Elath, 6 February, 1953.

38. The extract from Glubb's Memorandum is enclosed in FO 371 104759, ER 1072/54. It was written in March, 1953, though the precise date is not provided.

39. FO 371 104759, ER 1072/54, Falla, FO Minute, 31 October, 1953.

40. FO 371 104778, ER 1091/32, Rapp to Bowker, 2 February, 1953.

41. FO 371 104754, ER 1071/31, Rapp to Bowker, 23 March, 1953.

42. FO 371 104753, ER 1071/20, Evans to Bowker, 26 February, 1953.

43. FO 371 111066, ER 1071/117, Evans to Eden, 8 December, 1953.

44. ISA, 322/10, Elath to Michael Comay, 14 May, 1953.

45. FO 800/696, SELWYN LLOYD'S PRIVATE PAPERS, Lloyd to Eden, 28 October, 1953.

46. Shuckburgh Descent to Suez, 19 August, 1954, p.237. His entries for 1955 are particularly replete with these kind of references.

47. FO 371 98251, E1054/2, Gandy, FO Minute, "The Re-establishment of British position in the Middle East", 8 March, 1952.

48. FO 371 111068, VR 1071/5, Dodds-Parker to Gaitskell, M.P., 6 January, 1954. A term previously used by Britain's Ambassador to Iraq, Sir John Troutbeck. See FO 371 104208, E1121/196, Baghdad to FO, 3 November, 1953.

49. FO 371 104257, E10345/20, Rapp to Bowker, 19 May, 1953.

50. FO 371 104208, E1121/196, Baghdad to FO, 3 November, 1953.

51. FO 371 104258, E10345/43, Gardener to Bowker, 7 July, 1953.

52. FO 371 111069, VR 1072/5, Furlonge to Allen, 30 December, 1953.

53. FO 371 111069, VR 1072/5; a remark written by Allen on the sideline of the above letter; no date given.

54. FO 371 104753, ER 1071/4, Troutbeck to Bowker, 2 January, 1953.

55. FO 371 104754, ER 1071/31, Rapp to Bowker, 23 March, 1953.

56. FO 371 104258, E 10345/36, Kirkbride, FO Minute, 3 July, 1953.

57. FO 371 104765, ER 1072/214, Gardener to Falla, 1 December, 1953.

58. FO 371 104753, ER 1071/25, Barnes to Bowker, 13 March, 1953.

59. FO 371 111089, VR 1074/154, Tripp, FO Minute, 13 May, 1954. Incidentaly, Gazit formed the impression that Tripp, who had previously served for seven years in the Sudan, was essentially unsympathetic towards the Arabs and critical of a strictly pro-Arab policy by the West. ISA, 401/143, Gazit to Elath, 7 December, 1954. Avner, for his part, remembers Tripp as a sympathetic person, more forthcoming than some of his colleagues and more candid with Israeli diplomats. Personal interview, Jerusalem, 30 May, 1989.

60. DEFE 11/87, DEFENCE OF THE MIDDLE EAST AN ANALYSIS OF FUTURE PROSPECTS, 23 February, 1953.

61. FO 371 104759, ER 1072/54, Baker, FO Minute, 30 October, 1953.

62. FO 371 111074, VR 1072/181, Evans to Shuckburgh, 31 August, 1954.

63. FO 371 111065, VR 1051/12, Evans to Eden, 30 September, 1954.

64. FO 371 104208, E1121/196, Baghdad to FO, 3 November, 1953.

65. FO 371 91726, ER 1155/19, Helm to Bowker, 22 October, 1951.

66. FO 371 98257, E1056/80, Memorandum prepared by Chancery, British Embassy, Tel-Aviv, "Israel and her relations with the Arabs and the West", 9 June, 1952.

67. FO 371 98785, ER 1011/1, Evans to Eden, 19 February, 1952. On a more practical level, Evans indicated a year subsequently that there was in Israel "much admiration for British methods of government". FO 371 104753, ER 1071/20, Evans to Bowker, 26 February, 1953.

68. FO 371 104258, E10345/39, Moore to Bowker, 7 July, 1953.

69. FO 371 104258, E10345/42, Evans to Bowker, 13 July, 1953.

70. FO 371 111066, VR 1052/3, Evans to Bowker, 15 June, 1954.

71. FO 371 111119, VR 1196/1, Molyneux, MP., to Eden, 10 May, 1954.

72. Personal interview, Jerusalem, 30 May, 1989.

73. ISA, 5/39, Keren to Michael Comay, 20 June, 1952.

74. In her book on Israeli-French relations, Sylvia Crosbie relates that, in the early 1950s, "French diplomats complained of the 'typical British coolness and snobbery' of Israeli officials, most of whom were either of British background or education or had served in the British administration of Palestine". Sylvia Crosbie, A Tacit Alliance France and Israel From Suez to the Six Day War (Princeton University Press, Princeton 1974) p.44.

75. FO 371 98799, ER 1051/3, Evans to Bowker, 14 January, 1952.

76. Avner, personal interview, Jerusalem, 30 May, 1989.

77. Personal letter to this writer, Jerusalem, 11 June, 1989.

78. Quoted in FO 371 111065, VR1051/14, Falla, FO Minute, 29 October, 1954.

79. FO 371 111065, VR1051/14, Falla, FO Minute, 29 October, 1954.

80. FO 371 111065, VR 1051/14, J.G. Ward, FO Minute, 29 October, 1954. Writing about Begin's Herut Party, in May 1954, Evans maintained that "it would [...] already seem to merit the title, given to it recently in an editorial of one of the leading daily papers, 'A party in decline'". FO 371 111059, VR 1015/12, Evans to Eden, 4 May, 1954. The Herut Party, it should be noted, was to increase gradually its electoral strength in the years to come, culminating in the 1977 victory of the Likud block, a coalition of centre-right parties headed by Herut.

CHAPTER TWO:

BRITAIN AND THE JORDAN-ISRAEL BORDER TENSION

The Armistice Agreements between Israel and its Arab neighbours, which followed the 1948 War, did not produce peace agreements in their wake. The early nineteen-fifties witnessed a fragile balance entailing an absence of peace and war which manifested itself in a complete boycott waged by the Arab States against Israel. In addition, Israel's borders remained tense, with sporadic hostile actions directed at Israeli property and lives which, in turn, prompted Israeli reprisals. The frontier most beset by violence between 1951 and 1954 was the Jordan-Israel one: a border across which Arabs infiltrated, be it with benign intent or with the purpose of stealing or damaging property or, indeed, with the aim of perpetrating attacks upon Israeli citizens. The Israelis, for their part, staged reprisal raids on villages believed to have been harbouring infiltrators. Considering its Treaty of Alliance with Jordan of 1948, under which it was pledged to come to Jordan's defence in case of war, Britain, its other interests apart, could hardly maintain an aloof posture as the problem developed.

Divergent views were advanced by the Jordanians and the Israelis to explain the nature of infiltrations. As Britain's Ambassador in Israel, Sir Francis Evans, summarised it in a despatch to Winston Churchill,

> The Jordanians maintain that infiltration, which is the essence of the border problem, is principally due to the understandable persistence of the unfortunate Arab refugees in returning to their former homes in Israel to harvest their crops, collect their belongings, or visit their relatives. They agree that on occasion the less laudable motives of robbery or vendetta play a part, but argue that this is only a minor one.

On the other hand, Evans continued , the Israelis produced figures

> to show the continuous and substantial losses they suffer, and they point out that the strain imposed on border settlements by the constant threat of robbery and murder is intolerable.[1]

Indeed, as the Minister at the British Embassy in Israel, Anthony Moore, reminded the Foreign Office, the Israelis derided the Jordanian explanation as regards the nature of infiltrations.

> The Israelis claim that since the gangs frequently make no attempt to steal and are often only intent on destruction or murder, it is obvious that they are organized.[2]

The Jordanians, as well as Britain's Ambassador in Amman, Geoffrey Furlonge, deemed the above explanation entirely incorrect. Not only was infiltration the responsibility of individuals and small groups, "frequently children", but its objective was stealing and not murder.[3] The United States Embassy in Jordan similarly maintained that there was not "any deliberate terrorism by dispossessed Arabs. There is too much evidence to contrary".[4]

The line espoused by the British Embassy in Israel was that,

> Whereas when the border troubles first started, the motive of the infiltrators was robbery, now the Israelis by their reprisal raids [...] have established so many blood feuds that they must expect marauders bent on vengeance.[5]

A more detailed analysis by the British Embassy in Tel Aviv had been put forward by Moore's predecessor, John Chadwick, some months previously. The nature of the Jordan-Israel frontier, he explained, rendered it impossible "to prevent people from slipping over the border", except, that is, by effecting close cooperation between the police forces of the two countries. The purposes of infiltrators were varied : some crossed the frontier "to look" at the property they had left behind following the 1948 War, the majority were intent on robbery, and some infiltrated "to murder and destroy". The situation existing along Israel's part of the border was such that "no village in the country is safe from raids, and every village and every town, even up to within five or six miles of here, is guarded every night".[6]

Like Chadwick, the Foreign Office in London subscribed to the view that the particular characteristics of the border made control and policing very difficult. "It is not clearly demarcated, and it divides villages from their lands or wells". Most of the people "who illegally cross the line" were deemed to be Arab refugees who were separated from their property. Nevertheless, the Foreign Office asserted that some of the infiltrators "go to rob or murder", further acknowledging that infiltration "inflicts considerable loss on the Israelis and creates great nervous tension".[7]

The Intelligence Community in the United States did not seem to believe - at least by mid-1953 - that infiltrators were bent on murder. The aim of those crossing the border, "many of them refugees", was "to smuggle, steal, or visit their former homes and fields in Israel". Consequently, it was stated in a vague manner, "acts of violence frequently result."[9] Thus, in contrast to the line adopted by the Foreign Office in London (similarly by mid-1953), the Intelligence unit of the State

Department did not appear to embrace the view that at least some infiltrators may have been *intent* on violence: violence was perceived to be a by-product of smuggling, stealing or innocent visits to formerly-owned property in Israel.

It was widely acknowledged that the nature of the boundary dividing the territories of Israel and Jordan only exacerbated the problem. By separating villagers from their lands it induced refugees to attempt to cross the line; its elongated and difficult terrain rendered it most difficult to prevent infiltration. Furlonge, for one, referred to the frontier as "arbitrary"[10] The British Embassy in Israel considered it "irrational".[11] And Geoffrey Baker of the Eastern Department of the Foreign Office described the boundary as "impossible".[12] The British Embassy in Tel Aviv, to be sure, deemed the frontier irrational insofar as it was perceived to provide no strategic depth to Israel; a view which was espoused by many in Israel who, as Moshe Sharett put it, regarded the existing line as "artificial" and the Jordan River as Israel's "natural" border".[13]

In the light of the daily occurrence of infiltrations, and the evident hardship it caused to the civilian population residing along the frontier, the role played by the Jordanian authorities assumed particular interest. Two principal questions emerged in this context: were the Jordanian authorities conniving in infiltrations? If not, were they doing their utmost to prevent them?

The evidence available would seem to indicate that up until the second half of 1953 the view prevailing within the Foreign office was less favourable towards Jordan's role than was to be the case thereafter. By the beginning of 1953, the

Foreign Office in London believed that Jordan "could do more to prevent infiltration into Israel".[14] The Head of the Eastern Department, Archibald Ross, referred to Jordan's "fault" in its apparent "failure to prevent infiltration". As to the more serious suggestion that Jordan encouraged or at least connived in infiltrations, Ross stated that it was "admittedly hard to prove".[15] The Assistant Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, Sir James Bowker, acknowledged that, the difficulties they faced notwithstanding, "It is possible that the Jordanians have not been as zealous as they should be, ideally speaking".[16] When it came to relaying its views to the Jordanians, the Foreign Office in London was most emphatic:

> the Jordan Government should be left in no doubt that their measures are inadequate, and that this failure makes a major contribution to the disturbed state of the area.[17]

The Israelis may not have been entirely aware of the attitudes prevailing within the Foreign Office, let alone of the forceful line adopted vis-a-vis the Jordanian Government. The Minister of State at the Foreign Office, Selwyn Lloyd, did acknowledge to the Israeli Ambassador in London, Eliahu Elath, that "it might [...] be possible that the Jordanian Government were *not [my italics]* doing everything they could to prevent it [infiltration]"[18] However, when Elath "expressed doubt", as Ross recorded. "as to the ability or even willingness of the Jordan Government to prevent attacks on Israel", the latter "refuted this suggestion vigorously"[19]. This is of particular interest, considering Ross' significantly less emphatic language when advancing his opinion to his superiors at the Foreign Office. Indeed, Elath may not have conveyed a view radically divergent from that held by the Foreign office. For, when by October 1953 the Jordanians were

thought to have taken measures to prevent marauding raids across the border, the Foreign Office expressed satisfaction that at long last the Jordan Government had "come to realise that infiltration is their concern".[20] The obvious inference to be derived is that previously the Jordanians had *not* realised that infiltration was their concern. The Jordanian authorities were thus accused, at least of negligence, at worst of unwillingness to undertake the required action under the circumstances. Whether or not Britain conducted a *policy* deemed by Israel as appropriate, so far as *attitudes* were concerned - at least by October 1953 - the Foreign Office in London appeared to have adopted a stance not too dissimilar from Israel's as regards the role played by Jordan over infiltration. The Israelis, though, may not have been fully aware of that.

British and Israeli attitudes seemed to have converged more clearly and conspicuously from, at least, mid-1954. Already by April 1954, the Israeli Army observed that the Jordanian authorities were doing their utmost to prevent infiltration.[21] The Israelis, therefore, could hardly argue with the Foreign Office when on 9 July, 1954, it conveyed to the Counsellor at the Israeli Embassy, Gershon Avner, that "We believed that the Jordanians did do their best to stop border raids".[22] Indeed, Avner himself said three months subsequently to James Brewis, of the Levant Department of the Foreign Office, as the latter recorded, that

> He suspected that [...] the Jordan Government were trying to check infiltration, and such trespasses as occurred were more or less inevitable.[23]

Thus, by October 1954, British and Israeli appraisals were not only similar, but also

apparently understood to be so by both Governments.

The psychological, economic and human toll suffered by Israel from infiltrations prompted Israeli reprisal attacks across the border, upon villages believed to have harboured marauders. This policy of retaliation was perceived by the British Embassy in Tel Aviv to be "part of a defensive reaction caused by a series of developments which have accentuated Israel's sense of isolation." These developments were believed to have been : the increasing Arab hostility, manifested by threats enunciated by Arab politicians, and the tightening of the economic blockade; the sale of weapons to Israel's "hostile neighbours"; and the constant pressure represented by infiltrations. These events, among others, "have created a sense of uneasiness and insecurity, to which the Israelis have wished to give full expression".[24] Reprisals, then, were regarded by the British Embassy in Israel as a *defensive* reaction to a *wider* set of circumstances that affected the country's perceived sense of isolation, and not merely as a direct response to the threat posed by infiltrations. Although, to be sure, Evans reckoned that the Israelis

> may have decided that the tough policy of reprisals against Jordan [...] will (1) encourage Jordan frontier authorities and border villages to control infiltration, (2) persuade Jordan Government that to take a leading part in hostile policy of the Arab League can produce uncomfortable results, and that there is something to be said for accommodation with Israel.[25]

Thus, according to Evans, Israel's policy of retaliation may have had a rational set of goals, designed to obtain a short and a long-term objectives, both within the confines of Israeli-Jordanian relations. Reprisals, therefore, may have constituted not just a manifestation of frustration, but a well-defined policy comprising clear aims.

However, as Britain's second highest-ranking diplomat in Israel explained to the Foreign Office in London, Israelis were not united behind a monolithic policy. There existed two schools of thought as regards the best means to be employed to deal with the problem of infiltration. The first one, "to which on the whole the Army, the Police and the inhabitants of the border settlements" belonged, argued that the Jordanian Government had to be induced to maintain peace on the Jordanian side of the border. Even, supposing the Jordanian authorities in Amman had been sincerely desirous of preventing infiltrations, they would have been thwarted in their attempts by the presence of Palestinian Arabs in the Administration, and in Government, who would have sabotaged such a policy. The lack of effective police on the West Bank did not render the situation any easier. In these circumstances, contended those belonging to the first school, there was no hope that diplomatic pressure exerted by the Western Powers on Jordan could reap any fruits. The only solution, therefore, was

> direct action by Israel forces of the kind traditionally adopted by countries with anarchic territories across their borders, e.g. the policy of the Ancient Romans towards the German tribes, and of the British on the North-West Frontier of India in the nineteenth century.

The second "and more moderate" school of thought deemed the above argument irrelevant in an era of international organizations and a world public conscious of international issues. A country so dependent on international support as Israel could not afford to base its policy on ideas as those espoused by the first

school. Those belonging to the second school maintained, therefore,

> that Israel must take pains to appear before World opinion as the patently injured party, and must rely on diplomatic action to bring about a change of heart and of practice in Jordan

Those who subscribed to "this more reasonable policy" were believed to be "inevitably" few - though no explanation was advanced as to why this should have been inevitable. Moshe Sharett, the Foreign Minister, was thought of as someone who "inclines towards it", as were "a number of senior officials in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, as well as some of the more responsible journalists and members of the Knesset". David Ben Gurion, who served as Prime Minister and Minister of Defence until his resignation in December 1953, "undoubtedly belongs by temperament to the first school, though his awareness of Israel's dependence on foreign support curbs his inclinations to some extent." Moore's impression was that Ben Gurion's policy was "inclined to zig-zag."[26]

Israel's policy of reprisal did not elicit any favourable response from the British Government. Retaliation, the arguments advanced by British officials seemed to indicate, was considered to be, in essence, counter-productive. As Baker put it: "force breeds force and results in a growing upward spiral of tension."[27] Reprisals were believed to render Arab attitudes towards Israel more obdurate.[28] Furthermore, as Eden was told by his officials, "the Arab attitude is basically one of fear" , and armed raids "can only intensify Arab fears and reduce the chances of a political settlement."[29] To be sure, reprisals were not necessarily deemed to be unjustified in principle: "They might be justified as deterrent measures if the Arabs

were about to fall upon Israel by force of arms."[30]

The United States Government appeared to have entertained similar misgivings concerning Israel's reprisal policy, arguing that "it would only lead to greater difficulties and effectively prevent re-establishment of normal relations." Perhaps in contrast to the Foreign Office (though it has to be borne in mind that unlike the above reference this was a message to be relayed to the Israeli Government), the State Department stressed that it "could never agree policy of reprisals justified in *any [my italics]* circumstances".[31] The State Department deployed an additional argument, not mentioned by the British, to reinforce its contention that retaliation was counter-productive.

> official Israel policy involving mil forays [...] and resulting in killings of Arabs and destruction of their property will undoubtedly have its effect on Arab attitude toward Jewish minorities on such states as Iraq.[32]

Other considerations apart, the Foreign Office refused to condone retaliatory attacks by Israel, contending they were unjustified under international law. The Foreign Office did maintain that it was

> defensible in international law for a Government, dealing with raids on its territory from a neighbouring state, to pursue and capture the raiders beyond the frontier.

However,

> such measures must be directed exclusively to the capture of the marauders and must follow immediately upon their transgression of the frontier.

Reprisal raids, on the other hand, were deemed to be "entirely different" as they were said to involve

> the indiscriminate murder of nationals of the other country who had no direct connection with the act which occasioned the reprisal.[33]

The evidence available suggests that the legal dimension of this question may not have weighed too heavily in formulating Britain's policy in this regard. There is hardly any reference to this theme in the Foreign Office's internal discussions, nor in the records of conversation with Israeli officials, nor in public pronouncements by ministers of the Crown. Few of the arguments forwarded by British diplomats in opposition to reprisals would have been affected one way or another had the Foreign Office concluded that a policy of retaliation did conform to international law. Indeed, one may speculate that, even had the Foreign Office judged that reprisals were strictly legal, British support for them would still not have been forthcoming. Legal considerations seemed to have constituted additional arguments to be deployed in justification for a policy motivated primarily by a pragmatic reasoning.

Although Britain did not conceal its opposition to a policy of reprisals, attitudes prevailing among British diplomats were not necessarily devoid of understanding of Israel's perceived problems. Paul Falla, the Head of the Levant Department, acknowledged that "the Israelis have serious cause for complaint" regarding the activities of infiltration from Jordan.[34] Britain's Ambassador in Israel

went even further, urging

> that we should not give the Israelis the impression that we have no sympathy with the losses they suffer as a result of infiltration from Jordan or that we regard infiltration as a natural result of the creation of Israel, and therefore an inevitable cross which the Israelis must continue to bear with fortitude.[35]

In a seemingly contradictory vein, the Assistant Under-Secretary maintained that Israel, which had a good case on infiltration, "should 'grin and bear it'"[36], and yet - significantly - also argued that

> While we strongly deprecate the retaliation of the Israelis *we cannot expect the latter to sit back and take no action at all [my italics].*

Much as one may try, it seems rather difficult to reconcile the two views quoted above: In the first, Bowker appeared to display a certain lack of sympathy for Israel; in the second, he did not only understand Israel's problem, but almost justified Israel's response to it.

Seen in a wider perspective, Israel's reprisal policy, though clearly condemned, elicited considerable understanding among British officials. Beyond the constant threat posed by infiltrations, Israel had to confront a hostile Arab world adamant in its refusal to reach a mutually acceptable *modus vivendi*, let alone peace accords. Thus, Evans asserted that

> the fault [...] lies less with Israel for her occasional, though violent, reactions to continued acts of violence, than with the Arab States for continued waging of Cold War on her[38]

Falla similarly contended that

> basically, the responsibility for the situation arises from the Arab States' refusal to come to terms with Israel except on conditions which ignore the Israeli victory of 1948-9.

Indeed, he further suggested to convey to the Jordanian Government, "for the record", Britain's view to the effect that

> So long as Israel cannot look forward to any prospect of establishing normal relations with her neighbours, the present situation must be expected to continue.[39]

Falla seemed to have expressed a view widely shared within the Foreign Office in London, for, when the Parliamentary Under-Secretary, Anthony Nutting, had to reply to an official letter on this very theme two months previously, he advanced the argument that Israel's retaliatory attacks

> are unfortunately likely to occur so long as the Arab States decline to recognise Israel and Israel is subject to constant raids from the territory of her Arab neighbours.[40]

Meanwhile, at the State Department in Washington the fear grew that Israel's reprisal policy was designed to "foment border disturbances" so as to provoke war and thus bring about "a revision of the armistice machinery and permanent arrangements with the Arab States."[41] Although the Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, similarly believed that the Israelis had embarked "on a deliberate policy of

making things worse in the hope that by so doing they may force us to force peace on the Arabs", he nevertheless acknowledged in a singularly candid manner that

> The basic fact of the matter is that the Arabs do not want peace and will not negotiate in any way for any sort of settlement, even when obligated by the Armistice. The only argument which we have to make when we ask the Israelis to remain calm and peaceful is that in some way which has never been clear to me we may in the course of a few years win sufficient confidence from the Arabs to persuade them to negotiate for peace. *I can scarcely blame the Israeli for thinking this is wishful thinking [my italics]*[42]

Dulles seemed to have gone further than any official at the Foreign Office in almost justifying Israel's reprisal policy -- or at least the reasoning behind it. Like British officials, Dulles regarded the absence of peace as the cause of Israeli retaliatory attacks, and not *vice versa.* And the Arabs, rather than Israel, were held primarily responsible, both by Dulles and the Foreign Office, for the absence of peace.

The Israelis may not have been apprised of these attitudes. Indeed, these assessments had apparently scant bearing on the posture adopted by Britain as regards retaliatory raids when dealing with Israeli officials: reprisals were deemed unacceptable, their cause notwithstanding. Little wonder, therefore, that a senior Israeli diplomat who served in the Embassy in London should have stated - with the benefit of hindsight - that acts of retaliation had a disastrous effect upon British-Israeli relations.[43]

What officials at the Foreign Office displayed sympathy towards was not necessarily the *objective* that might have motivated the policy of reprisals, but rather

the *conditions* that prompted Israel to adopt it. Dulles, for his part, appeared to have acknowledged a lack of coherence in the stance taken by his Government : to urge Israel to eschew retaliation in the hope that events would unfold in a manner conducive to negotiations, when such a prospect was deemed by himself as unrealistic, rendered the whole argument rather implausible. To be sure, the British Government did not entertain the notion, which the State Department under Dulles seemed to have espoused, that, should Israel refrain from conducting reprisal raids, somehow a process might ensue leading to serious negotiations with the Arab States. More modestly, the British believed that retaliatory acts would render Arab hostility more acute and make reconciliation even more distant.

No Israeli reprisal attack had a more adverse effect upon British opinion than the raid on the village of Qibya, on the night of 14 October, 1953. Following the murder of a woman and two of her children in the Israeli village of Yahud by infiltrators from Jordan, a decision was reached in Israel to retaliate. The objective was to be the Jordanian village of Qibya, a base whence infiltrators were known to have conducted attacks across the border.

Based on the accounts of those who participated in the operation, the task of the parachutte unit sent to carry out the raid was to blow up several houses. Casualties on the Jordanian side were to be limited to between ten and twelve. The village was duly captured; twelve Jordanians, mostly soldiers, died. A mass exodus from the village ensued. The Israeli force encountered empty houses and proceeded to destroy forty-five of them. The unit subsequently returned to Israel territory, believing it had successfully implemented the instructions that had been

relayed to it. The Israeli soldiers, though, were unaware that many of the inhabitants of Qibya had remained in the attics of their houses, hiding in silence whilst the Israelis were carrying out their operation. It transpired that seventy people, men, women and children, had met their death, their bodies discovered the following morning by the returning dwellers of the village who had escaped the previous night.[44]

A United Nations investigating team arrived on the morning of 15 October in Qibya. Its findings were summerised in the Yearbook of the United Nations for 1953 as follows:

> Witnesses had been uniform in describing their experience as a night of horror, during which Israeli soldiers had moved about in their village blowing up buildings, firing into doorways and windows with automatic weapons and throwing hand grenades.[45]

According to the information received at the Foreign Office the day after the raid, a large Israeli force had launched a coordinated attack upon Qibya, advancing behind a 2-inch mortar barrage. The Israelis, it was further reported, "had prevented women and children escaping from the houses and had then systematically destroyed much of the village".[46]

Sharett, who, in addition to his normal duties as Foreign Minister, was also serving as Acting Prime Minister, replacing Ben-Gurion who was temporarily on leave, had been opposed to a reprisal raid following the attack at Yahud. After all, the Jordanians had condemned the murder of the Israeli mother and her two

children, and had even offered to assist the Israelis in tracking down the assailants. Sharett told the Acting Defence Minister, Pinhas Lavon - who was substituting for Ben Gurion - that a retaliatory act would be "a grave error". He was, however, overruled by Lavon and, indirectly, *in absentia*, by Ben-Gurion.[47]

In the light of its outcome, Ben-Gurion, who had meanwhile resumed his normal duties in Government, was determined that the Israeli Defence Forces should not admit responsibility for the Qibya raid. Rather, he argued, it ought to be said that Israeli settlers, residing in the frontier area, resolved, out of sheer frustration with the constant killings they had to endure, to take the law into their own hands and launch an attack on a Jordanian village. Ben-Gurion was motivated by a desire to preserve the honour and good name of the Army and he believed this was the way to do it. Years later, Ben-Gurion was to admit that Qibya had been an error about which he felt ashamed.[48]

Sharett made it known that he was unenthusiastic about releasing a fictitious version of events such as Ben-Gurion proposed. He contended that no one in the world would accord any credence to it and that the Government would merely be playing the role of simple liars. He recognised, however, that he could not demand that the Army admit responsibility since that would preclude the Israeli authorities from criticising the raid, thus condoning what he termed "the horrendous bloodshed".[49] In the wake of Ben-Gurion's radio broadcast in which he conveyed his Government's sorrow at the spilling of innocent blood, Sharett confided that he would have resigned had he been asked to deliver the broadcast himself.[50]

Evans found it difficult to accept Ben-Gurion's denial of the Army's responsibility, considering that five days had elapsed before the statement was issued and the "heavy offensive weapons" employed in the attack which were not usually given to border settlements.[51] Nevertheless, he acknowledged that "it is just possible the operation got out of hand and the slaughter and destruction became greater than intended".[52]

At the Eastern Department of the Foreign Office Ben-Gurion's version of events was regarded with profound scepticism. Baker, for instance, argued, similarly to Evans, that

> It is hard to accept the Israel Prime Minister's contention that the Israel Defence Forces were not involved in the attack on Qibya.[53]

British incredulity found expression in the Security Council resolution on the Qibya raid, tabled jointly by Britain, the United States and France, which referred to "the retaliatory action at Qibya taken by *Armed Forces of Israel* [my italics]." [54] Almost a year later, the Head of the Armistice Affairs Department of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, Yossef Tekoah, acknowledged that, although Israel had presented its fictitious version "with respect" , it had failed to persuade the Security Council that the Army had not been involved in the Qibya raid.[55]

Israel's Ambassador in London conveyed to Sharett an insightful analysis of reactions in Britain to the Qibya attack. Dwelling upon official attitudes first, Elath maintained that

> There can be no doubt that the Foreign Office people, like everyone here, were sincerely shocked when the news of the size and nature of the Qibya raid came through.

He was convinced of the genuiness of the horror expressed by officials, particularly on account of what he described as "the very cautious and reserved tone of those with whom I spoke at the Foreign Office". Indeed, Elath feared that Qibya had had an adverse effect on the Embassy's relations with the Foreign Office.

To be sure, he was not suggesting that the Foreign Office had been motivated exclusively by moral indignation. Qibya had presented with what Elath defined as an "excellent opportunity" of demonstrating to the Arabs, among other things, "that it was their ally and friend, Britain, who was first to spring to their defence."

So far as the attitude adopted by the press was concerned, Elath stressed that

> In all my three-and-a-half years in London, I cannot recall any criticism of Israel so unanimous and so unsparing.

Israel's best friends, for their part, professed to being astonished. Leopold Amery, long-time supporter of the Zionist cause, described, in a private letter to Elath, as the latter recorded, "the grief and distress caused to Israel's friends by behaviour so unworthy of a State built on the high spiritual and moral principles of Zionism". Churchill told the Liberal Leader, Clement Davies, that he had been shocked by the news from Qibya.

Elath concluded his despatch with a personal *credo* on the serious adverse repercussions of Qibya:

> We have gravely endangered the good name and prestige of Israel, on which the very existence of our State so largely depends, alienated our friends, strengthened our enemies, and voluntarily thrust ourselves into isolation [...] we are a small country surrounded by enemies waiting their chance to destroy us, and desperately in need of help and support from friends outside, without which our own utmost heroism and sacrifice may be in vain.[56]

The British Government reacted swiftly and unequivocally in the wake of the Qibya raid. A day after the attack, a telegram was sent to Evans, instructing him as follows:

> Please express to Israel Government our horror at Qibya incident. Such action by *regular Israel forces [my italics]* makes nonsense of Israeli protestations of readiness to make peace with Arabs.[57]

When Selwyn Lloyd met the Israeli Ambassador, he similarly expressed his Government's "horror" at the incident. He further told him he hoped

> that the Israeli Government would take the initiative by instituting an immediate investigation [...] with a view to punishing those responsible.

However,

> In H.M. Government's view the Israeli Government should announce their readiness to make compensation for the loss of life and damage to property.[58]

The Israeli Government subsequently announced that it accepted, in principle, to pay compensation for the Qibya raid. It argued, however, that the principle had to be applied to Jordan as well, and that compensation ought to be paid in connection with attacks perpetrated by Jordanian infiltrators.[59] So far as the suggestion for an investigation was concerned, some officials in the Israeli Foreign Ministry proposed several measures designed to *convey the impression* that Israel would see to it that the culprits, supposedly people residing in the frontier zone, would be punished - without, that is, punishing anyone dwelling in the area as none had actually been involved in the attack. Sharett rejected these proposals out of hand.[60]

In Parliament, Eden, employing a milder language than the one used in official discourse with Israeli representatives, referred to Qibya as "something out of the ordinary even in the sad catalogue of events that have occurred on either side of the frontier."[61]

Meanwhile, discussions were being held within the Foreign Office, and with both the United States and French Governments, over the wording of a Security Council resolution with regard to the Qibya raid. Evans seemed to have reflected the views prevailing among British diplomats when he stated that "no condemnation of Israel for the Qibya incident could be too strong."[62] The question with which the Foreign Office had to contend, however, was whether to confine a Security Council resolution to a condemnation of Israel or to widen it to deal with the whole of the border problem, including the absence of Arab-Israeli peace.

His aforementioned remark notwithstanding, Evans maintained that, in contrast to the Qibya raid,

> The general border question is not susceptible to clear-cut recommendations or awards of blame.

Indeed, he argued that

> Israel undeniably has a case based principally on the Arab Government's refusal to negotiate either overall peace settlement or any detailed readjustments of the armistice terms, designed as temporary.

Any early debate on the general border problem, contended Evans, would be difficult in the prevailing circumstances. He suggested, therefore, that the Security Council should

> (I) discuss and pronounce in strongest terms on the Qibya incident, thereby giving assurance and satisfaction to the Arabs, and separately
>
> (II) to note that the whole border situation constituted a threat to peace and agree to discuss this separately in, say, three months time.[63]

Evans' recommendation was endorsed, in essence, both by Selwyn Lloyd and by Eden.[64] Neither considered it wise to introduce the theme of Arab-Israeli negotiations into the proposed resolution. Lloyd believed that "any recommendation of such a nature now [...] would only exasperate the Arabs"[65]. To the Israeli

Representative at the United Nations he said that, since Qibya "had completely put the Israelis in the wrong with world opinion", the time now would not be "appropriate" to call on both sides to commence direct negotiations. Presumably with Evans' suggestions in mind, Lloyd expressed to Abba Eban his hope that within three months, when the "atmosphere" was expected to be "rather calmer", "a more appropriate opportunity for promoting direct negotiations" would emerge.[66] In a conversation with Elath , Eden, conveying his "personal thought", argued, as he later recorded, that

> The difficulty about any attempt to get the Arab States and Israel directly into contact now was [...] that feelings ran so high in the Arab States over Qibya, that the attempt might easily fail. If so, the situation might become even more dangerous.[67]

Neither Lloyd nor Eden, it would seem, were entirely candid - for understandable reasons - with Eban and Elath, respectively. For, when the question arose as to whether the resolution should call upon both sides to observe the Jordan-Israel Armistice Agreement of 1949 - nothing as explicit and precise as a reference to peace negotiations - Falla made it clear that

> It seems to be universally thought that at this time such a step would have disastrous effects on our position in the Arab world.[68]

Indeed, Lloyd himself, in opposing any reference to direct negotiations, recalled how, by supporting a General Assembly appeal for Arab-Israeli talks in November 1952, "we ran into serious trouble with the Arabs".[69] The fear of prejudicial repercussions upon British-Arab relations, apart from anything else, appeared to

have motivated the Foreign Office in rejecting the inclusion of even the most indirect reference to negotiations. True, such a measure was deemed anyhow to be futile, as the Arabs were not expected to heed it. But, beyond that, the British were apprehensive that any such clause would incur the wrath of the Arabs and adversely affect Britain's standing in the Arab world. After all, a reference to peace was regarded as a pro-Israeli move, and, in the wake of Qibya, when the Israelis were thought of by Lloyd to being "so much in the wrong", the Arabs were "extremely suspicious that we are trying to protect Israel from condemnation for, and consequences of, this incident."[70]

The State Department, meanwhile, while concurring with the line adopted by the Foreign Office, told the British Embassy in Washington that they might feel obliged to add a reference of regret at the "'lack of progress towards permanent peace'". To be sure, United States officials harboured some misgivings about this, as they feared the Arabs might find the above wording objectionable. They preferred rather that an expression of regret that there was not yet any basis for permanent peace between Israel and the Arabs should be introduced, thus avoiding even the implication of censure as regards Arab attitudes on the matter. Dulles, considering public opinion in the United States, agreed that some reference to a final peace ought to be included in the resolution.[71]

Thus, the United States proposed a paragraph reading as follows

> Expresses its concern at the failure of the parties to achieve progress by peaceful means towards a lasting settlement of the issues outstanding between them.

In response, the Foreign Office made it clear, as Falla indicated, that "we do not favour the addition proposed [...] as it is likely to arouse the hostility of the Arabs without achieving anything." However, considering that

> it expresses a general sentiment with which we cannot in principle disagree, we should, if necessary, be prepared to have it inserted in the draft resolution.[72]

British diplomats in the Arab world were urging their Government to adopt a resolute line vis-a-vis Israel at the Security Council. Britain's Ambassador in Baghdad, Sir John Troutbeck, was particularly emphatic : unless Western powers called either for punishment of the offenders or compensation to the victims.

> The impression will be strengthened here that *the crack of the Jewish whip [my italics]* will always bring the United Nations and the Western Powers quickly to heel.

His seemingly unsympathetic disposition towards Jews notwithstanding, Troutbeck did not convey the impression that he was primarily moved by moral indignation, for he went on to state

> I feel bound to draw attention to what struck me as the inconsistency between our continued assertion that the Arab world is vital to our strategic and economic interests on the one hand, and on the other our failure to give the Arabs our wholehearted support when they have such a cast-iron case at the United Nations. *I cannot see how one day our vital interests can fail to be affected [my italics].*[73]

The reaction at the Foreign office in London was singularly unfavourable.

Baker asserted that "the Qibya raid is not as 'cast-iron' as Sir J. Troutbeck would have it." In an apparent plea for a more balanced view, Baker maintained that

> We cannot [...] shut our eyes to the fact that the immediate cause of it was the long series of acts of violence committed by the Jordanian infiltrations and that *the fundamental [my italics]* cause is the Arabs' refusal to admit Israel's right to exist and to come to political terms with her.

He submitted that Troutbeck's advice should be discarded.[74] The Head of the Department concurred with him.[75]

No Israeli diplomat could have presented Israel's case in the wake of Qibya any better than Baker - with Falla's endorsement - did : Qibya was a *reaction* to attacks perpetrated against Israel, and a *corollary* of Arab opposition to its very existence. In this respect, Baker - and Falla - reflected the attitudes prevailing among diplomats at the Foreign Office in London and in the Embassy in Tel Aviv regarding Israel's reprisal policy. However unacceptable reprisals were deemed to be, their *cause* - as seen by the diplomats concerned - had to be clearly comprehended and fairly assessed. Qibya was no exception. True, Qibya was considered to have been an extraordinary act of retaliation, in terms of the brutal outcome it produced. Its *cause*, though, was not judged to have altered on that account. However bloody Israel's attack might have been, the conditions that prompted it were believed to have been the same as those motivating previous raids. Whereas British policy was understood to be singularly critical of Qibya, the attitudes displayed by some in the Foreign Office and by Evans, in Tel Aviv, were considerably more sympathetic to Israel's *basic* case than would have been apparent from the public posture adopted by British officials. In this respect, Qibya was no

different from other reprisal attacks.

Going somewhat beyond Troutbeck, the Head of the Middle East Office, Sir John Sterndale-Bennett, asked the Foreign Office in London to consider imposing sanctions on Israel, either through the United Nations or independently.[76] Again, as in the case of Troutbeck's suggestion, the Foreign Office in London refused to deviate from its desired intention of confining the critical element of the Qibya Resolution of the Security Council to a condemnation of Israel.[77]

The object of this diplomatic exercise, so far as the Foreign Office was concerned, was to express condemnation rather than to inflict punishment. Britain's "horror" at events in Qibya had to be reflected, clearly and unequivocally, in a resolution adopted by the Security Council. British diplomats in London wanted to avoid incurring the wrath of the Arabs by including in any such resolution a reference to Arab-Israeli negotiations. They seemed, however, to have entertained no desire to undertake measures that would be construed as explicitly hostile to Israel, however favourable Arab reactions were expected to be. The aim, in this respect, was primarily negative in nature; it was, essentially, to prevent provoking the anger of the Arabs, rather than to elicit their enthusiastic applause - particularly if that was to be achieved at the expense of Israel.

The diplomatic process preceding the adoption of the Qibya Resolution at the Security Council afforded Evans an opportunity to witness how his advice, rather than the different suggestions advanced by British representatives in Arab posts, was, in general terms, endorsed by the Foreign Office in London: the line expressed

by the Government in discussions with the United States and France reflected, to a substantial degree, Evans' original proposal to the effect that Israel had to be condemned and the wider question of the situation prevailing in the frontier had to be postponed to three months' time from the moment of the resolution's adoption. It further illustrated how a diplomat serving abroad could and did wield a decisive influence in shaping policy vis-a-vis the Arab-Israeli dispute.

The draft resolution was severely condemned by Israel. Sharrett deemed it one-sided, discriminatory and unprecedented. Although he professed to being shocked at the Qibya incident, Sharett protested to Evans that all of the three Western Powers - i.e., Britain, the United States and France - had, at one time or another, resorted to indiscriminate mass killings.[78] Ever sensitive to pronouncements by the United Nations, Sharett feared that, if the draft resolution was adopted, Israel would lament it for generations to come.[79]

As the Israeli Government was gradually becoming resigned to what it considered to be a most unfavourable resolution at the Security Council, the Israeli delegation at the United Nations came up with a suggestion entailing a course of action designed to neutralise its adverse effect. The Delegation proposed to the Foreign Ministry in Jerusalem that Israel should resort to Article 12 of the General Armistice Agreement signed by Jordan and Israel in 1949. According to that particular Article,

> either of the Parties may call upon the Secretary-General of the United Nations to convoke a conference of representatives of the two Parties

> for the purpose of reviewing, revising or suspending any of the provisions of this Agreement other than articles I and II [which prohibit the resumption of hostilities]. *Participation in such conference shall be obligatory upon the parties [my italics].*[80]

There was little doubt that Jordan would refuse to attend, but then, it was anticipated, Jordan would be blamed for a clear violation of the Armistice Agreement, thus enhancing Israel's prestige whilst rendering most uncomfortable Jordan's position. The expectation was that this diplomatic manoeuvre would constitute an effective propaganda device against the Jordanians. Sharett confessed he had not thought about resorting to Article 12 before. Ben Gurion, for his part, endorsed the recommendation with enthusiasm.[81]

Israel presented its request to the Secretary General of the United Nations, Dag Hammerskjold. Meanwhile, the British Representative at the United Nations, Sir Gladwyn Jebb, was approached by the Israelis with a plea to postpone the vote on the draft resolution on Qibya pending the outcome of the deliberations on the implementation of Article 12.[82] Although none of the three Western Powers tabling the resolution was inclined to accede to the Israeli plea, the French Representative argued that the Security Council should not ignore this new important development. He therefore proposed that the final draft ought to contain a reference to Israel's invoking of Article 12. Jebb reported back to London that "the Israeli manoeuvre has much alarmed the Arabs".[83]

The Foreign Office decided, some minor modifications notwithstanding, to endorse the French suggestion and add a reference to the Israeli request. As Falla

put it: "It seems appropriate in principle to insert something of this kind on the draft resolution."[84]

The Security Council resolution having been adopted, the diplomatic focus of attention turned suddenly in the direction of Jordan. The United States and Britain agreed that it would be most unwise for Jordan to refuse to attend the conference as that would constitute a clear violation of the Armistice Agreement. They equally maintained that Israel should set limited objectives, confined to the particular problems besetting the border area, and should avoid transforming the intended meeting into a peace conference.[85] To be sure, Sharett's aim was indeed to limit the scope of the Conference to a request on both sides to fulfill the Armistice Agreement in its entirety. When Israel first raised this matter at the United Nations, peace was stated to be the object of the Israeli diplomatic exercise. Sharett, though, made it quite clear that his diplomats at the United Nations had failed to heed his instructions to avoid setting peace as Israel's objective.[86]

Before the Jordanians were able to reply as to whether they would consent to participate in such a conference, it became clear that views among British diplomats regarding the desired level of representation of the delegations concerned were hardly unanimous. Geoffrey Baker, for instance, arguing that "the higher the better", suggested that the Prime Ministers of both countries should attend.[87] Falla disagreed. He feared that "the more politics, the less chance of success".[88] Britain's Ambassador in Jordan reminded his colleagues in London that "we have always considered here that relaxation of border tension would come about not from high-level discussion, but by the loyal execution of both sides of existing agreements".

Consequently, "a mainly military conference on a lower-level", Furlonge maintained, "would seem logical since the conference flows from a military agreement".[89] Evans hoped that should the Jordanian Government be "absolutely unable to send a political representative", then the military representative that it decided to send would be "of the highest ranks and empowered to discuss all aspects of the Armistice Agreement".[90] The Foreign Office in London finally adopted the view that the conference "should be a primarily military conference".[91]

A few days later, Furlonge was able to ascertain from Jordan's Prime Minister that, the advice tendered by both the United States and Britain notwithstanding, the Council of Ministers in Amman felt compelled to decline the convocation in the light of the prevailing mood of public opinion and the adverse reactions from other Arab states.[92]

Furlonge thought it "most unlikely" that any further representations would induce a modification of Jordanian attitudes. According to him, the stance adopted by Jordan must be seen in the context of "the violent feelings aroused by Qibya" and the fact that the Security Council Resolution contained no call to punish Israel. Beyond that, Jordan was reluctant to provoke the anger of other Arab states, "through two of whom all of Jordan's trade passes". Furlonge also believed that the "proclaimed intention" of Israel to transform the intended meeting into a peace conference was ill advised.[93]

So as to lessen Arab opposition, the Secretary General of the United Nations told Selwyn Lloyd that he would be prepared, without much enthusiasm though, to

convene the proposed conference himself. The hope was that this type of United Nations umbrella would go some way towards mitigating the reluctance of the Arabs to endorse anything which might be construed as bilateral negotiations with Israel.[94] This was precisely the reason why Baker had reservations about it. For, among other disadvantages,

> It gives the Arabs another opportunity of evading their responsibility for negotiating direct with the Israelis, by sheltering behind the skirts of the United Nations.

In the light of the prevailing attitudes among the Arabs, however, the alternative was probably no conference at all. In such circumstances, Israel would, according to Article 12, present the matter before the Security Council. A resolution condemning Jordan for not attending a conference which was obligatory would place the British Government in an uncomfortable position, for Britain would be unable to refrain from associating itself with such a resolution; and this would have "a damaging effect on Anglo-Arab relations in general and Anglo-Jordan relations in particular". Baker therefore suggested, as a means of inducing the Arabs, to endorse Hammerskjold's offer. All his superiors, including Eden, approved of this course of action.[95]

Nevertheless, the Jordanians remained adamant. The Prime Minister explained to Furlonge that if a conference was indeed convoked and failed, the matter would then be referred to the Security Council, which would most probably dictate solutions less acceptable to Jordan, on whatever issue the Israelis might raise, than would be the case should the conference be held.[96] In addition, the Jordanians

insisted that discussions of the nature envisaged by Britain could as well be held in the Jordan-Israel Mixed Armistice commission, whose function was to deal with problems arising out of the implementation of the Armistice Agreement.[97] Meanwhile, and so as to reinforce Jordan's position, the Political Committee of the Arab League reached the decision that Israel's request should be rejected.[98]

Baker thought the attitude adopted by Jordan and the other Arab states was "inflexible".[99] Hubert Pullar, serving in a more junior capacity in the Foreign Office, was more explicit. Although he recognised that "the Israel request may have been originally a manoeuvre", Pullar nevertheless argued that "the authority of the Armistice Agreements and the Security Council's position in the Palestine dispute are at stake in this matter". His unfavourable disposition towards Jordan's stance can be gauged from his seemingly bitter conclusion:

> It may well be a salutary lesson to the Arab countries, which they appear to expect, if the Jordan reply is considered unsatisfactory and the authority of the United Nations upheld against the Arab view.[100]

Pullar's wish was not shared by his superiors. The Head of the Department, for instance, recommended that, when and if the Jordanians replied as expected, the Foreign Office should "consider afresh (with legal advice) what support, if any, we can give the Arabs in the Security Council on this issue."[101] The Assistant Under Secretary, Roger Allen, agreed, though he suggested not to wait for the Jordanian reply.[102] Thus, although Britain fully acknowledged Israel's right to invoke Article 12 of the Armistice Agreement, and urged Jordan to attend the conference to be convoked, only one junior diplomat at the Foreign Office was prepared to see

Jordan censured at the Security Council for its failure to afford a positive reply; indeed, he seemed to relish such a prospect. The high-ranking officials, on the other hand, believed that Britain would have to assist the Jordanians to avert condemnation of their country for their negative response to a request to which the British had argued a positive one should have been advanced. They apparently feared, as Baker had previously indicated, that Britain would be unable to distance itself from a Security Council resolution censuring Jordan, thus causing damage to British standing in the Arab world. It may have been considered only sensible, therefore, to help Jordan so as to prevent such an eventuality from emerging.

To be sure, there seemed to have prevailed within the Foreign Office a sense of unease over Israel's move. Selwyn Lloyd, in a conversation with Elath, said, as he later recorded, that " the Israel Government had been rather too clever over this matter". The Israelis, he went on to explain, "had taken advantage of a technical right but, by doing so, they had made it extremely difficult to set up a conference in which Jordan would willingly and usefully take part."[103]

Meanwhile, though, there occurred an attack on a civilian bus in Israel which was to alter the scope of discussion as regards the border problem. On 17 March, 1954, a bus travelling northwards from Elath was attacked by a group of Arabs at a site known as the Scorpion Pass (*Maale Ha-Akrabim*); out of sixteen passengers, only two survived unharmed, and one, a child, was badly hurt.

The Chairman of the Jordan-Israel Mixed Armistice Commission, Commander Elmore Hutchinson, claimed that there was no concrete proof indicating that those

responsible for the attack had come from Jordan. He therefore abstained when an Israeli resolution condemning Jordan was put to the vote, thus preventing the Mixed Armistice Commission from pronouncing on this incident. The Israelis, who anyhow regarded Commander Hutchinson as anti-Israel, decided to leave the Mixed Armistice Commission as a sign of protest.

The Jordanian Delegation at the Mixed Armistice Commission had raised the hypothesis that the attackers might have originated in Israel itself; an idea which Furlonge, in Amman, suggested should not be dismissed out of hand considering, among other things, "the known presence of terrorist organisations in Israel". The Head of the Arab Legion, General Glubb, had advanced the possibility that the attackers might have come from the Gaza Strip or Sinai; a suggestion which Furlonge acknowledged "seems the more inherently probable". So far as the British Embassy in Jordan was concerned, Furlonge stressed, "we here genuinely incline to the belief that Jordan bears no responsibility for the incident."[104]

The Israelis had little doubt that the assailants had come from Jordan; the possibility that they might have come from the Gaza Strip or Sinai was regarded by them as highly improbable. The evidence, such as existed, indicated, as the First Secretary of the Israeli Embassy in London, Mordechai Gazit, said to John Tripp of the Levant Department, that the attack had originated in Jordan. Tripp was certain

> that Mr Gazit and probably most responsible Israelis do genuinely believe that the attack was mounted from Jordan and do not exclude the possibility that it was carried out with the knowledge of the Arab Legion.

His conclusion was, therefore, that

> In these circumstances [....] it would be wrong to condemn Israel for her uncompromising attitude to Jordan over the bus incident although we may regret her interpretation of the evidence.[105]

Israeli attitudes notwithstanding, Evans assessed that Sharett, now both Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, would not be in favour of a reprisal attack, "unless there was fresh provocation."[106] Sharret and officials at the Foreign Ministry in Jerusalem were indeed opposed to any kind of retaliatory raid, fearing that it would only help erase the negative impression left by the bus attack at the Scorpion Pass and put Israel on the same level as the culprits of that incident.[107]

However, as Evans had predicted, a further attack, on this occasion on two Israeli watchmen in the Jerusalem corridor on the night of 26 March - an attack which left one of them dead and the other wounded - persuaded Sharett that a retaliatory raid was now called for.[108] Evans was not convinced, though, that the raid which ensued on the village of Nahalin, near Bethlehem, on the night of 28 March, was carried out with Sharett's approval. "I think it unlikely", he wrote, "that the Prime Minister was aware of the incident, which will be most damaging to Israel's case abroad".[109]

The Nahalin incident prompted Churchill to write to Sharett a message in which he referred, in a seemingly menacing vein, to Britain's defence treaty with Jordan. "A renewal of the war between Israel and the Arabs", Churchill

maintained, "would be a calamity". And, in consequence,

> If the United Kingdom in virtue of its treaty obligations, became involved in that war, *it would be a sad ending to the hopes and achievements of the last few decades* [my italics][110]

Sharret received Churchill's message while a Cabinet Meeting in Jerusalem was in progress. He read it out. The Ministers present were astounded; one of them interpreted the letter as a threat to destroy the State of Israel. Sharett, however, argued that Churchill was referring to the ending of the historical chapter of contact and cooperation between Israel and Britain, and not to the end of Israel's existence as a sovereign state.[111]

A further letter by Churchill to Sharett, written in response to Sharett's reply to his previous message, should have dispelled any doubt Israeli ministers might have harboured as to what Churchill actually meant when he wrote the paragraph quoted above. In this new epistle, Churchill warned Sharett that

> The fate of countless men, women and children, both Jew and Arab, may hang on the success of your endeavour. *So too may hang the future of the great experiment in your country* [my italics] which, as you know, I have always regarded as one of the most hopeful and encouraging adventures of the 20th century.[112]

It would require a particularly imaginative intellectual endeavour to attribute to Churchill's warnings any other interpretation than the one that appears as the most obvious: a threat to the very existence of the State of Israel. The question that emerges in this context is not, therefore, whether what seemed to have been

written was indeed written, but rather, *why* should Churchill have written what he actually wrote. He was, after all, the most ardent supporter of the Zionist cause and the State of Israel in the British Government. It would seem somewhat peculiar that, any misgivings he might have entertained as regards Israeli actions notwithstanding, he would issue threats of this nature. Even assuming he deemed it imperative to warn Israel of the inevitable military involvement of Britain in case of an Israeli attack upon Jordan, it must still remain a mystery why he, of all people, should have advanced a scenario of Israel's destruction by British forces to illustrate his point.

To be sure, following the Nahalin raid, Churchill had told Eden he was contemplating delivering a message to the Israeli Government "'asking them to behave themselves'".[113] When asked subsequently by Eden whether a message of that nature ought to be sent, the Assistant Under-Secretary of the Foreign Office argued that, since Sharett was doing his utmost to prevent reprisal attacks, any message had to be "so couched as to help him"; indeed, he went on, "it would be useless merely to rebuke him". However, it was Allen himself who, despite these words of caution, suggested that Churchill might refer explicitly to Britain's treaty obligations to Jordan and might warn Israel that, should hostilities compel the British to intervene, this would be "*totally disastrous for Israel* [my italics]." [114] Officials at the Foreign Office, rather than Churchill, drafted the first - and, probably, also the second - message to Sharett.[115]. Nevertheless, unless Churchill failed to read the letters prior to their delivery, he should have been made aware of their contents. Crucial though the Foreign Office's input in drafting the first - perhaps also the second - letter apparently was, the enigma as to Churchill's role

becomes no less perplexing on that account. After all, Churchill was not known for being particularly timid in dealing with the Foreign Office. Whenever he disagreed with a Foreign Office draft that was to be sent on his behalf, under his name, he would not hesitate to make that quite plain, and would demand a different one, more akin to his predilections.[116] Having apparently, unlike Churchill, no strong emotional attachment to the Zionist cause, Foreign Office officials were able, in a cold and detached manner, to deploy any semantic formula, however unpalatable to the Israelis, in order to *avert* the necessity of British involvement in an Arab-Israeli war; an explanation which, while clarifying why the Foreign Office could have drafted such a letter, only deepens the mystery as to why Churchill should have endorsed it.

The high-ranking officials at the Foreign Office were indeed only a little vaguer in the warnings they thought necessary to issue themselves to Israel. When Elath protested that Britain must persuade Jordan to negotiate with Israel before the Jordanians were entitled to invoke the Anglo-Jordan Treaty, Allen retorted that

> Our engagements to Jordan were quite specific. If we were called upon to honour those engagements, it would obviously place us in a terrible position; but if ever we had to go to war with Jordan against Israel, *the result could only be disastrous for Israel.* [my italics][117]

The Permanent Under Secretary, Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick, was impressed with the way Allen had spoken to the Israeli Ambassador.

> The Israeli Government must realise that if they place us in the position of having to fulfill our treaty obligations to Jordan, *they will be courting disaster* [my italics][118]

Although equally impressed with Allen's performance, Eden appeared to be more cautious, urging his officials to "keep contact with the Ambassador [Elath] during these difficult days".[119] Furthermore, in public Eden adopted a posture which seemed to differ - certainly in tone, if not in substance - from the language employed by Allen and Kirkpatrick, let alone that contained in Churchill's messages to Sharett. In a reply to a question, Eden told the House of Commons that Britain's treaty obligations to Jordan

> is subject to the duty of the parties to seek peaceful settlement of their disputes, and is subject also to our obligations under the Charter of the United Nations.[120]

Although he fully agreed that Israel should harbour no doubt whatsoever that Britain would fight for Jordan should the need arise, Evans nevertheless agreed that the Anglo-Jordan Treaty must not constitute

> a shield behind which the Arab League and Jordan allow themselves the luxury of an intransigent policy towards Israel, which we regard as likely to lead us into war with Israel in the defence of Jordan.[121]

Britain's obligations towards Jordan were thus seen by Evans not only as a *preventive* device by which war might be averted, but also as an obstacle affording Jordan, and the Arabs as a whole, a sense of passive resistance to the need for reconciliation with Israel;[122] which, in turn, rendered the danger of hostilities more likely. The Anglo-Jordan Treaty, Evans seemed to indicate, created a paradox: it

was designed to prevent an eventuality from emerging which was more probable to arise on account of its very existence.

The British Government, to be sure, was singularly cautious not be drawn into a military confrontation with Israel unless deemed imperative. Thus, while reassuring the Jordanians of Britain's earnestness in abiding by its treaty obligations, the British made clear to Jordan that "border incidents or limited reprisal raids would not, in our view, constitute a casus foederis"[123]

The scenario envisaged both by the Military and the Foreign Office in London, throughout 1954, requiring British intervention in Jordan's defence, was one entailing an Israeli attack aimed at capturing the West Bank. Prior to Britain's commitment, under the Anglo-Egyptian Agreement, to evacuate the Canal Zone, the Chiefs of Staff argued that, in the event of an Israeli attack, Jordan could be assisted by, among other steps, employing the R.A.F. to neutralise the Israeli Air Force; by advancing an infantry division to the Tel Aviv area and an armoured regiment from the Canal zone through the Sinai Peninsula; and by instituting a naval blockade of Israel.[124] In the wake of that Agreement, though, the Chiefs of Staff acknowledged that "we cannot guarantee to prevent Israel overrunning the Jordanian territory up to the west bank of the Jordan." Efforts had to be concentrated, therefore, on adopting "all possible *deterrent [my* italics] action."[125] Indeed, the Foreign Office in London feared that the evacuation of British forces from the Canal area might tempt Israel to believe that "the only obstacle to her later acquisition of the whole of the West Bank" would have been removed.[126]

The British Embassy in Tel Aviv appeared to ascribe to the Israelis. in the context of a scenario whereby Israel launched an attack upon Jordan, a rational motivation entailing a well defined aim:

> If Israel should decide to 'break out', we feel reasonably confident that it would be with the limited objective of securing a more natural and defensible frontier possibly along the line of the Jordan . This would relieve her not only of military anxiety about the present irrational frontier, but also of the minor but not inconsiderable drain of the material and stock stolen by infiltrators.[127]

To be sure, the strategic advantage entailed in the capture of the West Bank, so far as Israel was concerned, was considerably offset, according to Evans, by the demographic implications resulting from such an operation.

> if the Israelis decided to advance as far as the River Jordan, they would be faced with the grave problem of the Arab population, refugee and indigenous, on the West Bank. If they endeavoured to absorb this population within Israel, the balance between Jew and Arab would be seriously upset; if, on the other hand, they sought to drive the Arab population east of the river, the whole refugee problem would only be further aggravated and the difficulties of achieving a final settlement increased.[128]

The British Embassy in Tel Aviv stressed, anyhow, that the Israelis would not initiate hostilities unless it was generally perceived that Israel was the aggrieved party.

> Any idea that Israel would embark on an aggressive war without ensuring that she appeared the innocent party, seems to us to be tenable only on the assumption that once again, as in Roman days, the Jewish people are ready to commit national suicide.[129]

An assessment apparently shared by the Levant Department of the Foreign Office, which envisaged likewise that Israel would want to ensure that it was regarded as the innocent side prior to launching an attack on Jordan.[130]

It would seem, then, that the British envisaged a scenario whereby they would have been impelled to become directly involved in a war which, according to the Levant Department and, most particularly, the British Embassy in Tel Aviv, would have assumed the characteristics of a defensive enterprise on the part of Israel; which, in turn, might have rendered British participation all the more difficult. Although it would not be inconceivable that Britain might have felt compelled, in any case, to intervene on behalf of its Jordanian ally, the inference to be derived from the scenario depicted by the British Embassy in Israel could be as follows : unless Israel conveyed the impression of being the aggrieved party, disaster would befall the Jewish state : From which quarter? Jordan? It seems hardly plausible that the diplomats in Tel Aviv had the Jordanians in mind in this context. Rather, an implied reference to Britain appears as the most probable. And yet, disaster was not foreseen in reference to an attack in which Israel conveyed the impression of being the innocent side: by mere logical deduction, the absence of a British military intervention seemed to be alluded to in this instance.

A more explicit indication that Britain might not, after all, have become involved in armed conflict with Israel in case of a Jordanian-Israeli war, was forwarded by Tripp, of the Levant Department. In a conversation with Gazit, he asserted, referring to the Tripartite Declaration of 25 May, 1950, under which

Britain, the United States and France were bound to concert action against either Arab states or Israel embarking on armed operations to alter the territorial *status quo*, that, should Israel attack the Arabs, Britain would not dare to launch a counter-attack on the "Holy Land". "Would it be conceivable", he asked rhetorically, "that the R.A.F. should bomb Jerusalem ?"[131]

Although Britain may have considered its obligations to the Anglo-Jordan Treaty more binding than to the Tripartite Declaration, it could safely be assumed that Tripp did not find it any less inconceivable that Britain should attack the "Holy Land" under the Treaty than on the basis of the Declaration. After all, the "Holy Land" would not have been rendered any less sacred in the latter case. Nevertheless, it must be pointed out that, according to Gazit, Tripp tended to be rather critical of the Arabs and of a clear-cut pro-Arab policy on the part of the West. Furthermore, Tripp was said to have had the habit of expressing his view freely and without inhibitions.[132] Indeed, a year previously Eden had recognised that

> a failure on our part to defend Jordan against at any rate a direct attack by Israel would provoke intense bitterness in the Arab world and destroy the value of our treaty connections, especially with Jordan and Iraq.[133]

Therefore, whether there would have existed the political and emotional will in Britain to respond militarily against Israel in case of a seemingly unprovoked attack, let alone in circumstances in which Israel appeared as the aggrieved party, must inevitably remain an open question, considering the conflicting evidence available.

As the Anglo-Jordan Treaty seemed to afford the British a diplomatic device by which to avert a widening of hostilities in the Jordan-Israel frontier, so too, Britain's defence arrangement with Iraq was employed, on one occasion, to confine the Israel-Jordanian conflict to within existing bounds.

Following the bus incident at the Scorpion Pass in March 1954, the Iraqi Government advanced to Jordan an offer of military assistance. Iraqi military representatives visited Jordan and held discussions with their Jordanian counterparts. To be sure, Jordan was worried lest the presence of Iraqi troops in the front line might provoke Israel, considering Iraq had not signed an armistice agreement in the wake of the 1948 War. It was agreed, therefore, to ask the Iraqis to maintain a brigade in a state of readiness for an emergency. The Foreign Office in London was subsequently informed by its Charge d'Affaires in Baghdad that an infantry brigade group of about 3,000 troops were concentrating at a camp close to the Iraqi capital and that, according to what was described as a reliable source, they were preparing to head for Amman.

The Israelis, who had meanwhile been apprised through their own sources of the intended Iraqi move, made clear that, apart from a direct attack by Iraq on Israel, this would constitute the gravest threat to Israel's security. The hope was expressed that the British Government would wield its influence in Iraq to prevent the Iraqi offer from materialising.

The Foreign Office recognised that any move of Iraqi troops to Jordan might have serious consequences as it would be deemed most provocative by Israel.

However, it was thought, Britain could not, presumably, object to the Iraqi Government earmarking a military unit to render Jordan assistance should the latter be actually attacked. Nevertheless, the Foreign Office maintained that, according to the Treaty of Alliance with Iraq, Britain was entitled to enquire what the precise intentions of the Iraqis were and to convey to them that consultation between the two parties should be held *prior* to any decision to move troops into Jordan.[134] Whether or not Iraq intended to despatch forces to Jordan forthwith, the fact remains that Iraqi troops were not moved across the border with Jordan, and a potential source of conflict involving Jordan and Israel was thus removed.

When, following the incidents at the Scorpion Pass and the village of Nahalin, Eden and Dulles met to discuss the state of Arab-Israel relations, they reached the conclusion that any attempt to bring about peace was doomed to failure and that only in the domain of frontier control was there any chance of attaining some improvement.[135]

A diplomatic process was consequently set in motion as the State Department made clear that it expected the Foreign Office to advance specific proposals designed to reduce incidents in the Jordanian-Israeli border.[136] Among the different proposals suggested by British diplomats in the Middle East, a few forwarded by Evans elicited particular interest: the Israel-Jordan frontier should be clearly marked under United Nations supervision so as to avoid accidental crossings; minor boundary adjustments ought to be negotiated to permit lands to be reunited with villages - a proposal that would be mostly to Jordan's advantage; and the most daring of them all, "the construction of a major physical obstacle", namely, "a wide

electrified and heavily mined wire fence along almost all Jordan-Israel frontier and the Gaza strip." The fence, Evans clarified, would need to be jointly patrolled by Jordanian and Israeli troops, preferably accompanied by United Nations observers.[137] Evans recognised the enormity of the undertaking proposed. He realised that the cost entailed would have to be assumed by the Western Powers. The benefits that could accrue, though, were such as to convince him of its necessity.

> my hope is that by constructing a fence both infiltration into Israel and Israel attacks on Jordan could be *entirely [my italics]* stopped.[138]

The British Embassy in Amman reminded the Foreign Office in London that the Jordanian Government had always been opposed to the demarcation of the Armistice line as it feared this would tend to perpetuate the existing boundary, something the Arabs were averse to. The Embassy did not fully subscribe to the view expounded by Evans to the effect that a major barrier as the one he proposed would thwart infiltrations from Jordan "and still less Israeli reprisals." Instead, the Embassy suggested "the erection of fences along those parts of the frontier which have been most disturbed."[139]

While concurring with Evans that the demarcation of the Armistice line was necessary, the United States Embassy in Israel considered, like the British Embassy in Jordan, that a barrier had to be erected only in sites where infiltration was most serious, and not along most of the border, as Evans suggested.[140]

The State Department, in Washington, stressed the need for clear demarcation

of the Armistice line so as to avert accidental intrusions across the border, though harboured no illusions that the Jordanians would endorse the proposal for minor alterations of the Armistice line to reunite villages with their lands.[141]

This exchange having been effected, the United States and, rather reluctantly, France, joined Britain in a new diplomatic initiative which consisted of advancing, separately, a list of suggestions for border control to Jordan and Israel. The aim was to find out whether there existed some common ground for further action; the mode of approach, a corollary of Jordan's refusal to negotiate directly with Israel. In order to avoid leaks secrecy was essential. The suggestions concerned included, among others, the demarcation of the Armistice line by United Nations observers, to be followed, if possible, by frontier rectifications and the construction of barriers at the most important points of the border. Thus, Evans' more radical proposal seemed to have been discarded for the more modest alternative deployed by the British Embassy in Amman and the United States Embassy in Tel Aviv.[142]

Although agreeing with some of the suggestions forwarded, the Jordanian Government made it clear that it objected to the demarcation of the Armistice line and to the erection of physical barriers in the frontier.[143]

In principle, the Israelis were prepared to discuss the proposals under consideration; they insisted, though, that the way to do so was by direct negotiations between representatives of Israel and Jordan: the Jordanians must abide by their obligations as stipulated in the Armistice Agreement, the Israelis argued. Mediation, they feared, might further discourage the Arabs from discharging their

responsibilities under the Armistice Agreements.[144]

There was thus no common ground between Jordan and Israel even for measures of an interim nature. So far as the specific suggestions that have been dwelt upon above, Jordan was opposed to delineating the Armistice line, erecting physical barriers and rectifying anomalies in the existing boundary. Israel was in favour, though it stressed that negotiations involving both countries should be held to discuss these and other suggestions included in the Tripartite list forwarded separately to Jordan and Israel. Consequently, as conditions were not deemed to be propitious to secure any kind of agreement, the attempt at mediation was abandoned.

If one were to draw a distinction between *attitudes* and *policies* (an imperfect distinction, to be sure), then so far as the first was concerned, Israel's case concerning the tension bedeviling its frontier with Jordan enjoyed considerable understanding and support within the Foreign Office in London and at the British Embassy in Tel Aviv. Even as regards Israel's reprisal policy, although very critical of it, the Foreign Office in London and the Embassy in Tel Aviv recognised that, however much retaliatory acts may have sharpened the dispute, they did not create it. Reprisal raids were seen as a manifestation of an abnormal situation brought about by Arab policy rather than Israeli actions. This favourable *attitude*, though, was translated into *policy* only insofar as it was anticipated that it would not risk provoking the anger of the Arabs. The fundamental principle guiding British *policy* in this respect was to avoid undertaking measures which might incur the wrath of the Arabs. That, however, did not entail adopting a distinctively pro-Jordanian line,

for it was deemed to be unfair and unnecessary : British interests in the Arab world could be secured by not irritating the Arabs; there was no need to please them. Somewhat paradoxically, beyond its cautious *policy,* beyond the warnings and the threats, so far as Israel's basic case was concerned, Britain could be said to have adopted on this issue an essentially pro-Israeli *attitude.*

Admittedly, the explicit threats issued against Israel to the effect that Britain would not hesitate to come to Jordan's defence, and the daunting depictions of the tragic consequences that would ensue for Israel thereof, could hardly be construed as a reflection of an amicable disposition towards Israel. These threats, though, could not alter the fact that as regards the border tension the Foreign Office in London tended, on the whole, to adopt a fundamentally understanding, indeed favourable, attitude vis-a-vis Israel's basic case. The British-Jordanian defence accord was employed in this context in a defensive mode, its object being to *prevent* a situation from arising which would render its implementation necessary. It would be difficult to ascribe to it, the dire warnings that accompanied British statements to Israeli officials in this regard notwithstanding, an intentionally aggressive design. What the British wanted to accomplish was the intimidation of Israel which would thus avert the risk of having to deal with the dilemma of whether to carry out the threats that were supposed to avoid the need of confronting this dilemma to begin with. Although he did not disagree as to the necessity of issuing such warnings, Evans feared that whilst the prospect of British intervention might avert war, it equally helped to prevent peace. For the Jordanians, and indeed the Arabs as a whole, could feel secure behind this protective British military shield without having to reconcile themselves with the reality of the State of Israel. The dilemma thus

emerged, so Evans appeared to argue, *prior* to the moment when Britain might have to decide to implement its treaty obligations to Jordan; it was the awareness of the latter of Britain's pledge to come to its defence which, paradoxically, rendered peace more distant and, in a sense, war more probable.

FOOTNOTES

1. FO 371 104780, ER 1091/129, Evans to Churchill, 28 April, 1953.
2. FO 371 104790, ER 1091/444, Moore to Baker, 27 October, 1953.
3. FO 371 104779, ER 1091/82, Furlonge to Ross, 9 March, 1953.
4. FRUS, 9, Lynch to the State Department, 14 April, 1953, p.1172.
5. FO 371 104790, ER 1091/444, Moore to Baker, 27 October, 1953.
6. FO 371 104777, ER 1091/25, Chadwick to Baker, 31 January, 1953.
7. FO 371 104780, ER 1091/115, FO Minute for the Prime Minister, 24 April, 1953.
8. The CIA and the Intelligence organizations of the State Department, the Army, the Navy, the Air Force and the Joint Staff.
9. FRUS, 9, National intelligence Estiamte, 18 August, 1953, p.1287.
10. Quoted in FO 371 104779, ER 1091/67, Evans to Ross, 28 February, 1953.
11. FO 371 111114, VR 1105/2, Chancery to Levant Department, 26 July, 1954.
12. ISA 40/14A, Gazit to Elath, 6 February, 1953.
13. ISA, 22/39B, Sharett to Charge d'Affairs, 15 July, 1954. Sharett alleged that the Intelligence Services in Britain similarly saw the Jordan River as Israel's "natural" frontier.
14. FO 371 104777, ER 1091/11, FO to Amman, 4 February, 1953.
15. FO 371 104777, ER 1091/16, Ross, FO Minute, 3 February, 1953.
16. FO 371 104778, ER 1091/64, Bowker to Evans, 1 March, 1953.
17. FO 371 104779, ER 1091/69, Bowker to Furlonge, 16 March, 1953.
18. FO 800/698, SELWYN LLOYD'S PRIVATE PAPERS, Lloyd, FO Minute, 27 May, 1953.
19. FO 371 104784, ER 1091/232, Ross, FO Minute, 16 June, 1953.

20. FO 371 104791, ER 1091/448, Pullar, FO Minute, 21 October, 1953. Among the measures concerned : increased penalties for infiltrators that are apprehended and brought to trial, improved police and telephone contacts, and allowing Israel police dogs with United Nations observers to follow suspected infiltrators across the border into Jordan.

21. Moshe Sharett, *Yoman Ishi* [a Personal Diary] (*'Sifriat Ma'ariv, Tel-Aviv*, 1979), Vol II, 1954, 23 April, 1954, p.477. [Henceforward referred to as *Yoman Ishi*].

22. FO 371 111073, VR 1072/151, Falla, FO Minute, 9 July, 1954.

23. FO 371 111106, VR 1091/230, Brewis, FO minute, 7 October, 1954.

24. FO 371 104778, ER 1091/60, Evans to Bowker, 7 February, 1953.

25. FO 371 104777, ER 1091/14, Tel Aviv to FO, 3 February, 1953.

26. FO 371 104784, ER 1091/249, Moore to Ross, 16 June, 1953.

27. FO 371 104790, ER 1091/444, Baker, FO Minute, 3 November, 1953.

28. FO 371 111072, VR 1072/100, Tripp, FO Minute, 2 June, 1954.

29. FO 371 111070, VR 1072/62, *Brief for the Secretary of State for Nato meeting and the Geneva conference*, [Undated, though probably, March 1954]. The Contention that retaliatory acts by Israel must inevitably harden Arab attitudes in opposing negotiations had similarly been put forward by the Head of the Eastern Department, Paul Falla, some months previously. See FO 371 104790, ER 1091/438, Falla, FO Minute, 27 October, 1953.

30. FO 371 111070, VR 1072/62, *Brief for the Secretary of State for Nato meeting and the Geneva conference*, [undated, though probably March, 1954].

31. FRUS, 9, Davies to State Department, 23 January, 1952, p.884.

32. FRUS, 9, Acheson to the Embassy in Israel, 15 January, 1952, p.878.

33. FO 371 111072, VR 1072/102, Levant Department to Chancery Baghadad, 10 June, 1954.

34. FO 371 111066, VR 1052/1A, Falla, FO Minute, 4 January, 1954.

35. FO 371 104778, ER 1091/61 Evans to Ross, 12 February, 1953.

36. FO 371 104778, ER 1091/64, Bowker to Evans, 1 March, 1953.

37. FO 371 104779, ER 1091/69, Bowker to Furlonge, 16 March, 1953.

38. FO 371 104778, ER 1091/60, Evans to Bowker, 7 February, 1953.

39. FO 371 111072, VR 1072/142A, Falla, FO Minute, 9 July, 1954. Incidentally, Falla's suggestion was endorsed by his superiors and Britain's Ambassador in Amman duly relayed the message to the Jordanian Government. See FO 371 111073, VR 1072/159, Duke to Eden, 27 July, 1954.

40. FO 371 111101, VR 1091/75, Parliamentary Under-Secretary to Boyd-Carpenter, M.P., 1 May, 1954. See, for instance, FO 371, 111073, VR 1073/167, Lloyd to Davies, M.P., 20 August, 1954, in which the Minister of State wrote that "the basic cause of the unsatisfactory state of affairs on the Arab-Israel border is the refusal of the Arabs even to contemplate peace with Israel".

41. FRUS, 9, Memorandum by Byroade to Dulles, 7 April, 1954, p. 1502.

42. FRUS, 9, Memorandum by Dulles for Byroade, 1 April, 1954, p.1508.

43. Personal interview with Gershon Avner, Jerusalem, 30 May, 1989.

44. See Michael Bar Zohar, *Ben-Gurion (Moadon Israeli Le-Tarbut, Bnei-Brak, 1980)*, pp. 350-364; Arieh Avinery, *Pshitot Ha-Tagmul, Hesrim Shnot Tagmul Israeli Meever Le-Kavei Ha-Hoyev* [The Israeli Commando, a short history of Israeli Commando-1950-1969] pp.33-36.

45. Yearbook of the United Nations, 1953 (Department of Public Information United Nations, New York. September 1954) p. 216.

46. FO 800/698, SELWYN LLOYD'S PRIVATE PAPERS, Record of conversation with Elath, 16 October, 1953.

47. Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, Vol I, 1953-4, 14 October, 1953, pp.36-37. [my translation] To be sure, Sharett had been opposed to an attack of the nature of previous raids that had been carried out by Israel. Had he even suspected, so he confessed to his diary, the death toll that this one would produce, he would have "made a tremendous fuss". Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, Vol I, 16 October, p.44 [my translation].

48. Bar Zohar, *Ben-Gurion*, p. 367; Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, Vol I, 17 October, 1953, p.51; Dan Kurzman, Ben-Gurion (Simon and Schuster, New York, 1983), p. 360.

49. Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, Vol I, 18 October, 1953, p.51.

50. Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, Vol I, 20 October, 1953, pp. 59-60.

51. FO 371 104789, ER 1091/386, Tel Aviv to FO, 20 October, 1953.

52. FO 371 104789, ER 1081/131, Tel Aviv to FO, 17 October, 1953.

53. FO 371 104789, ER 1091/409, Baker, FO Minute, 26 October, 1953.

54. Quoted in Yearbook of the United Nations, 1953, p. 223.

55. ISA, 21/39B, Tekoah to Avner, 10 August, 1954; ISA 21/39B, Tekoah to Avner, 17 August, 1954.

56. ISA, 2440/3/A, Elath to Sharett, 12 November, 1953. [originally written in English]. Nevertheless, drawing upon a more recent analogy, Avner argued that, compared to the world's outcry at Israel's handling of the Intifida on the West Bank and Gaza reactions in the wake of Qibya paled into insignificance. Personal interview.

57. FO 371 104789, ER 1091/394, FO to Tel Aviv, 15 October, 1953. A note in that spirit was duly presented to the Israeli Government. See FO 371 104789, ER 1091/409.

58. FO 800/698, SELWYN LLOYD'S PRIVATE PAPERS, Record of Conversation with Elath, 16 October, 1953.

59. FO 371 104790, ER 1091/439, Strang, FO Minute, Record of Conversation with Elath, 28 October, 1953.

60. Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, Vol I, 19 October, 1953, p. 54.

61. Hansard, H.C., Vol. 518, 26 October, 1953 col. 2425.

62. FO 371 104758, ER 1072/20, Tel Aviv to FO, 19 October, 1953.

63. FO 371 104758, ER 1072/20, Tel Aviv to FO, 19 October, 1953.

64. FO 371 104758, ER 1072/35, New York to FO, 22 October, 1953; FO to New York, 23 October, 1953.

65. FO 371 104758, ER 1072/35, New York to FO, 22 October, 1953.

66. FO 371 104759, ER 1072/84, Lloyd, FO Minute, Record of Conversation with Eban, 28 October, 1953.

67. FO 371 104759, ER 1072/80, Eden, FO Minute, Record of Conversation with Elath, 2 November, 1953.

68. FO 371 104759, ER 1072/87, Falla, FO Minute, 30 October, 1953. His superiors, including Eden, appeared to have concurred with his assessment, since they read his minute and added no dissenting coment. It should be noted, however, that the final draft of the resolution did contain a reference to the "obligations" of both parties "under the General Armistice Agreement". See Yearbook of the United Nations, 1953, p. 223.

69. FO 371 104758, ER 1072/35, New York to FO, 22 October 1953.

70. FO 371 104759, ER 1072/87c, New York to FO, 30 October, 1953.

71. FO 371 104759, ER 1072/76, 2 November, 1953.

72. FO 371 104760, ER 1072/110A, Falla, FO Minute, 11 November, 1953. The final draft of this particular paragraph read as follows: "'Reaffirms that it is essential in order to achieve progress by peaceful means toward a lasting settlement of the issues outstanding between them that the Parties abide by their obligations under the General Armistice Agreement and the resolutions of the Security Council.'" Quoted in Yearbook of the United Nations, 1953, p.223. Presumably a less objectionable clause, so far as the Arabs and the British were concerned, than the one proposed by the State Department.

73. FO 371 104760, ER 1072/106, Baghdad to FO, 10 November, 1953.

74. FO 371 102760, ER 1072/109, Baker, FO Minute, 13 November, 1953.

75. FO 371 104760, ER 1072/109, Falla, FO Minute, 13 November, 1953.

76. FO 371 104759, ER 1072/61 B.M.E.O. to FO, 28 October, 1953.

77. See FO 371 104759, ER 1072/87, FO to Washington, 31 October, 1953; FO 371 104759, ER 1072/72, Allen, FO Minute, 3 November, 1953; FO 371 104760, ER 1072/109, FO to Baghdad, 14 November, 1953.

78. Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, Vol I, 20 November, 1953, p. 173; FO 371 104761, ER 1072/149, Tel Aviv to FO, 21 November, 1953.

79. Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, Vol I, 20 November, 1953, p. 172.

80. Quoted in FO 371 111068, VR 1071/23; FO 371 104761, ER 1072/168.

81. Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, Vol I, 20 November, 1953, p. 178.

82. FO 371 104761, ER 1072/156, New York to FO, 23 November, 1953.

83. FO 371 104761, ER 1072/157, New York to FO, 23 November, 1953.

84. FO 371 104761, ER 1072/157, Falla, FO Minute, 24 November, 1953. Falla's superiors, including Eden, concurred.

85. FO 371 104761, ER 1072/166, Washington to FO, 25 November, 1953; FO 371 104761, ER 1072/167, Baker, FO Minute, 26 November, 1953.

86. See, FO 371 104761, ER 1072/156, New York to FO, 23 November, 1953; Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, Vol I, 24 November, 1953, p. 191.

87. FO 371 104761, ER 1072/167, Baker, FO Minute, 26 November, 1953.

88. FO 371 104761, ER 1072/167, Baker, FO Minute, 26 November, 1953. Falla's remarks were written on the sideline of Baker's minute.

89. FO 371 104761, ER 1072/167, Amman to FO, 25 November, 1953.

90. FO 371 104762, ER 1072/184, Tel Aviv to FO, 1 December, 1953.

91. FO 371 104763, ER 1072/215, Falla, FO Minute, 3 December, 1953. Assuming Jordan advanced a positive reply, the tendency within the Israeli Foreign Ministry was to send a mixed diplomatic-military delegation, headed by the Director-General of the Ministry, Walter Eytan. Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, Vol I, 27 November, 1953, p. 198. The idea of a purely military delegation or a high-ranking political delegation was apparently either discarded or not contemplated.

92. FO 371 104762, ER 1072/196, Amman to FO, 3 December, 1953.

93. FO 371 104762, ER 1072/197, Amman to FO, 3 December, 1953.

94. FO 371 104764, ER 1072/236, Duff, FO Minute, 16 December, 1953.

95. FO 371 104764, ER 1072/252, Baker, FO Minute, 18 December, 1953; see also FO 371 104764, ER 1072/236, Baker, FO Minute, 18 December, 1953.

96. FO 371 111068, VR 1071/8, Amman to FO, 8 January, 1954.

97. FO 371 111068, VR 1071/12, Amman to FO, 8 January, 1954. Four separate Mixed Armistice Commissions were established under the Armistice Agreements signed in the wake of the 1948 War: Israel-Jordan, Israel-Egypt, Israel-Syria, Israel-Lebanon. Their object was to help implement and supervise the Armistice Agreements. The MAC were bipartite military commissions in which each side was represented by military delegates, though civilians often took part in their proceedings in the capacity of advisers. Each MAC was chaired by the Chief of Staff of the United Nations Truce Supervisory Organisation, who usually was represented by one of his senior officers. Preferably, decisions were to be unanimous; a simple majority, however was enough. On contentious issues the final decision rested with the Chairman of the MAC concerned.

98. FO 371 111068, VR 1071/12, Pullar, FO Minute, 23 January, 1954.

99. FO 371 111068, VR 1071/12, Baker, FO Minute, 26 January, 1954.

100. FO 371 111068, VR 1071/12, Pullar, FO Minute, 23 January, 1954.

101. FO 371 111068, VR 1071/15, Falla, FO Minute, 5 February, 1954.

102. FO 371 111068, VR 1071/15, Allen, FO Minute, 5 February, 1954.

103. FO 371 111068, VR 1071/31, Lloyd, FO Minute, Record of Conversation with Elath, 19 March, 1954.

104. FO 371 111078, VR 1073/59, Furlonge to Allen, 26 March, 1954.

105. FO 371 11100, VR 1091/69, Tripp, FO Minute, 9 April, 1954.

106. FO 371 111069, VR 1072/28, Evans to Allen, 21 March, 1954.

107. Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, Vol II, 18 March, 1954, p. 405.

108. Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, Vol II, 27 March, 1954, p. 415.

109. FO 371 111099, VR 1091/28, Tel Aviv to FO, 30 March, 1954.

110. FO 371 111069, VR 1072/35, FO to Tel Aviv, 2 April, 1954.

111. Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, Vol II, 4 April, 1954, p. 432.

112. FO 371 111070, VR 1072/68, Churchill to Sharett, 23 April, 1954. Unfortunately, Sharett wrote nothing in his diary between 25.4.54 to 15.5.54, except some general headlines, thus depriving his readers of his comments upon this letter. He did mention, to be sure, under the date 28.4.54, having received a letter from Churchill. See Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, p. 479.

113. FO 371 111069, VR 1072/35, [name unclear], FO Minute, 30 March, 1954.

114. FO 371 111069, VR 1072/35, Allen, FO Minute, 31 March, 1954.

115. See FO 371 111069, VR 1072/35, [name unclear], 1 April, 1954.

116. See, for instance, the exchange with Selwyn Lloyd on a reply note, drafted by the Foreign Office, which he should have conveyed to the Israeli Government regarding Israeli concerns over the Suez Base Agreement of 1954. Suez Canal Boycott Chapter, pp. 118-119.

117. FO 371 111070, VR 1072/43, Allen, FO Minute, Record of Conversation with Elath, 31 March, 1954. Incidentally, when suggesting what kind of message Churchill might convey to Sharett, Allen similarly employed the term *disastrous* in reference to the consequences that would befall Israel in the event of Britain having to fulfil its obligations to Jordan.

118. FO 371 111070, VR 1072/43, Kirkpatrick, FO Minute, 31 March 1954.

119. FO 371 111070, VR 1072/43, Eden, FO Minute, 1 April, 1954.

120. Hansard, H.C., Vol 525, 31 March, 1954, col. 190. A point he had previously raised in Cabinet. See CAB 129/64, 13 November, 1953, Memorandum by Eden, MILITARY AID TO JORDAN IN THE EVENT OF ATTACK BY ISRAEL.

121. FO 371 111070, VR 1072/38, Tel Aviv to FO, 6 April, 1954.

122. See FO 371 111069, VR 1072/34, Evans to Eden, 30 March, 1954, in which Evans suggested that "it is conceivable that if it were not for the security afforded by the Anglo-Jordan Treaty [...] the Arab League as a whole might, if faced directly with the military strength of Israel, be more inclined to pursue a realistic and compromising policy".

123. CAB 129/64, Memorandum by Eden, MILITARY AID TO JORDAN IN THE EVENT OF ATTACK BY ISRAEL, 13 November, 1953.

124. FO 371 110831, V1192/71G, DEPLOYMENT OF BRITISH FORCES IN JORDAN, 27 July, 1954.

125. CAB 131/14, AID TO JORDAN, MEMORANDUM BY THE CHIEFS OF STAFF, 22 October, 1954.

126. FO 371 111114, VR 1105/4A, Levant Department Memorandum ISRAEL'S ECONOMY IN RELATION TO WAR, 14 October, 1954.

127. FO 371 111114, VR 1105/2, Chancery Tel Aviv to Levant Department, 26 July, 1954.

128. FO 371 111073, VR 1072/163, Evans to Falla, 3 August, 1954

129. FO 371 111114, VR 1105/2, Chancery Tel Aviv to Levant Department, 26 July, 1954.

130 See FO 371 111114, VR 1105/2, Chancery Tel Aviv to Levant Department, 26 July, 1954.

131 ISA. 40/14B, Gazit to Elath, 7 December, 1954. [originally reported in Hebrew; my translation].

132 ISA 40/14B, Gazit to Elath, 7 December, 1954.

133 CAB 129/64, Memorandum by Eden MILITARY AID TO JORDAN IN THE EVENT OF ATTACK BY ISRAEL, 13 November, 1953.

134 FO371 111100, VR 1091/65, Falla, FO Minute, 12 April, 1954. This line was adopted by Falla's superiors, including Eden.

135 FO371 111070, VR 1072/56, FO to Washington, 12 April, 1954; FRUS, 9, Dulles to the State Department, 13 April, 1954, pp.1513-1514.

136 FO 371 111070, VR 1072/56A, Levant Department Minute, 20 April 1954.

137 FO 111070, VR 1072/57, Tel Aviv to FO, 14 April, 1954.

138 FO 371 111077, VR 1072/74, Moore (for Evans) to Allen, 27 April, 1954.

139 FO 371 111072, VR 1072/101, Chancery Amman to FO, 26 May, 1954.

140 FRUS, 9, Russell to the State Department, 17 April, 1954, p.1521; FO 371 111071, VR 1072/74, Moore (for Evans) to Allen, 27 April, 1954.

141 FO 371 111071, FO Minute, RECORD MEETING IN THE STATE DEPARTMENT ON APRIL 26, 1954 TO DISCUSS POSSIBLE MEASURES WHICH MIGHT BE CONSIDERED TO IMPROVE THE ARAB-ISRAEL BORDER SITUATION.

142 FO 371 111071, VR 1072/76, FO to Geneva Conference (UK Delegation), 5 May, 1954; FO 371 111071, VR 1072/76, FO to Geneva Conference (UK Delegation), 5 May, 1954 [two separate telegrams]; FO 371 111071, VR 1072/78, Falla FO Minute, 7 May, 1954; FO 371 111071, VR 1072/78, FO to Washington, 7 May, 1954; FO 371 111071, VR 1072/82, Washington to FO, 13 May 1954; FRUS, 9, Dulles to Consulate General at Istanbul, 11 May, 1954, pp.1553-1555.

143 FO 371 111072, VR 1072/114, Falla, FO Minute, 14 June, 1954; FRUS, 9, Aldrich to the State Department, 14 June, 1954, p.1576.

144 FO 371 111073, VR 1072/172, Evans to Falla, 10 August, 1954. The detailed formal Israel list of reply is to be found in FRUS, 9, Russell to to the State Department, 30 July, 1954, pp.1594-1596.

CHAPTER THREE :

BRITAIN AND THE SUEZ CANAL BOYCOTT

From its inception, the State of Israel was beset by an economic boycott imposed by its Arab neighbours. This affected not only Arabs and Israelis, but third parties as well. Any company maintaining commercial links with Israel was prohibited from establishing similar contacts with Arab states. By the same token, individuals who had invested in the Israeli economy were barred from any business liaison with the Arab world. Port facilities were refused to vessels placed on the Arab League blacklist on account of their having conveyed or being suspected of having conveyed goods to Israel. Airlines flying directly to Israel, or overflying its territory on their way to Arab countries, were also boycotted; this directive, however, was implemented only in a partial and *ad hoc* manner. A particularly conspicuous and harmful manifestation of the boycott was the naval blockade imposed by the Egyptian authorities on shipping passing through the Suez Canal *en route* from or to Israel; a blockade that was to be extended and applied in the Gulf of Aqaba as well.

Egyptian interference with shipping in the Suez Canal commenced some months prior to the proclamation of the State of Israel in 1948. In the wake of the establishment of Israel, though, this measure was translated into formal, binding policy. Consequently, every vessel passing through the canal, in a south to north direction, was liable to be searched. Indeed, many ships of different nationalities were compelled to unload cargoes believed to be destined for Israel. Seizures of cargo continued throughout 1948, though the second half of the year witnessed a reduction both in the scale of such interference with shipping and in the delays which were occasioned.

Although Egypt and Israel signed an Armistice Agreement on 14 February 1949, the Egyptian authorities refused to abolish the Suez Canal restrictions. However, by September 1949 the Egyptian list of contraband goods was confined to combustibles (including oil) and military equipment; military inspection was replaced by regular customs inspection.

However, in August 1950, the Egyptian Government published new regulations forcing shippers of oil or other contraband cargoes, whatever their destination, to be equipped with certificates of "end-use". These were supposed to demonstrate that their cargoes had been unloaded at the stated port of destination and been taken into the venue declared for local consumption. Ships which were found not to have complied, or to have conveyed "contraband" to Israel from any source since June 1950, were liable to be blacklisted; a measure which entailed the denial of all ports' facilities and right to load cargoes in Egyptian ports.[1]

Since close to a third of the ships passing through the Suez Canal flew the British flag, the Egyptian restrictions inevitably caused much anxiety in Whitehall.[2] More particularly, the Egyptian ban on the use of the Canal by oil tankers led to the partial closing of the Haifa refineries. By the end of 1951 the Haifa refineries were working at an annual rate of about 800,000 tons, equivalent to 22 per cent of its capacity.[3] This deprived British-controlled oil companies of some 2.75 million tons of sterling oil products, worth about £18 million per annum.[4]

Thus, so far as British interests were concerned, the two principal manifestations of the Egyptian blocade of the Suez Canal were: the confiscation of

British-owned and British-insured cargoes - especially prevalent in the period prior to 1951; and the denial of the free passage of oil to the Haifa refineries.[5]

Britain was in a dilemma. Whatever action it sought to undertake, international law was not entirely on its side - or so the Law Officers contended. In the advice tendered in the first half of 1950 they maintained, as summarized by the African Department of the Foreign Office,

(a) That the situation in Palestine since May 1948 was to all intents and purposes a war, and as such that it conferred belligerent rights on Egypt.

(b) That Egypt was probably entitled under the terms of the Suez Canal Convention to exercise belligerent rights within the Canal itself.

The Law Officers argued that with the passage of time Egypt's case for the continued application of restrictive measures in the Canal diminished. The Law Officers concluded by emphasising the weakness of the British position on this question, which rendered any recourse to international arbitration ill-advised.[6]

Still, by 1951 the Foreign Office considered that "Whatever may have been the legal or moral justification for these restrictions in the past, after over two years of armistice in the Middle East, they can no longer be considered defensible on any reasonable grounds."[7] Furthermore, in an apparent challenge to the Law Officers' advice - though without conveying it as such - the Foreign Office advanced the argument to the effect that

> if Egypt is not justified in exercising belligerent maritime rights in the high seas, a fortiori she is not justified in doing so in the Canal, whose neutrality is subject to exceptional international safeguards.[8]

The British Government, therefore, felt justified in lodging a strong protest to the Egyptian Government. However, the British Ambassador in Cairo, Sir Ralph Stevenson, questioned the wisdom of such a move. Lacking any effective material leverage with which to exert pressure on the Egyptians, the protest would have no effect, he argued. Moreover, it would merely render more difficult the continuation of the defence negotiations between the two countries.[9] The Permanent Under-Secretary of the Foreign Office, Sir William Strang, disagreed. "I think that Sir R. Stevenson should submit a strong protest to the Egyptian Government."[10]

Stevenson duly presented the protest note to the Egyptian Foreign Minister, who, personally, saw no possibility of Egypt meeting British demands to lift the Canal restrictions. He further "repeated time-honoured accusation that Israel had been created by the Western Powers for the express purpose of keeping Egypt and other Arab States weak."[11]

The divergence of views concerning the delivery of a protest to Egypt reflected, to some extent, a stronger disagreement which emerged in the Foreign Office on whether to support a resolution at the Security Council condemning Egyptian restrictions on the Canal.

The strength of Egyptian feelings on this question was such, explained Stevenson, as to render any note of censure at the Security Council entirely ineffectual. Stevenson warned that a resolution ignored by Egypt would transform

that country in the Arab world into a martyr. "A note of censure", he concluded, "might well do more harm than good."[12]

Britain's Ambassador at the United Nations, Sir Gladwyn Jebb, entertained serious doubts as regards the effectiveness of such a resolution. It might, he argued, not attain its declared object whilst Britain would merely incur odium in Egypt and the other Arab countries for scant or no material return.[13]

Sir William Strang came out strongly in favour of a resolution at the Security Council.

> I do not think we should be deterred by the fear of odium in Egypt and the other Arab States or by concern for the effect on Anglo-Egyptian negotiations (they are not going to succeed whatever happens). Our object should be to secure a majority for a strong resolution condemning the Egyptian action.[14]

Apart from Stevenson and Jebb, The State Department, in the United States, was not enthusiastic either about bringing the matter of Egyptian restrictions before the Security Council.[15] The United States Delegation at the United Nations was particularly emphatic in their suggestion that the British be dissuaded from such a move. A public debate, it argued, would be prejudicial. It would tend to freeze Egyptian "intransigence". Furthermore, it would damage the United States' position in Egypt in particular and in the Arab world in general. A debate would also sharpen British-Egyptian differences. Indeed, it would exacerbate Arab-Israeli relations. The only real hope, contended the United States Delegation, rested on continued, concerted, behind-the-scenes diplomatic efforts on the part of the countries most closely affected.[16]

The Foreign Office disagreed. Diplomatic representations had failed to elicit a positive response from Egypt. "Further efforts at persuasion seem hardly worthwhile."[17] Still, the Foreign Office was keen to persuade the State Department to drop its doubts and proceed to embrace a common stance vis-à-vis the Egyptians at the Security Council.

In transferring Britain's grievance against Egypt from the private to the public realm of diplomacy, the Foreign Office seemed to have been actuated by two factors - one external, the other internal in nature. There prevailed a rather vague sense that there was an "obvious advantage in having Egypt held up in a public pillory" for its actions.[18] As for the prospects of Egypt heeding a Security Council resolution to lift the Canal restrictions, the Foreign Office was under no illusions. Nevertheless, "the Egyptians, having flouted the United Nations, will have put themselves morally in the wrong." And this could be employed as a means to thwart Egyptian endeavours to secure international support as regards future British-Egyptian deliberations over the 1936 Treaty and the Sudan.[19] In other words, an unheeded censure vote on the Suez Canal, it was thought, might enhance British standing in other domains of British-Egyptian relations.

There was an additional consideration shaping British policy on this matter. It was increasingly felt that public opinion in Britain expected the government to take the lead and adopt a firm stance on Egyptian restrictions in the Canal.[20] Even the Ambassador in Egypt, who was not enthusiastic about a Security Council resolution, recognised that "some action may be necessary from the point of view of British public opinion".[21]

By 17 July there was a sense in the Foreign Office that the State Department had "gradually moved towards our point of view recently".[22] Indeed, on 19 July, the Secretary of State indicated that the United States was disposed to co-sponsor a resolution, assuming that the "UK will continue to take lead particularly in securing other co-sponsors."[23]

On 1 September 1951, the Security Council adopted a resolution calling on Egypt "to terminate the restrictions on the passage of international commercial shipping and goods through the Suez Canal [. . .]"[24] Egypt refused to comply, claiming that it enjoyed the rights bestowed upon a belligerent state. Thereafter, this resolution was to become the legal cornerstone, the moral foundation, upon which Israel, and indeed Britain and other maritime states, were to pursue their diplomatic endeavours aimed at lifting the Egyptian restrictions on the Canal.

Already four months prior to the adoption of the resolution in question, Eden, then opposition spokesman on foreign affairs, suggested that an oil tanker escorted by Royal Navy gun boats should be sent through the Suez Canal to the Haifa refineries. The then leader of the opposition, Winston Churchill, supported the idea.[25] The Foreign Secretary, Herbert Morrison, instructed that the Chiefs of Staff should be asked to convey their opinion on the feasibility of the proposal.[26]

The Chiefs of Staff reported that, in their view, there was nothing to be gained by conveying one tanker through the canal, if - as would probably happen -

any further tankers would be obstructed. The Chiefs of Staff concluded that in order to maintain a regular flow of tankers Britain would be compelled to take over the Canal and its administration.[27] The disadvantages entailed in this option, contended the Foreign Office, outweighed any advantage that might accrue should it be pursued.[28] The Prime Minister, for his part, made it clear that he agreed with the Chiefs of Staff.[29] Eden, however, commented to Morrison that he was not altogether convinced by the arguments advanced by the Foreign Office in reaching its negative conclusion.[30]

Meanwhile, the State Department, which had been acquainted with Eden's suggestion, regarded with horror the prospect of a tanker forcing its way through the Canal in the manner proposed. Not only would such an act be most prejudicial to Western standing in the Middle East, but the question of the nationalisation of the Canal might consequently gain a new lease of life.[31]

Independently of the Chiefs of Staff, Britain's Envoy in Cairo argued similarly that even if "the first tanker got through without any serious trouble, any repetition of the manoeuvre would, in my opinion, cause a showdown between us."[32]

Following the Security Council resolution, and Egypt's non-compliance, Israel's Minister in London, Eliahu Elath, enquired whether the British Government had not contemplated escorting a tanker through the Canal to test Egyptian reaction. After he was told that the government feared the negative repercussions this action might precipitate, "Elath then suggested that perhaps we should try and send a tanker through without escort"; to which the reply was given that "if we did so and it was intercepted an incident would have arisen which it might be difficult to resolve."[33]

The idea re-emerged the following month, when the Chief of the Air Staff suggested to the Prime Minister to send tankers through the Suez Canal. Following instructions from Atlee, the Foreign Office proceeded to examine the proposal. Once again, the Foreign Office recommended not to pursue the matter any further. The Arab States might construe such an action as rendering assistance to their arch-enemy, Israel; this would damage the prospects of British-Arab negotiations aimed at securing a regional system of defence.[34] In addition, the United States would not be keen on the idea, and its view must be considered.[35] And, anyhow, without first securing control of the Suez Canal the entire exercise would be futile.[36] The Foreign Secretary commented in a seemingly reluctant tone,

> For the moment I agree but I should much like to see the tankers go through. We have to keep ourselves and Israel in mind as well as the Arabs.[37]

Immediately upon assuming the premiership, Churchill indicated, as the Cabinet Conclusions recorded,

> that policy should now be based on the principle that it was the duty of the United Kingdom Government to keep the Suez Canal open to the shipping of the world, *using such force as might be necessary for that purpose.* [my italics]

He believed therefore that

> It would be consistent with that principle that oil tankers bound for the refinery at Haifa should be allowed to pass through the Canal.[38]

Eden, now back at the Foreign Office, fully endorsed the principle enunciated by Churchill. He doubted, however, whether it would be wise to apply it at the moment to the particular case of tankers destined to Haifa. He explained, as the Cabinet Conclusions recorded, that

> This was a matter of timing. Our immediate aim should be to prevent the other Arab states from supporting the attitude taken by the Egyptian Government in abrogating the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936; and precipitate action on our part regarding the passage of tankers through the Canal would be likely to arouse resentment in some of the other Arab states.[39]

The evidence available indicates that Eden reached his conclusion before he consulted the Foreign Office about it. He did not appear to have been influenced by the arguments advanced by his officials, since they presented their adverse views on Churchill's comments one, two days *after* the Cabinet meeting had taken place.[40]

Eden could report back to his officials that "P.M. agreed [. . .] that issue was one of timing".[41]

Responding to parliamentary queries over the government's inaction as regards the Suez Canal restrictions, Eden revealed that

> This matter had been discussed with the oil companies concerned [. . .] they do not feel that in present circumstances the situation would be assisted by Government's action.

Eden then made it clear that

> I agree with this view and do not, therefore, propose to take any action at the moment.[42]

Subsequently, however, the Foreign Office acknowledged that "The oil companies are [. . .] by no means of one mind on the subject." Whereas the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company believed there was much to be said for attempting to resume the shipment of oil through the Suez Canal to Haifa, Shell warned of the negative consequences of such an act upon British-Egyptian relations.[43]

Despite the divergence of views between the oil companies, the Foreign Office still argued that

> The present moment does not appear to be a suitable one to raise this issue, either from the point of view of our relations with Arab countries [. . .] or from that of the oil companies themselves, whose position in the Middle East would be considerably weakened by a move which might lend colour to an accusation that they were favouring Israel.[44]

Nevertheless, faced with hostile questions in the House of Commons concerning the apparent *volte face* by Eden on this matter, the Minister of State at the Foreign Office, Selwyn Lloyd, advanced an entirely new argument.

> It would not be correct for Her Majesty's Government to take unilateral action to secure the implementation by Egypt of the Security Council's resolution of 1st September, 1951.

He further indicated that

> The reason why action has not been taken in this matter is that at the moment other negotiations are going on between this country and Egypt and it is not considered appropriate to raise this matter first.[45]

The British Government, then, refused to countenance even a diplomatic approach designed to persuade or compel Egypt to comply with the Security Council resolution, since it believed that "The present moment would [. . .] be inopportune for direct action designed to secure such compliance." Discussions were being conducted with the United States and French governments "with a view to determining the moment at which the matter could advantageously be raised with the Egyptian Government".[46]

The Israeli Government had previously been advised by Britain to await the outcome of the British-Egyptian negotiations before attempting to secure Egyptian compliance of the Security Council resolution.[47]

Similarly, the United States believed that

> element which shld govern any actions at this stage re Suez blockade is course of Anglo-Egyptian negots. Accordingly, we do not believe Suez restriction problem shld be raised while Anglo-Egyptian conversations continue [. . .] *We understand UK del has been instructed by London this sense.*[48] [my italics]

Still, the British were not entirely in one mind as to how to proceed. Britain's representative at the United Nations, Jebb, appeared to be persuaded by Israeli arguments in favour of diplomatic action.

> Perhaps the Security Council ought never to have passed the resolution; but since it did so I do not think that we ought indefinitely to acquiesce without protest in its repudiation by the Egyptians.[49]

Eden himself endorsed the Foreign Office line with apparent reservation.

> I think we should raise this issue with the Egyptians at an appropriate moment and not merely "stall". We are sitting on the Canal with 80,000 men and allowing the Egyptians to break their international engagements.[50]

So far as the Israelis were concerned, there was precious little to commend in Britain's policy. Israel's Representative at the United Nations, Abba Eban, who had been actively engaged in the diplomatic deliberations related to the question of the Suez blockade from its inception, stated categorically "that there is nothing to be said in favour of the British record on the Suez access question". Indeed, he argued further,

> it is a story of utter frivolity and ineptitude for three whole years, well reflected in Eden breathing fire and brimstone before election, and bleating ineffectually afterwards.[51]

Failure to implement the Security Council resolution caused significant economic loss to Israel, since it was obliged to import oil from Venezuela, rather than from a much nearer location, at approximately twice the cost. Furthermore, due to the blockade, Israel was precluded from purchasing relatively cheap products from Africa and Asia.[52]

In Parliament, Eden's perceived change of attitude over the Egyptian restrictions in the Suez Canal elicited some negative comments. Michael Foot, for instance, articulated the views espoused by members of the opposition by cynically asking Selwyn Lloyd "Whether it would be helpful to send the Egyptian Government copies of the speech delivered by the Foreign Office when he was in opposition". The Minister of State, echoing a reply he had himself advanced a year previously, maintained that "Since then there has been a decision of the Security Council which alters the situation."[53] In what respect had the situation been altered by that decision? Selwyn Lloyd did not elaborate.

Neither on that occasion, nor in a subsequent parliamentary reply on this very question,[54] did the government's spokesmen refer to or even allude to the British-Egyptian negotiations as a motive shaping Britain's policy. In the correspondence relayed during those months between the Foreign Office and the British Embassy in Cairo, there is not even a hint of the Security Council resolution - and any change it may have brought about in the prevailing conditions - as a factor in the decision-making process. However, the reason why Britain had been refraining from mounting a diplomatic campaign designed to secure the lifting of the Canal boycott did not elude the British Embassy in Cairo.

> A general attack has been postponed for a long time past on the grounds that defence negotiations [with Egypt] or the expectation of them made the moment inappropriate.[55]

Indeed, the Foreign Office made it clear that even an approach to the Egyptian Government urging it to alter its stance on the blacklisting of British ships

- suspected of having conveyed "contraband" cargo to Israeli venues - would have to await the signing of a defence agreement.[56]

The Foreign Office knew that it could rely on the support of the State Department which considered likewise that a British-Egyptian agreement should precede any endeavour to secure the removal of the Canal restrictions.[57]

The Israeli Government, however, harboured profound apprehension at the prospect of an agreement between Britain and Egypt. For this would have entailed the eventual evacuation of the eighty thousand British troops from the Canal zone, thus leaving the Canal - so the Israelis feared - under the absolute control of the Egyptians. "It is one thing", the State Department reported Foreign Minister Sharett to have said, "to have an important Western power exercising a moderating influence on Egypt's control in the Canal zone but quite another matter to give the Egyptians control without any precautionary measures being taken to satisfy the rights of other states."[58]

The extent of Israeli fears may be gauged by the decision of the Israeli Government to intercede with Churchill directly on this matter. In a note addressed to him, the Israeli Government stressed that it was

> of paramount international interest that the final settlement with Egypt as to her status in the Canal area be made contingent upon Egypt's compliance with the [. . .] resolution of the Security Council [reference is to the 1951 resolution].[59]

Meanwhile, in the same note, Israel requested an opportunity to consult with the British Government on those aspects of British-Egyptian negotiations pertaining to Israeli interests. Selwyn Lloyd, who professed to be surprised by the public announcement of this note by the Israeli Embassy in London, suggested to the Prime Minister to convey to Israel "a rather colourless reply."[60] The draft reply sent by the Foreign Office to Churchill was not necessarily the one the Prime Minister had been hoping for.

> I think this should be strengthened. Israel is the most powerful fighting force in the Middle East and may come in very handy in dealing with Egypt if Neguib attacks us. We ought never to have allowed the obstruction in the Suez Canal of oil for Haifa. Pray let me have a more vigorous draft. If necessary I will see the Israel Ambassador myself. The late Mr Bevin, who had a strain of anti-Semitism in his thought, put the Foreign Office in the wrong side when Israel was attacked by all the Arab States.[61]

In case he should have been suspected by Selwyn Lloyd and the Foreign Office of being rather too implicit, leaving them to infer what his real views were, Churchill, referring to a somewhat different episode though dwelling on the same theme, made it clear that

> I do not mind it being known here or in Cairo that I am on the side of Israel and against her ill-treatment by the Egyptians.

Indeed,

> The idea of selling Israel down the drain in order to persuade the Egyptians to kick us out of the Canal more gently is not one which attracts me.

Alluding to a pragmatic dimension in his position, Churchill concluded,

> We have probably got to have a showdown with Neguib, and Israel will be an important factor both Parliamentary and military. We must not throw away any important card we have in our hand.[62]

Thus, Churchill and the Foreign Office were not in disagreement as to the unacceptability of the Egyptian ban. Churchill's attitude, though, appeared to reflect a personal involvement, an emotional attachment, absent in the stance adopted by officials at the Foreign Office. Churchill seemed to have interpreted the Foreign Office's strong preference for delaying diplomatic moves as regards the Canal restrictions and general lukewarm posture towards Israel as a manifestation of a hostile policy towards the latter. Prompted by a pro-Israeli attitude and a pragmatic assessment of the advantages to be derived from such an attitude, Churchill identified inaction with appeasement: Israel was being sacrificed so as to facilitate an agreement with Egypt over the future of the Canal base; this was, so Churchill appeared to argue, both morally unacceptable and pragmatically unwise.

The British Government, like the Israeli, was apprehensive over the possible ramifications of an agreement with Egypt upon the freedom of navigation in the Suez Canal. British decision-makers, however, were worried by a wider dimension of the question, extending beyond existing Egyptian restrictions against Israel. Nevertheless, as measures were being contemplated to ensure future Egyptian observance of the principle of free transit in the Canal, Eden still insisted that

> No guarantees that might be obtained from the Egyptian Government nor measures adopted by the maritime powers could be regarded as effective unless they led to the removal of Egyptian contraband control on cargoes passing through the Canal for Israel.

He advanced, though, a note of caution to the effect that Britain "should be reluctant to be further implicated in the dispute between Israel and the Arab States". Considering the strong opposition to be expected from all Arab states to any measure aimed at lifting the blockade against Israel, Eden indicated that "before a decision was taken [. . .] it would be necessary to give further consideration to the possible adverse effect of such Arab opposition on United Kingdom and other Western interests."[63]

A year later, the question was advanced in Cabinet as to whether the right of international passage through the Canal should not be raised in the context of the defence negotiations then taking place. However, it was finally decided against it since, it was argued, the two issues ought to be treated separately. Besides, it was deemed "most unwise to introduce a new and controversial element into the defence negotiations at this stage."[64]

Nevertheless, the following month the Cabinet agreed "to secure Egyptian assent to the inclusion in the preamble to the Agreement" of a clause referring, in general terms, to the principle of freedom of navigation. In addition, it was agreed to indicate to Egypt "that we [. . .] wish to see a suitable article included in the body of the Agreement".[65] The Cabinet was subsequently told by Eden, as the Cabinet Conclusions recorded, that the Egyptians "were willing to include in the preamble to an agreement a satisfactory reference to the Suez Canal".[66]

Meanwhile, the blockade against Israel remained unaltered. That is, until 7 December 1953, when the Egyptian Government issued a decree, with immediate effect, which added to the list of contraband goods prohibited from being conveyed through the Suez Canal "'foodstuffs and all other articles which may implement the war effort of the Zionists in Palestine in any manner whatsoever'".[67] For the Israelis this was a serious matter, considering, for instance, that 70 per cent of Israel's meat supplies were transported through the Canal.[68] Expressing the views of the African Department at the Foreign Office, C. B. Bromley wrote: "I do not think we can do more than express our sympathy."[69]

At the beginning of 1954, the Israeli Government announced that it wished to raise the question of the blockade, and its intensification, at the Security Council. The African Department at the Foreign Office indicated "that we favour support for Israel's action." Furthermore, it concluded that "*our negotiations with Egypt are hardly likely to be affected one way or the other.* [my italics]"[70] Both Selwyn Lloyd and Eden endorsed the recommendation of the African Department.[71] Eden, however, entertained no illusions about the outcome of the proposed diplomatic undertaking. "I think it unlikely", he wrote to the Prime Minister, "that the United Nations organisation will do anything effective."[72]

As far as Churchill was concerned, there was a basic principle involved. "The Egyptians", he maintained, had "no right to use an international waterway for the purposes of blockade." In addition, Churchill was aware of the domestic political advantages that could accrue to his government should the question of freedom of navigation in Suez be brought into prominence.

> The fact that Israel is the victim will give us a measure of support from the opposition which may be convenient. It will also please our own dissentients. There are not many aspects of the Middle Eastern problem about which this could be said.[73]

The "dissentients" to whom Churchill seemed to be alluding were those Conservative Members of Parliament who were opposed to an agreement with Egypt designed to evacuate the British military base from the Suez Canal, fearing as they did the adverse effect of such an evacuation upon British interests and prestige in the Middle East. They came to be known as the Suez Group and were led by Captain Charles Waterhouse, traditionally sumpathetic to the Arab cause, and Julian Amery, a supporter of Israel. The latter notwithstanding, many of its members were identified with the Arab case. Nevertheless, their and Israel's interests happened to coincide on the question of the Suez Canal. Churchill therefore realised that a diplomatic move against Egypt over its blockade of the Suez Canal would inevitably elicit their support.

Eden became uneasy at the prospect of renewed public debate over the Canal restrictions. He was convinced that

> if the Egyptians can be persuaded to rescind their restrictions and the Israelis consequently to withdraw their resolution, we shall have gained what we want. A public dispute will only sharpen Israeli-Arab hatreds which are already so acute.[74]

Churchill disagreed.

> The more we can bring the Suez Canal question to the front the greater will be the strength of our position towards Egypt [referring to British-Egyptian defence negotiations].

Furthermore,

> There is nothing wrong in itself in having matters of dispute discussed in the United Nations Council. Indeed I thought that was what it was for. I do not see why Israeli-Arab hatred should be sharpened by an orderly discussion of undoubted points of difference.[75]

Eden retorted that he was merely proposing that their representative at the United Nations should lend his good offices to settle the dispute outside the Security Council.

> A row with Egypt over the Canal may be inevitable; if so, we must face it. But it cannot help us to get a treaty, which I am still convinced is our chief interest.[76]

Their divergence of attitude notwithstanding, once the deliberations over the precise wording of a resolution commenced, Eden indicated he would not settle for a feeble draft.[77] Furthermore, Eden did not necessarily ignore the domestic dimension of this question. When the Israeli Government conveyed its wish that the resolution contain some provision for keeping the matter under review by the Council, Eden, replying to an adverse comment advanced by Millard of the African Department, pointed out that

> if we were to support such a proposal and others turn it down, our position would be stronger with our critics at home who are vocal on this topic.[78]

The resolution submitted by the New Zealand Delegation to the Security Council on 23 March 1954 noted with grave concern that Egypt had not complied with the resolution of 1 September 1951; Egypt was called upon to implement it in accordance with its obligations under the Charter of the United Nations. The draft resolution, put to the vote on 29 March, was not adopted due to a Soviet veto.[79] Sharett commented a day later that the Soviet veto rendered the role of the Security Council ineffectual in its dealings with the Arab-Israeli dispute; except, that is, on occasions when Israel would be held responsible, since both the West and the Soviet Union could then be expected to join forces with the Arabs against Israel.[80]

The Soviet veto precluded any further discussion of the restrictions imposed by the Egyptian Government, not only on the Suez Canal, but also on the Gulf of Aqaba. Since 1949 the Egyptians had maintained shore batteries at Sharm Esh-Sheikh, which commanded the Straits at the entrance to the Gulf of Aqaba. They had established, and gradually intensified, a blockade on shipping, wherever bound, conveying goods through the Gulf of Aqaba. Israeli ships were barred from passing through. Israelis regarded the restrictions applied in the Gulf of Aqaba as even more serious than those established in the Suez Canal. The then Director-General of the Defence Ministry, Shimon Peres, articulated Israel's attitude thus:

> *We never saw Suez as a casus belli, whereas we saw the Gulf of Aqaba as an extension of Israel's territorial rights.*[81]

Meanwhile, the Labour opposition in Parliament reminded the government that, while in opposition, Eden had advocated sending naval vessels to accompany British ships seeking to pass through the Canal. Selwyn Lloyd, referring to the Security Council resolution of 1 September 1951, retorted that

> At the present time there is a Security Council Resolution dealing with the matter and in our view it is now a matter for international action.[82]

This policy, publicly espoused by the government on previous as well as subsequent occasions, prompted the former Labour Foreign Secretary, Herbert Morrison, to enquire:

> Are we to understand that the policy of the Government is much the same as that of the Labour Government which was loudly condemned by the opposition at the time?

To which the parliamentary Under-Secretary, Arthur Dodds-Parker, replied:

> I should very much doubt that.[83]

A revealing answer, considering that precisely two years previously Selwyn Lloyd had stated in the House of Commons:

> I imagine that the present Government are actuated very much by considerations similar to those which actuated the late [i.e. Labour] Government.[84]

It could be argued, in deference to philosophical consistency, that to be actuated by similar considerations in devising policy ought not necessarily to be equated with pursuing the same policy. Whatever semantic formula is deployed in an attempt to ascribe to the government's public pronouncements a coherence not immediately apparent, these exchanges seem to indicate that the question of the blockade of the Suez Canal elicited perhaps more attention from Parliament during these years than any other issue related to the Arab-Israeli dispute. This may well have been due to the fact that Britain was directly affected by this Egyptian measure. For the opposition Labour Party, though, the apparent *volte face* by the Conservatives was a political gift that, beyond the merits of the case itself, and apart from its intrinsic importance, deserved to be fully exploited. None of the other questions directly concerned with the Arab-Israeli conflict presented such a golden opportunity for political ridicule by the opposition as this one. The government, for its part, had to make the best of a particularly uncomfortable situation, articulating a line of defence which, in addition to its sometime questionable coherence, only rarely reflected the real considerations motivating the policy adopted - or rather, discarded.

Still, as far as Eden's original proposal of sending an oil tanker escorted by Royal Navy gun boats through the Suez Canal was concerned, Dulles revealed to the State Department that the Foreign Secretary had confided in him that he had lived to regret having advocated that suggestion.[85]

In the light of the diplomatic impasse over the Canal restrictions, the Israeli Government decided to pursue a course of action which Eden had come to discard:

to test the Egyptian blockade - in this case, by attempting to send an Israeli merchant ship through the Suez Canal.

The *Bat Galim*, conveying a cargo of meat, hides and plywood, was sailing from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean, when it was detained at the entrance to the Suez Canal on 28 September 1954. Its crew was arrested and its cargo confiscated on a charge of firing on two Egyptian fishing boats, causing the death of two fishermen; a claim vigorously denied by the Israeli authorities.[86]

The Assistant Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, Evelyn Shuckburgh, suggested that Anthony Nutting, who was in Egypt for the signature of the British-Egyptian agreement, should propose to Nasser that he release the *Bat Galim* and its crew as a gesture.[87] Nutting's response was unequivocal:

> Formally to raise the question of the Israeli ship immediately after the signature of the Agreement, would only invite a rebuff on the grounds that it had nothing to do with us and no connexion with the Agreement.

He did not, however, rule out an informal approach by the British Ambassador, in the context of a general discussion on Israel, designed to persuade the Egyptians "to stop playing the Israel game".[88]

Eden, alluding to the possible domestic ramifications of Nutting's proposed course of action, retorted:

> Shall we not get into considerable Parliamentary trouble if we say nothing to Egyptians [. . .] ?[89]

He answered his own question subsequently: "I think Mr Nutting should raise this."[90]

By the beginning of December, the Egyptian Government had reached the decision to release the ship, and its crew, and to send it back through the Red Sea. So far as the Egyptian authorities were concerned, Israel's demand that the *Bat Galim* be allowed to pass through the Suez Canal as originally intended was totally unacceptable.[91] Shuckburgh considered that it would be "a great mistake" to exert any pressure on the Egyptians to permit the ship to sail through the Suez Canal.

> it is tantamount to asking them to abandon their major weapon in their dispute with Israel without any quid pro quo and in circumstances which can only look like surrender to an Israeli try on.[92]

The African Department concurred.

> We certainly cannot admit that the Egyptians have any right to prevent the passage of Israeli ships, even in the absence of Israeli counter-concessions. But to allow the Bat Galim through would mean for the Egyptians the sacrifice of a principle.

Therefore,

> there would be little advantage in pressing the Egyptians to allow the ship through the canal.[93]

In an account of a conversation he had held with Shuckburgh and with John Nicholls, the British Ambassador in Israel, the Director-General of the Israeli Foreign Ministry wrote as follows:

> They thought the timing of "Bat Galim" was quite brilliant from a certain destructive point of view, but most embarrassing, and therefore unhelpful, both to them, the British, and to the Arabs.[94]

As far as the British-Egyptian negotiations were concerned, the Israeli Government had been following them with much apprehension. Although, in the House of Commons, Selwyn Lloyd acknowledged that "The general question of freedom of passage through the Canal is being considered", he made it clear that

> The question of any breach by the Egyptian Government of the Security Council's Resolution of 1951 is not under negotiation at present.

When he was pressed by the former Labour Defence Minister, Emmanuel Shinwell, to "see that in the course of the negotiations it is brought to the notice of General Neguib and his associates", Selwyn Lloyd reverted to the government's oft-repeated argument

> that this is really an international matter which affects all maritime countries and is a matter for action by them together.[95]

However, the decision not to refer to the Egyptian Canal restrictions in the context of the negotiations was prompted by a different reason. Writing six months subsequent to Lloyd's speech, Millard of the African Department contended that

> To have raised this issue in connexion with the present Agreement would have provided the strongest reaction in the Arab world as a whole and would have further complicated an already difficult situation.[96]

The Agreement signed by Britain and Egypt, stipulating the evacuation of the British military base from the Suez area, contained, to be sure, a clause which referred to the determination of both governments to uphold freedom of navigation of the Suez Canal.[97] The Israeli Government, though, maintained a profoundly sceptical attitude. Mordechai Gazit, First Secretary at the Israeli Embassy in London, deemed the clause meaningless in view of the Security Council acquiescence in Egypt's continuing restrictions.[98] Gershon Avner, Counsellor at the Embassy, assumed that "it is quite clear that Egypt will still be free to deny free passage to ships going to and from Israel." He therefore asked: "What then is the point of agreeing on the principle?"[99]

In a speech to the Knesset, Israel's Prime Minister, Sharett, referred, in a somewhat cynical vein, to an apparent contradiction in the British position. If the Egyptian restrictions, and the whole question of free passage in the Canal, was said to be unrelated to the negotiations designed to establish the terms for Britain's evacuation of the Canal area, why then did the British Government consider it important to introduce a clause in the Agreement on the principle of freedom of navigation in the Suez Canal[100]

The Foreign Office was convinced, though it refrained from conveying it either to Parliament or, indeed, to the Israeli Government, that had Britain advanced the particular case of the Egyptian restrictions during the negotiations, "We should not have reached agreement with Egypt." The Agreement, it was hoped, would reduce

tension in the area and enhance British influence in regard to a solution of the Arab-Israeli dispute, including the problem of the Canal blockade.[101]

Anthony Nutting, who, as Minister of State at the Foreign Office signed the Agreement on behalf of the British Government, stated subsequently that Britain became satisfied by Egypt's assurance on freedom of navigation. Indeed, as Russell Braddon, who had interviewed the minister, wrote:

> Unlike Eden, he [Nutting] had no knowledge of Arabs nor any particular sympathy for them before 1954; but having negotiated with Nasser, he had come to believe in his integrity.[102]

Writing with the benefit of hindsight, Harold Macmillan recalled that the Agreement, "unhappily", had "made no provision for Egypt's lifting the blockade against Israel".[103]

The prominent historian, Hugh Thomas, writing a brief comment on the Suez Base Agreement, contended in a particularly conclusive manner that, as a consequence of the Agreement, "Israel could now never expect the opening of the Suez Canal to her."[104]

The dispute between Egypt and Israel over the legality of the blockade measures would continue for some time to come. Egypt would still argue that under article X of the 1888 Constantinople Convention, which regulated transit in the Suez Canal, it was entitled to adopt defensive measures in the Canal. Israel would continue to retort that article XI clearly and unequivocally precluded interference with the free use of the Canal. Indeed, Egypt argued that a state of war prevailed

between the two countries which allowed it to undertake restrictive measures against warlike cargo. Israel maintained that the Armistice Agreement, signed in 1949, terminated the state of war and that, in any event, under the provisions of the Constantinople Convention, Egypt was specifically forbidden from interfering with Canal traffic - both in time of peace and war. Furthermore, the Israelis pointed to a contradiction in Egypt's stance. When the surrounding Arab states invaded the newly established State of Israel in 1948, they maintained that their purpose was not to wage war but only to restore law and order. Egypt's contention that a state of belligerence still existed was, therefore, incompatible with Arab declarations enunciated in 1948.[105]

A self-critical Israeli perspective of the Suez Canal dispute in the period under consideration is provided, with the benefit of hindsight, by Gershon Avner. Israel, he claims, was pursuing an "unobtainable objective" in seeking to secure the removal of Egyptian restrictions. Egypt was, for all practical purposes, in control of the Canal and, therefore, so long as the Egyptian authorities persisted in their refusal to lift the blockade, there was no prospect of altering the situation. And the British, for their part, had no crucial interest to risk a major rift with Egypt over this matter.[106]

Egypt's blockade against Israel was to remain a potent propaganda device which would be deployed subsequently in time of need - as during the Suez Crisis of 1956.

The Conservative Party, anxious to stress the perils entailed in Nasser's nationalisation of the Suez Canal in July 1956, reminded the public:

> Let us not forget that Egypt had already put herself in the wrong over the Canal by flagrantly disregarding a Security Council Resolution of 1951 about the passage of Israeli ships.[107]

The leader of the opposition, Hugh Gaitskell, questioning on 2 August 1956 the legality of the use of force to counter Nasser's action, went so far as to declare:

> if there were anything which he [Nasser] had done which would justify force at the moment, it is, quite frankly, the one thing on which we have never used force, namely, the stopping of the Israeli ships.[108]

There was undoubtedly a wide consensus among British diplomats and politicians that the blockade of the Suez Canal to shipping *en route* from and to Israel was *in principle* wrong. Although British commercial interests were directly affected, Israel's case *per se* elicited an almost instinctive support from Foreign Office's officials and politicians. There is no evidence that any British official seriously doubted that Egypt was, in principle, in error over this question (admittedly, the Law Officers contended in 1950 that Egypt's action could be justified in international law; they added, however, that with the passage of time the blockade had been, to all intents and purposes, rendered unacceptable). Even those who questioned the widsom of diplomatic moves aimed at redressing the situation did not, so far or can be established, cast doubt on the *principle* involved. Thus, when Sir Ralph Stevenson, the British Ambassador in Egypt, expressed his reservations prior to the lodging of the official protest to the Egyptian Government

in May 1951, or when both he and Sir Gladwyn Jebb, the Permanent Representative at the United Nations, cautioned against tabling a Security Council resolution in September 1951, the arguments employed were entirely devoid of even a semblance of support for the Egyptian stance.

Nevertheless, whereas resolute diplomatic action was taken in 1951 on the two occasions referred to above, following the return of the Conservative Party to office there ensued an almost complete diplomatic lull in this regard lasting until 1954. Then, faced with an Israeli request, prompted by an extension of the blockade by the Egyptian authorities, to table a resolution in the Security Council, the British Government decided to lend its support. It did so, as the African Department acknowledged, as it was not anticipated that the defence negotiations with Egypt over the Suez Canal base would be affected one way or the other. Indeed, it was the expectation and the holding of defence negotiations with Egypt, seconded by wider considerations of Arab susceptibilities, which explain why previously there had prevailed a virtual diplomatic silence on this question. Considering the issue of the Canal blockade as an intrusion in the context of those negotiations and fearing its adverse consequences upon them, the Foreign Office was most reluctant to undertake any diplomatic action - let alone military - in pursuance of an objective with which it fully agreed.

Eden's role in this respect is of particular interest. Having urged the Labour Government, while in opposition, to send a tanker escorted by Royal Navy ships through the Canal, Eden, on of his return to the Foreign Office in October 1951, not only discarded the idea but was seen to be timid in having recourse even to

diplomacy to help rectify what he had publicly enunciated as a clear wrong. Although he seemed to have objected in principle to Egypt's policy, Eden was actuated by the same line of reasoning as that entertained by his officials. He did fear, however, that the latter might merely be content to stall and refrain from taking any action, circumstances notwithstanding. Indeed, even though he harboured some misgivings over the proposed Security Council Resolution in 1954, once it was decided to go along with it, he favoured a strongly-worded draft. To some extent Eden could be said to have been, perhaps more than his officials, in two minds as regards the blockade of the Suez Canal, wrestling between his desire for action and his inclination for inaction. Whenever a deviation from the established line was contemplated, both Eden and Churchill seemed to have been alive to the domestic, particularly parliamentary, dimension. Churchill, more than anyone else, so far as it can be ascertained, wanted to fulfil and implement the pronouncements made by the Conservatives while in opposition. In urging action to back principle, Churchill was the most consistent of all the protagonists in question. His rhetoric, more than that of any other decision-maker or official, was distinctively pro-Israel, reflecting, as in other questions, beyond political considerations and a pure judgement of principle, an emotional attachment to that country and the case it presented.

Ultimately, though, Britain's policy on this question became entirely subordinate to its expectation of an agreement with Egypt over the Canal base. Churchill, in a sense, won the day in 1954 when the British Government decided to support a Security Council resolution condemning Egypt for its continued ban. This decision, however, was made possible by the advice tendered by the African

Department of the Foreign Office to the effect that such a move would not adversely affect the course of British-Egyptian negotiations. Nevertheless, had Churchill not taken the initiative and persuaded Eden to go along with it, Britain might not have afforded its unequivocal backing to the resolution as it eventually did.

FOOTNOTES

1. A summary of Egyptian restrictions from 1948 to 1950 can be found in FO 371/90191, JE 1261/34, FO Minute, 19 March 1951.

2. See FO 371/96998, JE 1261/51, Paper written by the Ministry of Transport, 13 November 1952.

3. Hansard, Lords, Vol. 174, col. 800, 15 December 1951. This figure was provided by the Minister at the Foreign Office, the Marquis of Reading.

4. FO 371/90195, JE 1261/144, African Department to UK Delegation, United Nations, New York, 16 July 1951.

5. FO 371/90191, JE 1261/34, Allen, FO Minute, 19 March 1951.

6. FO 371/90191, JE 1261/34, African Dept Minute, 19 March 1951. A decision was reached at the Foreign Office that the Law Officers' opinion should not be mentioned publicly.

7. FO 371/90193, JE 1261/74, [name unclear] Brief for the Minister of State's meeting with Trygve Lie, 2 May 1951.

8. FO 371/90194, JE 1261/130, Bowker to Stevenson, 12 July 1951.

9. FO 371/90193, JE 1261/81, Stewart, FO Minute, 6 May 1951.

10. FO 371/90193, JE 1261/87, Strang, FO Minute, 9 May 1951.

11. FO 371/90193, JE 1261/87, Cairo to FO, 28 May 1951.

12. FO 371/90193, JE 1261/77, Stevenson to Morrison, 21 May 1951.

13. FO 371/90193, JE 1261/81, Stewart, FO Minute, 7 May 1951.

14. FO 371/90193, JE 1261/81, Strang, FO Minute, 9 May 1951.

15. See FO 371/90194, JE 1261/124, Allen, FO Minute, 29 June, 1951; FO 371/90194, JE 1261/125, FO to Washington, 7 July 1951.

16. FRUS, 5, Austen to State Department, 2 July 1951, pp.740-1.

17. FO 371/90194, JE 1261/124, Allen, FO Minute, 29 June 1951.

18. FO 371/90194, JE 1261/124, Allen, FO Minute, 29 June 1951.

19. FO 371/90198, JE 1261/220, Bowker to Stevenson, 21 August 1951.

20. FO 371/90194, JE 1261/124, Allen , FO Minute, 29 June 1951.

21. FO 371/90193, JE 1261/77, Stevenson to Morrison, 4 May 1951.

22. FO 371/90196, JE 1261/173, Allen, FO Minute, 17 July 1951.

23. FRUS, 5, Acheson to US Mission at United Nations, 19 July 1951.

24. The Suez Canal, a selection of documents relating to the international status of the Suez Canal and the position of the Suez Canal Company, 30 November 1854-26 July 1956 (The Society of Comparative Legislation and International Law, London, 1956), p. 68. Henceforward referred to as The Suez Canal, a selection of documents.

25. FO 371/90193, JE 1261/81, [signature unclear], FO Minute, 10 May 1951.

26. FO 371/90193, JE 1261/81, Allen, FO Minute, 18 May 1951; FO 371/10193, JE 1261/826, FO to Secretary Chiefs of Staff Committee, 25 May 1951.

27. FO 371/90193, JE 1261/94G, Streak (Ministry of Defence) to Allen, 7 June 1951.

28. FO 371/90193, JE 1251/94G, Allen, FO Minute, 15 June 1951; Bowker, FO Minute, 18 June 1951; the Permanent Under-Secretary appeared to have concurred in this conclusion, 19 June 1951.

29. FO 371/90193, JE 1261/94G, [signature unclear; 10 Downing St] to Barkley (FO) 23 June 1951.

30. FO 371/90193, JE 1261/94G, [signature unclear], FO Minute, 19 June 1951.

31. FO 371/90194, JE 1261/106, Burrows to Allen, 14 June 1951.

32. FO 371/90194, JE 1261/113G, Stevenson to Allen, 13 June 1951.

33. FO 371/90200, JE 1261/293, Davies, FO Minute, 26 September 1951.

34. FO 371/90200, JE 1261/309, Wardrop, FO Minute, 19 October 1951.

35. FO 371/90200, JE 1261/309, Mackworth-Young, FO Minute, 20 October 1951.

36. FO 371/90200, JE 1261/309, Allen, FO Minute, 20 October 1951.

37. FO 371/90200, JE 1261/309, JE 1261/309, Morrison, FO Minute, 24 October 1951.

38. CAB 128/23 30 October 1951. Churchill had made it clear, though, that "I do not think we ought to have anything sharp or sudden and only kick back when we are maltreated." FO 371/90200, JE 1261/311, Churchill to Eden, 29 October 1951. The Israelis were unaware of Churchill's intervention in Cabinet as reflected in the Cabinet Conclusions. Mordechai Gazit, personal interview, Jerusalem, 27 June 1989.

39. CAB 128/23, 30 October 1951.

40. See FO 371/90200, JE 1261/312. The Foreign Office was reacting to Churchill's views as conveyed in his letter to Eden, which preceeded the Cabinet Meeting, to the effect that "we should maintain the full legal freedom of the Canal and make sure that the ships of all nations can pass through it, including those carrying oil to Haifa." FO 371/90211, JE 1261/311, Churchill to Eden, 29 October 1951.

41. FO 371/90200, JE 1261/312, Eden, FO Minute, 1 November 1951.

42. Hansard, H.C., Vol.495, col.159, 30 January 1952.

43. FO 371/96996, JE 1261/10, FO Minute Note for Lord Reading, date not mentioned, though most probably some time in early 1952.

44. FO 371/96996, JE 1261/10, FO Minute Note for Lord Reading.

45. Hansard, H.C., Vol.501, col.912, 26 May 1952.

46. FO 371/96998, JE 1261/43, UK Note verbal to Israeli Government, 9 September 1952.

47. See FO 371/96997, JE 1261/30, Israeli Note Verbale presented to UK Government, 22 July 1952.

48. FRUS, 9, Acheson to US mission at UN, 22 May 1952, pp.935-6.

49. FO 371/96997, JE 1261/26, New York, to FO, 7 June 1952.

50. FO 371/96997, JE 1261/30, Eden, FO Minute, 5 September 1952; FO 371/96998, JE 1261/44, Bowker, FO Minute, 15 September 1952.

51. ISA, 41/4, Eban to Comay, 5 June 1952.

52. FRUS, 9, Memorandum of Conversation, 23 July 1952, pp.966-7; FO 371/96997, JE 1261/26, New York to FO, 7 June 1952.

53. Hansard, H.C., Vol.510, col.1828, 4 February 1953.

54. Hansard, H.C., Vol.516, cols.58-9, 17 June 1953. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary, Anthony Nutting, declared then that "The situation has not changed" since the answer given by Lloyd to Foot.

55. FO 371/102900, JE 1423/92, Chancery to FO, 17 July 1953.

56. FO 371/102901, JE 1423/125, Mackworth-Young to Duke, 22 September 1953.

57. See FRUS, 9, Memorandum of Conversation, 8 April 1953, p.1165.

58. FRUS, 9, Memorandum of Conversation, 8 April 1953, p.1164. Israel's Ambassador to London, Eliahu Elath, made a similar statement some months subsequently, when he stressed that "the withdrawal of the British from Egypt leaves the world without effective means of protecting freedom of passage through the Canal in time of peace." ISA 36/4, outline of speech for Paladin Club, 26 October 1953.

59. PREM, 11/465, 14 April, 1953.

60. FO 800/699, LLOYD'S PRIVATE PAPERS, Lloyd to Churchill, 16 April 1953.

61. PREM, 11/465, 20 April, 1953.

62. PREM, 11/465, 23 April, 1953.

63. Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 28 July 1952: PREM, 11/703.

64. CAB 128/26, 10 August 1953.

65. CAB 128/26, 16 September 1953.

66. CAB 128/26, 13 October 1953.

67. Quoted in FO 371/102902, JE 1423/161, Cairo to FO, 17 December 1953.

68. FO 371/102902, JE 1423/164, Record of Conversation Elath-Lloyd, 24 December 1953.

69. FO 371/102902, JE 1423/164(A), Bromley, FO Minute, 24 December 1953.

70. FO 371/108504, JE 1251/98, Tenison, FO Minute, 8 January 1954.

71. FO 371/108504, JE 1261/98, Lloyd, FO Minute, 13 January 1954; Eden, FO Minute, 14 January 1954.

72. FO 371/108593, JE 1261/3, Eden to Churchill, 18 January 1954.

73. FO 371/108503, JE 1261/3, Churchill to Eden, 15 January 1954; CAB 128/27, CAB 128/27, 26 January 1954 where Churchill refers to this same theme.

74. FO 371/108503, JE 1261/31, Berlin to FO, 4 February 1954.

75. FO 371/108503, JE 1261/34, Churchill to Eden, 6 February 1954.

76. FO 371/108503, JE 1261/27, Berlin to FO, 7 February 1954.

77. FO 371/108503, JE 1261/46, Eden, FO Minute, 21 February 1954. A month later, Shuckburgh wrote in his diary that Eden was "insisting on our being tougher than anyone else at UNO about the resolution on freedom of navigation through the Suez Canal - not because we can influence the event, but because it will show we can be 'tough' against Neguib. This is all very distressing, and we drift away from any chance of agreement." Evelyn Shuckburgh, Descent to Suez, 20 March 1954, p.151.

78. FO 371/108503, JE 1261/56(A), Eden, FO Minute, 28 February 1954. Eden subsequently instructed the British delegation at the United Nations accordingly. FO 371/108504, JE 1261/77, Millard, FO Minute, 20 March 1954.

79. For a summary of the deliberations concerning this resolution, see Yearbook of the United Nations 1954 (Department of Public Information, United Nations, New York, 1955) pp.62-6.

80. Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, vol.2, 1954, 30 March 1954, p.421.

81. Quoted in Michael Brecher, Decisions in Israel's Foreign Policy (Oxford University Press, London, 1974), p.253, n.6. The then Army Chief of Staff, General Moshe Dyan, drew an identical distinction between the Gulf of Aqaba and the Suez Canal in his Diary of the Sinai Campaign (Sphere Books Ltd., London, 1967) p.18.

82. Hansard, H.C., vol.573, col.366, 3 February 1954.

83. Hansard, H.C., vol.528, col.396, 26 May 1954.

84. Hansard, H.C., vol.501, col.913, 26 May 1952.

85. FRUS, 9, Dulles to State Department, 2 October 1954, p.1662.

86. The Foreign Office believed that "the Egyptian story may well have been invented as an excuse for stopping the Bat Galim on other grounds than Egypt's claim [...] to exercise the right of blockade against Israeli traffic using the Canal." FO 371/108505, JE 1261/151, Bromley, FO Minute, 30 October 1954.

87. FO 371/111075, VR 1072/222, Shuckburgh, FO Minute, 4 October 1954.

88. FO 371/111075, VR 1072/229, Cairo to FO, 8 October 1954.

89. Eden's question was handwritten on top of Nutting's incoming telegram. FO 371/111075, VR 1072/229, Cairo to FO, 8 October 1954.

90. FO 371/108505, JE 1261/138, Eden, FO Minute, 20 October 1954.

91. FO 371/108506, JE 1261/203, Cairo to FO, 13 December 1954.

92. FO 371/108506, JE 1261/204, Cairo to FO, 13 December 1954.

93. FO 371/108506, JE 1261/204(B), Bromley, FO Minute, 14 December 1954.

94. ISA 2403/12A, Eytan to Elath, 29 November 1954.

95. Hansard, H.C., Vol.522, col.1445, 25 January 1954.

96. FO 371/108505, JE 1261/109, Millard, FO Minute, 28 July 1954.

97. Reference to clause 3 of the Agreement. See The Suez Canal, a selection of documents, p.70.

98. FO 371/111073, VR 10721162, Tripp, Record of Conversation with Gazit, 30 July 1954.

99. FO 371/111073, VR 10721167, Avner to Clement Davies, 29 July 1954. Sharett expressed himself in a similar vein in the course of a speech he delivered to the Knesset on 30 August 1954. *Divrey Ha-Knesset*, Vol.16, p.2546.

100. *Divrey Ha-Knesset*, Vol.17, p.66, 15 November 1954.

101. FO 371/111074, VR 10721207, Falla FO Minute, 22 September 1954.

102. Russell Braddon, Suez: Splitting of a Nation, p.32.

103. Harold Macmillan, Tides of Fortune 1945-1955 (Macmillan, London, 1969), p.631.

104. Hugh Thomas, The Suez Affair, p.20.

105. See Walter Eytan, The First Ten Years. A Diplomatic History of Israel (Simon and Schuster, New York, 1958), pp.99, 102. Ruth Lapidoth, Freedom of Navigation with Special Reference to International Waterways in the Middle East (The Leonard Davis Institute for International Relations, Jerusalem, 1975).

106. Personal interview, Jerusalem, 30 May 1989.

107. Conservative Party Archives, Box 1509/01, Middle East 1955-1957, fifteenth extract.

108. Speech delivered in the House of Commons, quoted in Hugh Thomas, The Suez Affair, p.205.

CHAPTER FOUR:

BRITAIN AND THE JERUSALEM QUESTION

The 1947 United Nations Partition Plan, which envisaged the creation of two states in Western Palestine, one Arab and one Jewish, stipulated that the area of Jerusalem should be established as a separate juridical entity, belonging to neither state. This *corpus separatum* was to be administered by the trusteeship council, operating on behalf of the United Nations as the Administering Authority.

The leadership of the Jewish Community in Palestine was willing to contemplate the severance of Jerusalem from a future Jewish state if sovereignty could be secured. The Palestinian Arabs and the Arab States, however, declined to endorse any resolution which entailed the establishment of a Jewish state in any part of Palestine.

The war that ensued left the City of Jerusalem divided into two : whilst the Israelis remained in control of the New City and an enclave in Mount Scopus, the Jordanians retained the area of the Old City, including the Old Jewish quarter and the Wailing Wall. Article VIII of the Jordan-Israel Armistice Agreement of 3 April, 1949, stipulated that a special committee of the representatives of each of the contracting parties should be convened to formulate arrangements to ensure, among other things, "free access to the Holy Places and cultural institutions and use of the cemetery on the Mount of Olives"[1]. This article was never implemented. Whereas the Jordanian authorities permitted free access to both Christians and Muslims to their respective Holy Places, Jews were barred from visiting any site in Jordanian-held Jerusalem.

Jordanian conduct as regards the implementation of Article VIII notwithstanding, Israel and Jordan were to find themselves in agreement upon the fundamental question of the future status of Jerusalem. The revival of the idea of an international regime for Jerusalem was to be rejected by both. They were to be adamantly opposed to any modification of the territorial status quo, which entailed any alteration of the legal status of the City itself.[2] Insofar as the Holy Places were concerned, though, Israel was to consent to some form of international supervision; a proposal that was not to prove appealing to the Jordanian authorities, who maintained that the Holy Places under their control were safe in their hands.

Early in 1949, it became clear that Israel had modified its stance in relation to the status of Jerusalem and that it no longer adhered to the provisions contained in the 1947 U.N. Resolution. Israel's Prime Minister, David Ben Gurion, in a statement to the Palestine Conciliation Commission, "accepted without reservation an international regime for, or the international control of, the Holy Places in the City". However, he was unable to accept that the City itself should be governed by an international regime.[3]

Moshe Sharrett, Israel's Foreign Minister, addressing the Knesset on 2 January 1950, reiterated Israel's opposition to the internationalisation of the City of Jerusalem in the light of a General Assembly Resolution adopted on 9 December 1949, reaffirming the territorial internationalisation of Jerusalem.[4]

The basic tenets of Israel's position were to remain unaltered during the early 1950s. In an official Foreign Ministry letter addressed to the foreign ambassadors

accredited in Israel, Walter Eytan, the Director General of the Foreign Ministry, referred to the question of internationalisation in rather pragmatic terms.

> Experience has proved that the resolution of the Fourth General Assembly of the United Nations of 9 December 1949, in favour of internationalising both parts of Jerusalem by constituting the entire City with the surrounding area as a corpus separatum, is inherently *unimplementable* [my italics].

In the case of the Holy Places situated in the New City of Jerusalem, Eytan indicated that:

> If at any time the United Nations finds it necessary and practicable to institute an all-round international supervision of the Holy places in Jerusalem, the Government of Israel stands ever ready to accept such supervision and lend its cooperation to the authority charged with it.[5]

Less than a month previously, Sharett had stressed this distinction between the status of Jerusalem as a City and the status of the Holy Places.

> We see no contradiction whatsoever between Israel's sovereignty in New Jerusalem and the satisfaction of international requirements concerning such Holy places as are located within it.[6]

Jordan's attitude on the question of the status of Jerusalem remained unchanged by July 1953. Ihsan Hashem, the Jordanian Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, articulated his government's views in a conversation he held with Geoffrey Furlonge, the British Ambassador in Amman, and Sir Thomas Rapp, the Head of the Middle East Office.

> In present circumstances, [Furlonge reported] the Jordan Government could never agree to internationalisation as this would remove a

> strategically vital area from their control. Their attitude might be modified if the 1947 partition line were ever to be put into force and the frontiers of Israel thus pushed back from Jerusalem.[7]

Jordanian ministers had frequently indicated the impossibility of Jordan consenting to the internationalisation of Jerusalem so long as the Israelis maintained a presence in Jerusalem, "since", as Furlonge explained, "they have realised that in these circumstances internationalisation would merely have the result of admitting the Israelis into a strategically vital area". However if the Israelis were to return to the 1947 partition line, it seemed probable that the Jordanian Government would be more disposed towards the notion of internationalisation. This scenario Furlonge remarked, was "a dream".[8]

Jordan's rejection of internationalisation rendered it entirely isolated in the Arab world. Since the conclusion of the Arab-Israel War in 1949, the Arab States, with the exception of Jordan, had embraced the concept of internationalisation and objected to the territorial status quo. They consistently enlisted themselves at the United Nations with the countries calling for the establishment of a *corpus separatum* in Jerusalem, and never wavered in their support for any resolution that could advance that cause.

The Iraqis, for instance, thought that the Jordanians were being very short-sighted in objecting to internationalisation. In the long run, argued the Iraqi Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Yusuf Gailani, the prevailing territorial conditions only reinforced Israel's position. Jordan might hope to get the entire City of Jerusalem; however, if there were to be any change, it was to be expected

that the Israelis would end up with the whole of it. Furthermore, the addition of Jordan to the rest of the Arab countries urging internationalisation would create a solid block supported by the majority of the world community against Israel.[9]

In analysing the stance adopted by the Arab countries, Hubert Pullar, of the Eastern Department, discerned three main reasons that prompted them to support internationalisation:

> first to weaken Israel and to express jealousy of Jordan's territorial gains, and secondly to enable Arab residents in Jordan-occupied Jerusalem to have a chance to recover some of their property or obtain compensation for it in the Israel-occupied area. Another reason [....] is to use the U.N. resolutions about internationalisation as an illustration of Israel's non-compliance with past resolutions, and to keep active the 1947 resolution.[10]

In advocating an international regime for Jerusalem, the Arab States knew they could rely on the active support of Catholic countries and, indeed, the leadership of the Vatican. The Vatican's attitude acquired particular significance as Catholic states, particularly in Latin America, tended to heed its statements on this issue.

The Vatican was adamantly opposed to the existing division of Jerusalem, and strongly objected to Israel's claim to sovereignty over West Jerusalem.[11] It maintained that only the establishment of a *corpus separatum* in the entire City could safeguard the Holy Places. Any scheme designed to isolate and divorce the question of the Holy Places' safety from the juridical authority ruling over the City

was totally unacceptable. Supervision, control and jurisdiction were inseparable and only an international regime could encompass them all.[12]

Advocates of internationalisation, though, were well aware of the reluctance of many countries to lend their support to the concept of *corpus separatum.* Indeed, even though a two-thirds majority could be mustered at the General Assembly of the U.N. on 9 December 1949 in favour of a resolution reaffirming the territorial internationalisation of Jerusalem, subsequent attempts foundered as a two-thirds majority was lacking.[13]

Among those countries which consistently declined, from 1949, to endorse any such resolution was Britain. British policy contained two distinct, though obviously interrelated, components: first, the attitude adopted in regard to the permanent status of Jerusalem; and second, the posture taken in the light of the prevailing conditions in the City.

A year after the Jordan-Israel Armistice Agreement, the Labour Minister of State at the Foreign Office, Kenneth Younger, stated that the British Government, pending a final determination of the status of the area of Jerusalem, "are unable to recognise Jordan sovereignty over any part of it". He made it clear, though, that the Government recognised "that Jordan exercises *de facto* authority in the part occupied by her". Younger made an identical statement concerning Israel. The Government was unable to recognise the sovereignty of Israel over any part of Jerusalem though, "pending a final determination of the status of the area", it recognised "that Israel exercises de facto authority in it."[14]

Elaborating upon this, Geoffrey Furlonge, of the Eastern Department, indicated that "in according de jure recognition of Israel we made it clear that this recognition did not extend to the Jerusalem area where, however, we recognised de facto control."[15]

This was to remain official British policy following the election of the Conservative Government to power in October 1951.[16] A distinction would still be drawn between *de jure* and *de facto* recognition. A distinction which could not render any less important the significance of the act of recognition itself. For, the absence of the essential juridical dimension notwithstanding, the adoption of this formula enabled the British Government to claim that the Anglo-Jordan Treaty of mutual defence of 1948 applied to Jordanian-held Jerusalem as well.[17] Still, having accorded *de facto* recognition to Jordanian and Israel control over their respective areas of Jerusalem, Britain had yet to formulate its policy as regards the permanent status of the City.

Almost two years prior to Anthony Eden's return to the Foreign Office, the General Assembly of the U.N., as has already been mentioned, had approved a resolution reaffirming the concept of internationalisation of Jerusalem contained in the 1947 Resolution. It requested the Trusteeship Council to draw up and implement a statute for Jerusalem. In 1950 the Council informed the General Assembly that it had been unable to carry out the task conferred upon it. Although Britain had not extended its support to the 1949 Resolution, the question still remained whether the British Government deemed it operative or not.

The Legal Advisers of the Foreign Office contended that since, following the failure of the Trusteeship Council, the General Assembly came to no decision, "it [the General Assembly] therefore tacitly admitted the impracticability of implementing the 1949 Resolution *and it would be unrealistic to regard that resolution as anything but dead* [my italics]."[18]

Pullar, of the Eastern Department, felt unease at this argument. He maintained that in practice "we must consider all past resolutions as alive."[19]

The Assistant Under-Secretary, Sir James Bowker, argued, though, "that there is a good case for regarding the Resolution as a dead letter." He emphasised, however, that "we do not, [...] wish to make it public, let alone use it as grounds for demanding the cancellation of that or any other resolution."[20]

Thus, according to the Foreign Office (with the exception perhaps of Pullar), there was no legal resolution *in force* stipulating the establishment of an international regime in Jerusalem.[21]

The legal framework having been delineated, the Foreign Office proceeded to articulate its views pertaining to the merits of the question of internationalisation.

The question of *corpus separatum*, recalled Pullar, had been rejected by Britain since 1949 on account of "its impracticalability". Indeed, proposing the revival of the idea had throughout been deemed "a retrograde step".[22] In other words, as Paul Falla, the Head of the Eastern Department, pointed out, so far as

the principle of internationalisation was concerned, "there is no hope of implementing it".[23]

The principal motive precluding the implementation of the idea concerned the line espoused by the British Government to the effect that "we cannot support any course which is unacceptable to Israel or Jordan." Considering the stance adopted by both, it is not surprising that the conclusion was reached that "Full internationalisation" was therefore "out of the question in any foreseeable circumstances."[24]

This argument was carried even further. Expounding the views of the Eastern Department, Pullar emphasised that the idea of full internationalisation "is for us quite dead". Moreover, "even if Israel and Jordan were to change their minds, we have the gravest doubts about the ability of the United Nations to administer a 'Corpus Separatum', and also of the kind of person who might find refuge therein."[25]

Beyond the pragmatic question of feasibility, British opposition to internationalisation was further reinforced by arguments that may have reflected Britain's perceptions of the volatile situation prevailing in the Jordan-Israel border. In May 1954 the Levant Department wrote:

> We remain opposed to the full internationalisation of Jerusalem: firstly, because it would in effect create a vacuum in which Israelis and Arabs could pursue terrorist activities, since no effective international police force exists, secondly, because it would entail the surrender by Jordan of militarily vital ground, while leaving Israel still in possession of dominating features, overlooking Jerusalem.[26]

Internationalisation, then, was not merely impractical, it was dangerous. It might destabilise the Jordan-Israel frontier, on the one hand, and perilously place Jordan at a militarily disadvantageous position, on the other. The objections of Jordan and Israel apart, Britain seemed to have had positive reasons of its own not to relish the prospect of internationalisation.

Whereas British opposition to the establishment of a *corpus separatum* in Jerusalem was indisputable, the Government appeared to adhere, in public, to a rather neutral posture. For instance, when the question of the practicalability of the idea of an international regime for Jerusalem was raised in the House of Commons, Arthur Dodds-Parker, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, replied as follows:-

> *I should not like to venture a reply* [my italics] [...] but everybody concerned is most anxious that a settlement should be reached as early as possible.[27]

And so as to emphasise the impression conveyed by Dodds-Parker's words, a seemingly exasperated Falla argued that "*we cannot continue indefinitely to defer to the principle of the internationalisation of Jerusalem.* [my italics]"; a principle, he reminded his superiors at the Foreign Office, "to which we have more than once expressed our opposition in the General Assembly."[28]

Still, both intellectually and in practice the British Government negated the notion of internationalisation as either a viable or desirable formula. However,

beyond the negative definition of attitude, the Government endeavoured to formulate a positive policy in relation to the status of Jerusalem.

The Foreign Office concurred in the view that a policy could be devised which acknowledged the unacceptability of internationalisation while recognising the particularity of the Holy Places situated in Jerusalem. Whereas a *corpus separatum* for the City should be rejected, an international regime for the Holy Places could be countenanced. A practical solution could be advanced so long as the status of the City was not equated with the regime prevailing in the Holy Places in it.

This formula was first articulated by Israel, which, following the 1948 Arab-Israel War, suggested a proposal designed to separate between the system governing in the City and that applying to the Holy Places. Thus emerged the concept of functional internationalisation, a term devised in 1950 by Abba Eban, Israel's Ambassador at the United Nations. Its object, he explained subsequently, was to maintain the idea and substance of internationalisation but direct it towards the main focus of concern, the Holy Places.[29]

The notion entailed in functional internationalisation was incorporated into a draft resolution put forward in the *Ad Hoc* Political Committee of the United Nations by Sweden in 1950. It provided for the appointment of a United Nations Commissioner to render supervision and protection to the Holy Places. The proposal, to which Britain accorded its support, failed to reach the General Assembly.[30]

This was to be the first and last attempt at advancing a draft resolution at the U.N. recommending functional internationalisation during the early 1950s. It was not, however, to signal a diplomatic paralysis on the part of Britain on this question.

Britain's posture precluding any settlement on the status of Jerusalem which was unacceptable to Jordan and Israel manifested itself also on the particular question of functional internationalisation.

> The attitude of Her Majesty's Government is that any form of international regime for the Holy Places must be acceptable to the two Governments which are in de facto occupation of Jerusalem.[31]

Thus, when the Foreign Office considered the possibility of revising the idea of functional internationalisation it had, first and foremost, to overcome Jordanian opposition. Jordan regarded as unnecessary any form of outside supervision over the Holy Places. These, it contended, were satisfactorily secure under its own authority and protection.

Jordan's rejection of functional internationalisation did not appear to Geoffrey Furlonge, Britain's Ambassador in Amman, to be insurmountable.

> I am inclined to believe, [he wrote to the Marquess of Salisbury] that the Jordan Government could be brought to accept a solution for Jerusalem on some such lines as those proposed in the Swedish-Dutch Resolution of 1950 (i.e. functional internationalisation), provided that Jordan sovereignty over the area of Jerusalem on this side of the line were recognised and that the other Arab Governments did not take up too categorical a position against it.

Still he foresaw difficulties.

> There would probably be criticism in the Majlis and elsewhere of any measure which appeared to derogate from Jordan sovereignty over Jerusalem.

He remained, however, cautiously optimistic.

> It seems probable that this would not prevail if the chances of a satisfactory resolution going through the Assembly appeared sufficiently strong.[32]

For any "satisfactory resolution going through the Assembly" of the U.N. the attitudes of different countries and interested groups would have to be ascertained. For, even should Jordan consent to a formula entailing some form of international supervision, the support of Catholic and Arab states, among others, would be imperative to entertain any hope of reaching the two-thirds majority necessary to pass a resolution at the General Assembly.

The idea, indeed, was to sound out those interested parties so as to advance upon this formula of functional internationalisation in the General Assembly to be convened in 1954. In this context, the Foreign Office seemed to accord much importance to the attitude adopted by the Vatican for, as John Tripp, of the Levant Department, commented, "It may be assumed that the Vatican line will be followed by all Catholic countries."[33]

The information relayed to London by British diplomats was hardly encouraging. M. Roberts, Britain's Representative before the Holy See, conveyed the Vatican's position as it had been communicated to him by Monsignor Sericano, Under-Secretary in the Secretariat of State.

> Monsignor Sericano confirmed that the policy of the Holy See remains as before, namely, that in principle it is *strongly* [my italics] in favour of internationalisation.

However, Monsignor Sericano made clear that,

> While the Vatican adhered to the principle it was content to wait until circumstances were more favourable for its application.[34]

Harold Beeley reported from Washington, on the basis of a State Department minute of a conversation between the Apostolic Delegate and a high-ranking United States Official, that "the Vatican were still adamantly opposed to any solution short of the establishment of a corpus separatum."[35]

Two months later, though, the Foreign Office received a letter from its Embassy in Tel-Aviv which placed a question mark on the absolute nature of the Vatican's apparent refusal to countenance functional internationalisation. The Marchese Capomazza, the recently accredited Italian Minister in Israel, conveyed to Anthony Moore, Minister at the British Embassy, his impressions of the Vatican's attitude based on a visit he had paid to Monsignor Tardini, the Secretary of State for Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs, before leaving Rome.

> Their [the Vatican's] aim was, and would remain a corpus separatum, under full international control, which they regarded as the *only* [my italics] satisfactory arrangement.

The Italian diplomat, however, believed that,

> they might be induced to support some other solution, providing for a lesser degree of international control, if this was without prejudice to the principle of the *corpus separatum*.[36]

Subsequent information that arrived from Washington, though, indicated that the Vatican was adamant. Indeed, the State Department, which had been sounding out Vatican opinion, was not disposed to make any further approach. Likewise, the French Government had approached the Vatican on this question and found their attitude particularly inflexible.[37]

If further proof was needed that hopes of a modification in the Vatican's attitude would have been misplaced, the Foreign Office received an official Vatican memorandum which restated traditionally-held Vatican views on the status of Jerusalem. This led Tripp to conclude that functional internationalisation "does not at present stand much chance of being accepted as a practical compromise solution."[38]

Meanwhile, as the British Government was being apprised of the Vatican's views, the Foreign Office had additionally to assess the prospect of altering the stance of Arab states in favour of full internationalisation.

Pullar advanced an argument that he suggested could be deployed in order to persuade the Arab Countries of the dangers of full internationalisation. Should Jerusalem be wrested from Jordanian control, Jordan would be placed in a strategically vulnerable position, thus strengthening Israel. This, Pullar believed, the Arab States could not envisage with equanimity. He proposed, however, that the

argument be conveyed to them by Jordan and that it should not be attributed to any British source. His aim, he made clear, was "to try to sow a few seeds in the minds of the other Arab States via the Arab Legion."[39]

Advantageous though it may be to heed Pullar's suggestion, Rapp argued against an attempt at persuading the Arab States of the unreasonableness of their stance. Such an initiative, he thought, would be doomed to failure. Nevertheless, Rapp did not despair.

> If ever it comes to negotiations or the imposition of a settlement, the internationalisation of Jerusalem would be viewed by the Arabs in a different light and it would probably be found that this is a matter on which they would offer "Concessions."[40]

Furlonge, in Amman, questioned the perceived notion that the Arab States felt so strongly about internationalisation. "I doubt whether any Arab State now attaches much importance to it; nor do I believe that the Arab States would be prepared to press it against Jordan's expressed opposition".[41]

By the end of 1953, and with the objective of formulating a resolution that would advance the cause of functional internationalisation in mind, Falla was not exuding undue optimism. "I very much doubt", he wrote to Beeley in Washington, "if the Arab States would weaken their attitude towards the status of Jerusalem in any United Nations Assembly debate, unless the political atmosphere were to change to an unexpected extent." "I think", he concluded, "that the Arab States will probably remain intransigent and that we should not approach them on this matter until much later, if at all."[42]

A potentially complicating factor was added by the assessment of Sir Francis Evans, Britain's Ambassador in Israel, who doubted "whether the Israelis would now accept any formula which did not provide some recognition of their sovereignty over the New City". He recognised that "they might have been prepared to overlook this point three years ago in their desire to reach at least a partial solution to the Jerusalem problem." Nevertheless, "since then their attitude has hardened considerably."[43]

Coming in the wake of a letter by Furlonge,[44] writing in a similar vein in relation to Jordan, Evans' assessment led Falla to conclude.

> It would appear that there is little prospect of arriving at a solution of the Jerusalem dilemma without running up against the sovereignty issue.[45]

It would seem, then, that the Foreign Office entertained the idea that a scheme for the supervision of the Holy Places could be implemented while the question of sovereignty over the City remained in abeyance. Since Britain recognised the *de facto* control of Jerusalem by Jordan and Israel, whatever settlement was reached as regards the Holy Places would not, in any event, have been established in a juridical vacuum. There would have been no reason, according to this line of thought, for the status of the Holy Places not to have been determined whilst that of the City awaited a solution of the Arab-Israel conflict as a whole. And when that eventuality emerged, the Foreign Office would expect,

> Recognition by all Arab States of Israel's and Jordan's sovereignty over their respective sectors in Jerusalem, and a promise of support in the United Nations for a resolution giving such recognition.[46]

Britain's recognition of Israel and Jordan's sovereignty over their respective sectors of Jerusalem would be extended *in the wake* of a resolution of the Arab-Israel dispute. So long as the conflict continued, Britain would refrain from according any juridical legitimacy to both countries' presence in Jerusalem beyond a *de facto* recognition. Any action undertaken by either country designed to assert its sovereignty over its own area of Jerusalem would pose an undesired challenge to the British Government.

On 11 December 1949, immediately following the U.N. General Assembly vote reaffirming its recommendation for a *corpus separatum*, the Israeli Government decided to make Jerusalem the seat of Government. The Knesset transferred its sessions to Jerusalem the same month. All ministries with the exception of two had moved there by 1951 : The Ministry of Defence remained in Tel-Aviv so as to ensure it was able to conduct its affairs from a relatively secure part of the country. The Foreign Ministry, for its part, did not move after the 11 December decision.[47]

Moshe Sharett, the Foreign Minister, was the only minister who declined to extend his support to the Government's decision. He tendered his resignation to Ben Gurion, who adamantly refused to accept it. Sharrett, however, had reasons of his own which prevented him from implementing the decision. He was sensitive to the possible international repercussions that might ensue from the transfer of the Foreign Ministry to Jerusalem. Walter Eytan, the Director General of the Foreign Ministry, referred to practical motives that prompted Sharrett to adopt this line : since the Diplomatic Corps was already established in Tel-Aviv, it would be inconvenienced, considering also the congestion in Jerusalem which made housing

most difficult. Sharrett's paramount concern, though, Eytan recalled, was to avoid the severance of contracts with the diplomatic community. As one minister put it, "'Sharrett was afraid they [the diplomats] wouldn't come to his ministry."'[48]

However, in light of the Swedish draft resolution on functional internationalisation, the Israel Minister in London, Eliahu Elath, informed the Foreign Office on 12 December 1950 that in the event of the resolution being adopted by the General Assembly his Government intended to transfer their Foreign Ministry to Jerusalem "*forthwith*" [my italics][49]

The Swedish resolution having failed to reach the General Assembly, the French nevertheless remained apprehensive of Israeli intentions to transfer the Foreign Ministry to Jerusalem. One of their diplomats suggested a pre-emptive move on the part of the United States, Britain and France designed to warn Israel against it.[50] Neither Britain nor the United States displayed much enthusiasm for this proposal. The matter, they contended, should not be raised with the Israelis unless and until they revert to it, and if and when they do "we should endeavour to discourage them from making the move. If they nevertheless persist we can consult further."[51]

Meanwhile, Britain's Representative in Israel, Sir Knox Helm, argued that talk of a transfer of the Foreign Ministry should not be taken seriously.[52]

Indeed, more than a year was to elapse before the Foreign Office became aware of the seriousness of such rumours. Then, however, these were no longer

rumours. On the 7 May 1952, a telegram arrived in London informing of the decision of the Israeli Cabinet on 4 May to move the Foreign Ministry to Jerusalem.[53]

The Israeli Foreign Ministry explained this decision in wholly pragmatic terms. The move was not intended as a political demonstration. It was rather an internal organisational imperative. The permanent separation from other government ministries and from the Knesset affected the work of the Ministry by hindering its efficiency, complicating the co-ordination necessary within the system, and by reducing the influence the Ministry was able to wield on other ministries. The Foreign Ministry suffered as well from the frequent absence of its Minister due to his attendance at cabinet meetings and in sessions of the Knesset. The move, therefore, was merely an inevitable and logical step to take.[54]

Whatever the motive that prompted the Israeli decision, Evans, in Tel-Aviv, argued that a delay in the implementation of it should be obtained.

> I believe [...] that if the Western Powers were to make it clear without delay, and in strict confidence, that they were unanimous in thinking a move to Jerusalem was *premature* [my italics], the Israel Government would see to it that the construction of their buildings was inexplicably delayed.[55]

This was indeed the line of reasoning adopted by the Foreign Office. When Evans met the Director General of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, he conveyed his Government's message that the intended transfer was "INOPPORTUNE."[56]

The wording employed was particularly important. This meeting had been preceded by diplomatic moves designed to effect co-ordinated, though separate, representations to the Israel Government in the wake of the Cabinet's decision. The Australians, for instance, argued that the countries approaching Israel should not do so on the basis of the action being *inopportune* but because the move was wrong in principle in the light of U.N. Resolutions.[57] This was rejected on pragmatic reasoning. Pullar, reflecting the views of the Foreign Office, doubted if such an approach would have much effect on the Israelis.[58]

The aim set by the Foreign Office seemed to be both practical in nature and short-term in duration. First and foremost, the objective must be to *prevent* the move from occurring immediately. As Evans put it, "our representations may persuade them to defer its execution until after the next General Assembly has dissolved."[59]

Whether as a result of those representations, the Israelis decided that the Foreign Ministry would not be transferred before the General Assembly; a decision, explained the Ministry, designed to avoid tension prior to the Assembly deliberations.[60] A month previously, the United States had already informed Britain that, based on a conversation held with Israel's Minister in Washington, the Israeli Government had apparently decided not to move their Foreign Ministry until after the General Assembly.[61]

The Israeli deferral notwithstanding, the protests presented to the Israeli Government over the original decision did not go unchallenged by Israel. These

had been, said Mordechai Gazit , the First Secretary at the Israeli Embassy, to Pullar, unjust and unwarranted. He explained that the move had been contemplated and planned in 1950, and then no protests had been advanced. Gazit then led his interlocutor into the realm of history, and of emotion. Jerusalem, he asserted, signified far more to the Jews than a mere paper capital. It was bound up with history, blood and idealism in a way which was possibly not easily comprehended by other countries. He indicated that there were no Holy Places in Jewish Jerusalem and that there was no reason whatsoever why the Foreign Ministry should not be moved to Jerusalem. Pullar, who reported on this conversation, concluded that "he obviously felt strongly on the question."[62]

Delaying the transfer of the Foreign Ministry to Jerusalem brought in its wake a further concerted protest by Britain, the United States and France. On 3 march 1953, Evans presented an *aide memoire* to the Israeli Government. As on the previous occasion, Britain deemed the intended move "inopportune", and hoped "that Israeli Government are not seriously considering such a move at *present time* [my italics]".[63]

Evans had questioned the utility of such protest.

> I cannot [...] pretend that I expect the note to have the effect of causing the Israel Government to *defer* [my italics] still less abandon the move [...] The Israelis have gone so far already in public announcement of their intention that it would be virtually impossible for them to back down now.[64]

And, indeed, they did not. On 10 July 1953, the Heads of Mission in Tel-Aviv received a note from the Israeli Government informing them that the Foreign

Ministry would be moved to Jerusalem on 12 July. A liaison office was to remain in Tel-Aviv.[65]

Fourteen months had elapsed since the Israeli Government had first decided to transfer the Foreign Ministry to Jerusalem. Now foreign representatives were told two days in advance of the implementation of that decision. Evans was intrigued at "the remarkable haste with which the move was finally consummated."[66] He thought it "was accomplished in a peculiarly abrupt and discourteous way".[67] Anthony Moore, Evans' deputy at the British Embassy in Israel, believed that "Israel's heavy-handed manner", in moving the Foreign Ministry, "has caused unnecessary friction and resentment aborad, sometimes leading foreign powers to rate the Israel case less highly than its intrinsic merits warrant".[68]

These critical comments over the *manner* in which the Foreign Ministry was transferred to Jerusalem may have reflected a distinctive sense of surprise at the *transfer* itself. C.F.R. Barclay, of the Information Services Department of the Foreign Office, told the Press Attache at the Israeli Embassy, Michael Arnon, that the decision to move the Ministry caused much resentment at the Foreign Office. British diplomats were convinced that, in the light of the pressure exerted against Israel, the Israelis would hesitate to undertake their intended action. The fact of the transfer itself came to them apparently as a surprise.[69]

The Foreign Office spokesman advanced three reasons to explain Britain's opposition to the transfer. First, the move was not calculated to ease the tension in the area; secondly, the British Government did not wish to prejudice future

consideration of the status of Jerusalem at the U.N.; thirdly, Britain had not recognised Israeli sovereignty over the Israel-held sector of Jerusalem.[70]

However, the News Department of the Foreign Office, which issued the statement, were apparently more discriminating in the information they were prepared to divulge to Michael Arnon. The principle motive, he wrote back to Israel based on conversations he had held with News Department Officials, which prompted the Foreign Office's strong opposition to the move was its fear of serious Arab criticism and a further weakening of Britain's position in the Arab world.[71]

So far as Arab opposition to Israel's action was concerned, Jordan's reaction was particularly demonstrative. The Jordan Council of Ministers met in Jerusalem on 27 July. Jordan's Prime Minister, Fouzi Mulki, explained that the meeting was intended almost entirely for internal consumption. The Government was resolved to show the Arab inhabitants of the City that whatever Israel might do they were part of Jordan. There was, he asserted, no intention of suggesting that Jerusalem was a second capital or that the Jordan Government would be transferred there.[72]

The Council of Ministers' meeting was followed by a session of the Jordan Chamber of Deputies which took place in Jerusalem on 6 August. Two resolutions were adopted. The first reaffirmed the "Arabism" of Jerusalem. The second called for the establishment in Jerusalem of a monument to the "Martyrs of the Palestine War".[73] Jordan's Prime Minister had already indicated that the decision of Parliament to convene in Jerusalem had limited significance and that it was merely a propaganda device to match the protests by other Arab countries.[74]

Considering the stance it had adopted, the transfer of the Foreign Ministry posed an inevitable dilemma to the British Government: should Britain's diplomatic representation in Israel follow suit and move to Jerusalem?

The question, to be sure, did not emerge only following the Israeli action. It had exercised the minds of British diplomats even prior to the Israeli Cabinet's decision to undertake the transfer of the Ministry in May 1952.

As early as December-January 1950-1, faced with the prospect of a move of the Israeli Foreign Ministry in the event of a scheme of functional internationalisation being accepted by the U.N., Britain was forced to consider its future course of action. In spite of the difficulties entailed, the Foreign Office predicted that in the light "of the many important questions we may have to discuss with the Israelis, we might find it necessary eventually to move Her Majesty's Legation to Jerusalem."[75]

A legal opinion preceded this conclusion. Sir Eric Beckett, of the Legal Department of the Foreign Office, indicated that a U.N. resolution which granted Israel and Jordan administrative power over Jerusalem would place no obstacles to establishing the diplomatic mission in Jerusalem. Britain, though, would have to make it clear that it "regarded Israel as the Administering Authority over her part of Jerusalem but as not yet the definitive sovereign over it."[76] Britain, then, could have its Legation in Jerusalem *without* having recognised Israel's sovereignty over its own controlled area of Jerusalem.

Despite the failure of the Swedish Resolution at the United Nations, as has already been noted, rumours still persisted that Israel would transfer its Foreign Ministry to Jerusalem. Knox Helm dismissed them as unfounded. Nevertheless, he suggested that discreet enquiries should be made for suitable property in Jerusalem in case the British Legation would have to move there. Admittedly, the idea of living in Jerusalem did not capture his imagination; he still preferred Tel-Aviv.[77] His suggestion did not persuade the Foreign Office. The Head of the Eastern Department thought a discreet search for property in Jerusalem would be imprudent. Sooner or later the Israelis would find out about it and would consequently feel encouraged to proceed with the transfer of the Ministry.[78] The Assistant Under-Secretary was emphatic in his rejection of Knox Helm's proposal. No attempt, he stressed, would be made to find accommodation in Jewish Jerusalem.[79]

A year later Knox Helm's successor, Francis Evans, returned to the same theme. He wrote to Bowker saying he had paid a visit to Jerusalem, for the purpose, among others, of "looking at possible sites for accommodation of the Legation in the event of our being forced to move to Jerusalem". Whether the Israelis knew about Evans' enquiries or not, Ben Gurion dwelt upon the subject when Evans visited him. "With a twinkle in his eyes", Evans reported, Ben Gurion "asked whether I was contemplating bringing my Legation to Jerusalem". Evans attempted to avoid the issue.

> But he later came back to the point by asking what accommodation we had for our Consular Office there and whether it could not be expanded to house the remainder of our Offices.

Evans assured him the accommodation was not suitable except for its present use, "and thereafter we left the subject alone".[80]

Following Israel's decision, in May 1952, to transfer the Foreign Ministry to Jerusalem, Evans proposed, as has already been indicated, a concerted Western approach to Israel designed to avert an immediate execution of that decision.

> On the other hand, if there is no general agreement to object to the proposed move, then I think it is important that we should prepare to move our Legation as soon as possible [...] If we accepted the fact that we were going to move our Legation some time, but delayed action until the last possible moment, the Israelis would find our attitude a little unfriendly and very difficult to understand.

On a personal level, Evans made it clear that

> I myself, and most if not all my staff, would much prefer remaining in Tel-Aviv and Ramat-Gan to going to Jerusalem.

However,

> In suggesting the desirability of an early move (if we move it all), I am thinking of the convenience of our work and of facilitating our establishment in Jerusalem as well as our relations with the Israeli Government.

Addressing himself to his colleagues in London, he concluded:

> I hope, therefore, that you will make up you minds whether we are to go or stay *as quickly as possible* [my italics].[81]

Following Evans' letter, the Foreign Office proceeded to formulate a policy, which on this occasion had to be shaped not in the light of any speculation of a possible Israel decision to move the Foreign Ministry, but in the aftermath of such decision.

The legal framework was provided by Fitzmaurice, of the Legal Department, who maintained that Britain could transfer its Legation to Jerusalem while adhering to its refusal to recognise Israel's claim to sovereignty.[82]

The Head of the Eastern Department, Archibald Ross, suggested that should an agreement involving Britain, the United States and France on a common approach not be possible, or, indeed, should representations fail "to restrain the Israelis", then

> We should, I think, be prepared to acquiesce in the move as soon as possible. We do not stand to lose much, but no doubt we should reserve our position in regard to Israel's sovereignty.[83]

The Assistant Under-Secretary, Sir James Bowker, agreed with Ross' proposed course of action. So did the permanent Under Secretary, Sir William Strang, as well as the Minister of State.[84]

Elaborating on his own recommendation, and in reference to Evans' letter, Ross further wrote: "Assuming that the Israelis do as F. Evans suggests, it [not moving the Legation] cannot at best do much more than postpone the evil day." Indeed, should Britain decide to retain its Legation in Tel-Aviv, "the situation would

become intolerable with Her Majesty's representative virtually cut off from personal contact with the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Government".[85]

The Foreign Office, in articulating its position to the State Department, made it clear that once the Foreign Ministry had been transferred to Jerusalem

> it would be necessary to move [the British Legation] sooner rather than later since the longer we delay the move, *which is in our view inevitable* [my italics] the greater the embarrassment in the end.[86]

By the end of May 1952 there was a sense in the Foreign Office that "we are moving steadily in the direction of transferring our Legation to Jerusalem".[87]

In response to the British initiative, Henry Byroade, Assistant Secretary for Middle Eastern Affairs at the State Department, doubted whether it would be possible to dissuade Israel from its intended action. He was opposed, though, to acquiescing in the move of the Foreign Ministry. It would merely indicate to public opinion in both countries that the Israelis could always do whatever they liked. This, he believed, would only encourage them to continue to advance extravagant claims.

His British counterpart, Sir James Bowker, argued that it would be an error to state that even should Israel transfer its Foreign Ministry the British Legation would not follow suit, since this might cause later great inconvenience.[88]

Byroade's views notwithstanding, the State Department Note, addressed to the Israeli Government, concluded by affirming that the United States Government "has no *present* [my italics] intention of transferring the Ambassador of the United States and his staff to Jerusalem".[89]

The intention of the Soviet Government, the Foreign Office learned, appeared to be that the Soviet Legation would move to Jerusalem once the Foreign Ministry was transferred. "This policy", assessed the British Legation in Israel, "would accord with the Soviet Union's attitude in the United Nations Assembly of 1950, of opposing the internationalisation of Jerusalem".[90] Pullar commented upon this that "it is probable that others will too, eventually".[91]

Meanwhile, the Israelis were being made aware of the attitudes prevailing within the Foreign Office through Barclay, of the Information Services Department, who displayed a candid disposition in his conversations with Arnon, the Israeli Press Attache.[92]

By January 1953 the Israeli Foreign Ministry had not yet moved to Jerusalem, nor had Britain reached any definite decision on whether to transfer the British Legation. Evans, though, reported to the Foreign Office that the date of the Ministry's transfer "cannot be distant". Therefore, he wished "to know as soon as possible whether you are contemplating our following suit". The reason prompting Britain to defer a final decision on this question, which incidentaly obtained likewise in the case of Israel's delay in the implementation of the Foreign Ministry's transfer decision, was related, or so Evans understood, to the possibility of the Jerusalem

issue being discussed at the General Assembly. Since the General Assembly had not done so, Evans believed.

> that we should do well to move as soon as practicable after the transfer of the Israel Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and that we should tell the Israel Government that this is our intention.

Evans recognised the damage that such a move would inflict upon Britain in the Arab world. However, if a decision to transfer the Legation was not in doubt, but rather its timing, then "I should not expect a move to be any more acceptable to the Arabs at any time in the foreseeable future than it would be now". Therefore, Evans concluded,

> I would urge [...] that unless we and the other Western Powers with diplomatic missions here are going to stick it out indefinitely in Tel-Aviv, and to accept all the consequences to the effectiveness of our work of being separated by fifty miles from the Israel Government and Foreign Ministry, we might as well face Arab hostility on this issue now as later.[93]

As in May 1953, so too now, Evans succeeded in prompting the Foreign Office to define its stance, to formulate a policy and to decide upon its forthcoming steps. But whereas on the previous occasion his general argument seemed to have been embraced by the Foreign Office, perceived changing circumstances were this time to lead to a different outcome.

In directing the principal source of anxiety over the question of the transfer of the Legation at the Arab factor, Evans was reflecting the prevailing attitudes at

the Foreign Office. Pullar, for instance, was quite explicit about it.

> It will be necessary to decide whether a decision in favour of remaining in Tel-Aviv will in fact make the Arabs more friendly to us over the problems that matter to us, or whether it will merely have the negative result of not increasing their bitterness.

Therefore,

> If we are going to play seriously for Arab favour in the hope of gaining something important the disadvantages of remaining in Tel-Aviv may be offset. But this seems to be *the only* [my italics] argument that should weigh heavily with us.[94]

Pullar, then, was arguing in favour of taking into consideration the Arab dimension on condition that it was anticipated that Britain would actually *gain* as a result and not merely avert Arab anger by so doing.

Fear of Arab reaction at a possible transfer of the British Embassy had already been expressed in 1952, following Israel's decision to move the Foreign Ministry to Jerusalem. Now, however, the Foreign Office believed that "the desirability of not adding to Arab grievances" had *increased.* The Arabs were resentful at the position that Britain had adopted in the United Nations at the latter part of 1952, urging the Arab States to consent to direct negotiations with Israel. An additional cause for grievance would render them less cooperative on regional defence matters and "make them more ready to listen to Soviet blandishments". The Foreign Office could not discard the possibility of a Soviet *volte face*, in the light of the existing anti-Zionist policy, that would lead to their mission remaining

in Tel-Aviv. "If they alone did so, the propaganda effect on the Arabs would be great".

Therefore, Britain would *not* transfer its Embassy in the wake of a similar move by the Foreign Ministry. The British Government wished the United States and France, among other countries, to agree that they should all remain in Tel-Aviv for, say, two years or "until the United Nations pass a resolution overtaking past resolutions on the status of Jerusalem".[95] This last proviso was also related, as Archibald Ross, the Head of the Eastern Department, acknowledged, to Arab sensibilities, since the Arab countries based their opposition on past U.N. resolutions.[96]

Despite this decision, it was generally agreed at the Foreign Office that in case the United States and France should be determined to move their Mission, Britain would follow suit.[97]

Having resolved to undertake concerted action with other countries, Evans believed it would be necessary to secure from the states concerned assurances to the effect that they would not subsequently take a unilateral decision to move their missions to Jerusalem. He feared that the missions remaining in Tel-Aviv would "suffer very considerable difficulties in their work". After a while, he predicted, there will probably develop a good deal of restiveness among the missions and a tendency for some of them to beat the pistol and move to Jerusalem on their own".[98]

Despite his advice designed to secure the success of his Government's policy, Evans did not exude much enthusiasm over the decision. To be sure, he did not conceal that he was "well content" to remain where he was. The difficulties that this emerging new situation would entail, though, could not be underestimated. Presently, with the seat of the Israeli Government in Jerusalem, the effectiveness of the Embassy's work was considerably reduced by the location of the mission fifty miles away from it. "We are in fact in the position of a Foreign Embassy in London stationed at Maidenhead but without the advantages of efficient transport and communications". Evans described a condition of isolation in which the Embassy was virtually unable to develop contacts either in Government or in other Jerusalem-based institutions, such as the Jewish Agency, the Hebrew University, etc. The projected move of the Foreign Ministry "will in fact only increase our existing isolation from the life of the Capital". Evans warned that "as a result this Embassy cannot hope to be as well informed, as influential, or as effective as it should be".[99]

The Foreign Office maintained that a General Assembly resolution containing some form of international supervision over the Holy Places could provide a venue for a change of policy on this question. As Paul Falla, the Head of the Eastern Department, put it,

> If it [such resolution] came about, there might be a good cause for transferring our missions to Jerusalem and so ending a situation which has definite practical disadvantages.[100]

When the Government was asked to clarify its position in Parliament, Eden replied that Britain,

> Together with the United States and French Governments [...] made clear at the time their view that the move of the Israel Foreign Ministry was not calculated to reduce tension between the Arab States and Israel, and might prejudice future consideration of the Status of Jerusalem by the United Nations. There is *therefore* [my italics] no intention *at present* [my emphasis] of transferring Her Majesty's Embassy to Jerusalem.[101]

It would appear from this extract that the decision not to transfer the Embassy was directly related to the explanations advanced by Eden in his speech. Although neither motive mentioned could be said to have been excluded from Foreign Office calculations, the *paramount* reason that prompted that decision - predicted negative repercussions in the Arab world for *Britain* - was not even alluded to. Thus, although British officials acknowledged that the Embassy would not be transferred to Jerusalem primarily so as to avert an adverse Arab reaction, the public and Parliament were not to be told so. Eden was therefore conveying to the House of Commons the truth, but not the whole truth; indeed, only a portion of the truth.

The Israelis were first informed of Britain's decision not to transfer its Embassy to Jerusalem early in 1953.[102] Following the move of the Foreign Ministry to Jerusalem, Britain officially conveyed to Israel that it did not "intend" to move its Embassy from Tel-Aviv.[103] Meanwhile, beyond the official stated position, the Israelis were apprised of the attitudes prevailing within the Foreign Office, in the wake of the transfer of the Ministry to Jerusalem, through different sources at the Foreign Office.

Barclay, for instance, told Arnon that he did not expect Britain to move its Embassy to Jerusalem in the near future. The British Government, he explained,

did not want to accord any legitimacy to an Israeli action which ran counter to a U.N. resolution. In addition, it desired to avoid Arab complaints that would have ensued.[104]

The unofficial information that Arnon received from the Foreign Office spokesman was more emphatic. The Israelis, Arnon was told, were not fully cognisant of the strength of British opposition to Israel's action. The British Government was determined not to transfer its Embassy to Jerusalem. The spokesman could not conceive of any change on this score in the foreseeable future.[105]

Geoffrey Baker, of the Eastern Department, appeared to have been less absolute when he met Mordechai Gazit to discuss this matter. Britain would transfer its Embassy to Jerusalem, Gazit quoted Baker to have said, "'when the time comes'". Gazit reported back to the Foreign Ministry his assessment that the British were not opposed in principle to move to Jerusalem but were rather waiting for a propitious moment, since the present one was "inopportune".[106]

An Israeli assessment of British intentions was further conveyed, with the benefit of hindsight, by Gershon Avner, Counsellor at the Israeli Embassy, from 1953 to 1957. The question of whether to transfer the Embassy to Jerusalem was analysed by the British in wholly pragmatic terms: should Israel transfer its Foreign Ministry to Jerusalem, Britain would then follow suit. However, once the Ministry was moved, and the British realised that other countries would not transfer their missions, they decided likewise to refrain from moving.[107]

When Israel's seat of Government was transferred to Jerusalem, in December 1949, and when its Foreign Ministry followed suit in July 1953, Britain's first response was of a passive nature, i.e. to refrain from moving its mission from Tel-Aviv. On both occasions, however, the subsequent British response was of an active character - to impose a boycott on visits to Jerusalem by British diplomats and visiting officials. In the second case, Britain's policy entailed a severance of contacts not only with the Israeli Government as such but with the principal interlocutor of the British Embassy - the Foreign Ministry.

The boycott carried out in the wake of Israel's decision of December 1949 covered, apart from official dealings, any form of social contacts with Israelis in Jerusalem; dinner parties, for instance, would not be attended by any British diplomats. Furthermore, official functions of a cultural nature, such as the celebrations mounted on occasion of the 25th anniversary of the foundation of the Hebrew University, would be deprived of any British diplomatic representation. So far as the British Legation was concerned, Jerusalem had to be totally and uncompromisingly ignored.[108]

These instructions, to be sure, did not cause any inconvenience to Knox Helm - on a strictly personal level, that is - since he was very glad to be able to avoid the long journeys to Jerusalem and back.[109]

Meanwhile, the Foreign Office did not countenance any modification of its instructions unless: first, the General Assembly of the U.N. adopted a resolution which even implicitly recognised Jordan and Israel as the controlling authorities in

Jerusalem; secondly, the United States and other interested governments concurred following consultations.[110]

Regarding the first proviso, J.G.T. Sherringham, of the British Delegation to the United Nations, maintained "that now that the Assembly has failed to take any action whatsoever there can be no great objection to a revision of our attitude". Therefore, Britain was "absolved from any moral obligation to continue to support the United Nations to the extent of refusing to have official dealings with the Israeli Government in Jerusalem".[111]

In the wake of this letter, Geoffrey Furlonge, the Head of the Eastern Department, received the opinion of the Legal Department of the Foreign Office. This accorded with Sherringham's view insofar as it considered the U.N. resolution of 1948, reaffirming *corpus separatum*, to have lapsed. The Legal Department saw consequently "no objection to permitting our representatives and visiting officials to visit Jerusalem on occasion to do business with the Israeli Ministers".[112]

In concert with other countries, among them the United States and France, Britain decided to amend instructions pertaining to visits to Jerusalem. From now on, occasional personal unofficial visits to Jerusalem would be allowed; moreover, *ad hoc* visits to conduct business with government officials would be permitted, provided these remained strictly limited in number and were accorded as little publicity as possible. Visits of an official nature, such as ceremonies, would have to be avoided.[113]

This decision, Furlonge explained, was prompted not only by the recognition that the Israeli Government was established in Jerusalem. It also derived from the realisation that Ben- Gurion would not conduct any official business in Tel-Aviv. And "since it is necessary that Helm, and occasional British official visitors, should see him from time to time, we decided that such visits must be authorised, and that we must accept the risk of appearing thereby to depart somewhat from our non-recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel".[114]

By early 1952 the existing instructions appeared to Evans to be too restrictive. Lord Mountbatten, the First Sea Lord of the Admiralty, was due to pay a visit to Israel, and according to the prevailing policy, would have been compelled to refuse official invitations to Jerusalem. His Israeli hosts, like the President of the State, might not acquiesce and consent to meet him in Tel-Aviv. Such visits would consequently have to be cancelled "with resultant bad blood with even an evocation of the old Israel animus against the Navy for its unhappy role in the days of illegal immigration". Evans stressed his opinion by widening the argument.

> I wonder whether considerations such as this do not warrant re-examination of our policy about Jerusalem [...] do not see how we can continue indefinitely our present attitude; it keeps us out of touch with the other Departments of the Government than the Foreign Ministry and greatly reduces the scope of whatever influence we may hope to bring to bear on these people".[115]

A further test to the policy of boycott emerged with the announcement that a new President would be elected on 8 December 1952, and that his inauguration would ensue shortly afterwards. Both were due to take place in Jerusalem.

Foreign representatives would be expected to attend his inauguration. Present instructions precluded that.

The State Department took the initiative. It conveyed its preliminary view to the Foreign Office that the United States Ambassador would have to be present at the inauguration of the new President. Otherwise, it argued, his absence would be construed by Israel as an unfriendly action. The Foreign Office, up to the Permanent Under-Secretary, agreed that Western representatives should attend the occasion. James Wardrop, of the Eastern Department, recognised that although this "may well provide an outcry, and more particularly in the Arab States, we cannot really boycott it".[116]

Following the transfer of the Foreign Ministry to Jerusalem in July 1953, the British Government imposed an almost complete embargo on visits to Jerusalem. British diplomats in Israel were forbidden from visiting the Foreign Ministry except with specific authorisation which would be given only in very rare circumstances. These would include courtesy visits paid to the Foreign Minister by a new or departing Head of Mission. Furthermore, the boycott would preclude attendance at functions in Jerusalem to which the diplomatic corps was invited.

It was expected that as a corollary of this decision the British Embassy would have to accept "the inconvenience and disadvantages" of dealing with the Foreign Ministry's Liaison Office in Tel Aviv. However, the Foreign Office found some consolation in its belief that the Israelis themselves "will no doubt also suffer from the separation". Indeed, "by taking a firm line at the outset we may induce the

Israelis to staff Liaison Office to deal with important matters".[117]

Britain wished to establish a common front, involving several countries that would pursue the same line. But, whereas the United States appeared to be adopting an identical stance to that of the British, the French had some reservations. These related to the intended boycott of all functions in Jerusalem. The French agreed that those staged by the Foreign Ministry should not be attended. However, they deemed it unnecessary to refuse invitations to functions in Jerusalem which had hitherto been attended by foreign diplomats.[118]

The Italian Government, on the other hand, argued that even courtesy visits should be excluded.[119] It would seem though that, subsequently, that prohibition was dropped since its newly appointed Minister in Israel was prepared to visit Sharett in Jerusalem.[120] Indeed, he was to be the first Western representative to pay an official visit to Sharett in the Foreign Ministry. The fact that he represented such an obviously Catholic state rendered his act, in Sharett's eyes, particularly significant in the attempt to break the boycott on Jerusalem.[121]

Britain's boycott policy was motivated by an apparent set of dual considerations. It rested, as Falla maintained, "on regard for Arab susceptibilities and the fact that the United Nations recommendation for an internationalised Jerusalem still holds the field".[122] Falla had made it clear, however, that references to United Nations resolutions was a "'talking point'", since

> *the main motive of our attitude is concern for the Arabs and not for the U.N.* [my italics][123]

In a minute he prepared for John Nicholls, who was to become Ambassador in Israel at the end of 1954, Falla appeared to have referred to the U.N. argument as a determining factor in Britain's boycott policy. His minute, though, suggested to Nicholls that "this cannot possibly be the determining factor". Apprehension of Arab reactions, Nicholls argued, was at the core of British policy on this question.[124]

The repeated reference to U.N. resolutions begs a question. The Legal Department had tendered its advice in 1951 to the effect that, the 1949 Resolution having lapsed, British diplomats should be allowed to visit Jerusalem to transact official business. Now an attempt was being made to justify the boycott on "the United Nations' recommendation for an internationalised Jerusalem" which "still holds the field". Notwithstanding Falla and Nicholls' recognition of the primacy of the Arab factor, an inevitable question still emerges: Had anything changed since 1951 to annul the validity of the Legal opinion received by the Foreign Office? Had any resolution been adopted by the General Assembly to render the conclusions of the Legal Department null and void? The answer to the second question is, of course, no. The answer to the first may well depend on the answer to the second question.

To be sure, the Foreign Office, as was alluded to earlier, was most anxious to secure a United Nations resolution recommending some form of functional internationalisation. This would facilitate a change of policy by Britain on the Jerusalem question, even making it possible to transfer the British Embassy to Jerusalem. The legal advice, however, did not provide for any such resolution as the basis for its implementation. British diplomats could visit Jerusalem as the existing resolution was deemed to have lapsed and not on account of any *new*

resolution having been adopted. Still, it might not be entirely inconceivable that meanwhile the Foreign Office had resolved to discard the opinion of its Legal Department as being legally unfounded, though there seems to be no evidence to that effect.

Furthermore, the Legal Advisers of the Foreign Office had stated in May 1952 that even if the Assembly Resolution of 1949 was considered to be valid, Britain's position would *not* be prejudiced either by acquiescing in the move of the Foreign Ministry or even by the transfer of the Embassy to Jerusalem. Would it be reasonable to infer from this that visits to the Foreign Ministry could be construed as a breach of U.N. resolutions? Consenting to the Foreign Ministry move or even transferring the Embassy to Jerusalem could not be held to contradict U.N. resolutions, whilst paying official visits to Jerusalem could? Still, the Foreign Office may have concluded that the advice tendered by the Legal Department in May 1952 also was legally dubious, though there seems to be no evidence to that effect.

A pertinent event in this context was the visit authorised by the Secretary General of the U.N. of General Bennike, Chief of Staff of UNTSO (United Nations Truce Supervisory Organisation) to Sharett in his office at the Foreign Ministry in Jerusalem. This development had prompted the Swedish Charge d'Affaires in Israel, Malling, to comment, as reported by his British counterpart, that

> It seemed that the diplomatic missions were being more Royalist than the King if they refused to call on the Israeli Ministry in Jerusalem, because of their respect for the United Nations resolutions, while the

> Secretary-General of the United Nations saw no objection to a member of his staff calling in Jerusalem.[125]

Whatever the answer to this query may be, one should in the meantime remain satisfied with Falla's observation that reference to U.N. resolutions was a convenient "talking point".

From the outset, Evans questioned the utility of the policy devised in London. He emphasised the effect that the embargo on visits to Jerusalem would have on the work of the Embassy.

> if we in this Embassy cease to have any direct contact with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs our usefulness will be even more seriously curtailed than I had foreseen.

This sacrifice would have come to nought, for Evans could not envisage any benefit accruing from the boycott decision.

> I think it very unlikely that any reaction by us or by the United States Government, except possibly the total curtailment of the United States financial aid, will persuade the Israel Government to go back on their decision.[126]

Evans, though, interpreted his instructions with sufficient leeway so as to permit his staff to visit other ministries and attend private, non-official functions.[127] There remained, however, an unanswered query: should Evans attend Presidential receptions for the diplomatic corps? Evans would not have hesitated to do so hitherto. But should he now? His view was crystal-clear: "To refuse the President's

summons would amount to extreme discourtesy, and could well prejudice my mission".[128] Falla agreed. He thought, though, that a common front with other countries should be preserved. Bowker stressed that such attendances "highlight the Israel contention that Jerusalem is the Capital".[129] "For this reason", the Foreign Office concluded, "we think they should be declined".[130]

Whilst the United States refused to authorise its Ambassador to attend Presidential functions,[131] France adopted a similar line as that espoused by Evans. Invitations from the Head of State fell into a distinctive category of its own and to decline them would be discourteous.[132] The prospect of a common front on the question, something the Foreign Office was keen to attain, seemed remote.

Meanwhile, Evans had retorted to the Foreign Office by re-emphasising that he still deemed it "desirable that invitation from the Head of State should be regarded as outside the scope of this dispute".[133] He considered the Foreign Office line to be rather too rigid: "For me to be obliged to refuse the President's invitation is to stretch our expression of displeasure to the extreme". He seemed unable even to comprehend the logic behind a policy which appeared to him to be "a far cry from our policy of last year, and even from our past practice which allowed me to call on the Prime Minister in Jerusalem when necessary".[134]

Falla, who had concurred with Evans when he first raised the issue, recommended that Evans should be authorised to attend Presidential functions.[135] He was, however, overruled by Lord Salisbury, who was substituting for the indisposed Anthony Eden, who maintained that Britain should continue to apply the

boycott to Presidential receptions.[136] Falla insisted. He recalled that the representatives of Britain, the United States, France and Australia had all attended the President's inauguration in Jerusalem in December 1952 "without, so far as I know, occasioning any violent Arab protests". He suggested approaching the United States so as to convey Britain's readiness to heed Evans recommendation.[137] On this occasion his superiors, including Eden, did not appear to object.[138] A final decision, though, had yet to be reached.

So far as the British Embassy was concerned the principal hindrance to its normal function remained intact. The Foreign Ministry was in Jerusalem, the Embassy in Tel Aviv, and British diplomats were unable to conduct their expected duties on account of a self-imposed embargo.

Evans advanced a further argument to stress the negative consequences of Britain's decision upon the very stability of Israel-Arab relations. Whereas previously the Israel Government was prepared to listen to advice tendered by Western missions as regards the situation on Israel's frontiers, now the Foreign Ministry could "go its own sweet way without the steady pressure which the Western missions have exercised in the past". An additional consideration to bear in mind would be the resultant inability of the Foreign Minister to cite the opinions of the Heads of Mission in Cabinet in support of his more moderate stance. "It is undeniably to our interests", Evans emphasised, "that Israel pursues as moderate a course as possible in the Middle East". Therefore, he regretted "that we should totally deprive ourselves of one of the most effective methods of influencing the Israeli Government". Evans concluded with a plea to relax the existing ban on all

visits to the Foreign Ministry, even if that entailed the pursuance of a different course than the one followed by the United States.[139]

The Eastern Department reacted cautiously. Evans may possibly have more latitude so far as contacts with the Israeli Government was concerned. However, since he was due to return to Britain on leave, there was nothing to be gained by modifying prevailing instructions.[140]

Meanwhile, the Foreign Office was receiving reports of restiveness and impatience among foreign representatives in Israel over the rigidity of the agreed policy. Indeed, many breaches of the boycott were in evidence. The French Embassy, for instance, which had never concealed its disapproval of the embargo, regularly met members of the Foreign Ministry in Jerusalem.[141] Evans' deputy commented: "I doubt if the present boycott [...] can be maintained intact for so long, and fear that even if a facade is preserved, it will wear ridiculously thin".[142] Pullar retorted in a defiant mood: "the longer we can stay as we are, the more our protest will strike home to the Israelis".[143]

The Israelis, and particularly Sharett, were surprised by the boycott and felt, not only hurt and bitter, but misled. Sharett reminded Evans that he had never forewarned him that the move of the Foreign Ministry would be followed by an embargo on visits to Jerusalem. True, the British had expressed their disapproval at the move and made clear their Embassy would not follow suit. But nothing was said that could have anticipated the present reaction. Evans, who endeavoured to challenge Sharett, admitted subsequently to Bowker that "the sharpness of the

reaction to the move of the Israel Ministry [...] came [...] as a surprise to me" therefore, "it must have been doubly surprising to the Israelis".[144]

To be sure, Sharett did not display much anxiousness to meet foreign diplomats wherever and whenever they so desired. He set well-defined guidelines and did not waver from them. He would not visit any diplomat in Tel-Aviv or Ramat-Gan, either on an official or private capacity, unless the representatives concerned had previously paid him a visit to Jerusalem. Once he combined both the Premiership and the Foreign Ministry from December 1953, Sharett was willing, as a sign of flexibility, to receive diplomats at the Prime Minister's Office, rather than the Foreign Ministry. Furthermore, under no circumstances would a diplomat or foreign dignitary be invited to Sharett's house except if he had visited him before at either the Prime Minister's Office or the Foreign Ministry.[145]

Sharett had been fiercely opposed to the decision to transfer the seat of Government to Jerusalem in December 1949. He was subsequently seen to be reluctant to follow suit and move the Foreign Ministry. On both accounts, he was displaying sensitivity to outside opinion, fearing the possible consequences. Now, once the Foreign Ministry had been established in Jerusalem, Sharett was determined not to allow any outside power to ignore this new reality, even at the price of a severance of contacts with their representatives.

Sharett thus posed a challenge to the countries participating in the boycott: either you modify your policies, or you run the risk of becoming as effective as a tourist with diplomatic immunity.

The implications of the second scenario were once again conveyed to the Foreign Office. Advancing a similar argument that Evans had already dwelt upon, Moore contended that, in order to secure a more moderate policy in relations with the Arabs under Sharett, "the steady advice and support which the Western Ambassadors could offer by regular contact might be decisive". For that to occur, the existing "divorce" between the diplomatic missions and the Foreign Ministry "must be broken".

He thereby proposed a compromise formula to be presented to the Israelis. If the head of each political division of the Foreign Ministry were to be available one day a week in the Foreign Ministry's Liaison Office in Tel-Aviv, the British Embassy would be prepared "to make periodic visits to the Ministry in Jerusalem".[146]

The Head of the Levant Department, Falla, recommended adopting "a compromise solution on the lines suggested by Mr Moore, doing our best to take the Americans along with us, *but if necessary proceeding independently.* [my italics]"[147]

In the meantime, though, more pressing decisions awaited. The President of Israel was expected to give a reception in Jerusalem for the National Day on 6 May 1954 and Evans was now doyen of the Diplomatic Corps. According to existing instructions he would have been precluded from attending such a function. A further matter that the Foreign Office had to deal with was the question of a courtesy call on Sharett as Prime Minister. Whereas some Heads of Mission had done so, the British Representative had been instructed not to pay a courtesy visit.

Should the prevailing prohibition not be amended, Evans would have no further contact with the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, with the sole exception of a call on his departure. Falla, therefore, recommended authorising Evans to attend Presidential receptions and to pay a visit to Sharett as Prime Minister at a suitable opportunity.[148] Eden agreed.[149]

A week had elapsed before the United States relayed its response. So far as celebrations connected with Israel's National Day to be held in Jerusalem were concerned, its Representative in Israel would be instructed not to attend. Eden commented upon this: "I presume we take our line then". The Department sided with Eden. The Minister of State, though, was not happy about it.[150]

Eden, however, proceeded to instruct Evans to attend Presidential celebrations in Jerusalem. He indicated to him that he should emphasise that his presence there had no political implications.[151] Eden felt justified in taking a different line than the United States on account, first of Evans being doyen of the diplomatic corps and secondly as the United States were then only represented by a Charge d'Affaires in Israel, rendering any slight to Israel less marked than if an Ambassador were to be absent.[152]

Whilst Britain proceeded independently of the United States on Presidential functions, the United States pursued a divergent course from Britain concerning the implementation of Moore's compromise formula. Francis Russell, the United States Charge d'Affaires in Israel, had told his British counterpart that within a period of three months he had visited Sharett in the Prime Minister's Office some five or six

times. Sharrett and Walter Eytan, on their part, had seen him twice respectively at the Liaison Office in Tel Aviv. Moore was surprised to learn that the United States was conducting business with Sharett in the Prime Minister's Office while his instructions limited his visits to formal occasions exclusively.[153] It would seem then that Moore's instructions accorded with Eden's approval of courtesy visits to Sharett as Prime Minister, but did not extent beyond that to any working relationship as envisaged by Moore's compromise solution. This appears to be rather peculiar in view of Israel's acceptance of Moore's formula almost four months previous to the letter aforementioned.[154]

Meanwhile, Nicholls, who was to succeed Evans in Israel at the end of 1954, had urged the British Government to modify its policy and allow closer contact with the Israeli authorities in Jerusalem.[155] Falla concurred in that view and advanced the possibility of authorising the British Ambassador "to make contact from time to time at his discretion with the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Jerusalem". Since new United States and British Ambassadors were about to take up their posts, this seemed "an opportune moment to make this change".[156]

The State Department was not inclined to go any further than it had so far. The United States Representatives in Israel was already permitted to conduct official business with Sharett in Jerusalem, though not in the Foreign Ministry, whilst Eytan was available from time to time in Tel-Aviv.[157] The Quai d'Orsay likewise considered the existing arrangement with the Foreign Ministry satisfactory and were negatively disposed to the idea of a change.[158]

The decision was therefore reached in London that, provided the new United States Ambassador were to continue the practice of fairly frequent visits to Sharett in Jerusalem, though not at the Foreign Ministry, the Foreign Office would instruct Nicholls to follow the same practice.[159]

The essence of Moore's compromise solution was finally adopted by the British Government. Falla's more flexible proposal was, at least for the moment, rejected. Nicholls would still have to refrain from calling on the Foreign Ministry. Moore himself, the advocate of a change in the boycott policy, tended to agree with the decision reached by his government. The ban on Nicholls' visiting the Foreign Ministry, Moore admitted, was "unrealistic", nevertheless, he added, "we cannot yet quite slough off all vestiges of unrealism".[160]

One additional "vestige of unrealism" was "sloughed off" when both the new United States and British Ambassadors to Israel presented their credentials to the President in Jerusalem at the end of 1954.

As a result of which the Jordan Government was reported to be considering the transfer of its seat, in its entirety or in part, to Jordanian-held Jerusalem. The Foreign Office set about to articulate persuasive arguments to dissuade King Hussein, if indeed the reports were proved to be true, from implementing any such plan.[161]

The aim of the boycott policy remains somewhat unclear: was it designed to express displeasure at the transfer of the Foreign Ministry to Jerusalem? Did it

seek to compel the Israeli Foreign Ministry to continue transacting business in Tel-Aviv, at the Liaison Office, thus rendering the act of transfer a half-way measure? Did it rest on the assumption that, confronted with an all-out embargo, the Israeli Government would acquiesce and order the return of the Foreign Ministry to Tel-Aviv?

There is evidence indicating that these three objectives were, either wholly or partially, incorporated within the province of British policy on this question. These, however, alternate, appearing and reappearing in turn, some deployed by officials at the Foreign Office in London, others advanced by diplomats abroad, with no well-defined, coherent message encompassing them all. Perhaps, then, there was no clear-cut aim, only a motivation: not to provoke the anger of the Arabs and not to undertake an action that could be construed as contravening past U.N. resolutions - though the latter, as we have seen, may have been merely a "talking point".

Whereas, apart from the officials at the Foreign Office and the diplomats concerned abroad, the highest echelons of the Foreign Office, including Eden, participated in the formulation of policy on the Jerusalem question, Churchill does not appear to have had any input - at least until the beginning of 1955. Then, in a conversation with Evelyn Shuckburgh, Assistant Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, Churchill made known his views when he said,

> But you ought to let the Jews have Jerusalem; it is they who made it famous.[162]

The British were thus opposed to the internationalisation of the City of Jerusalem as they considered it impractical. They argued that unless Israel and Jordan agreed otherwise the prevailing status of Jerusalem should remain unchanged. Having accorded *de facto* recognition to Israel and Jordan's control over their respective areas of the City, Britain identified the *status quo* as permanent rather than transitory in nature; and expected it to be stamped with the *de jure* seal of approval following a resolution of the Arab-Israeli dispute.

In the wake of Israel's decision to transfer the Foreign Ministry to Jerusalem, the inclination among British officials was to follow suit and move the Legation from Tel-Aviv as well. The delay that ensued in the actual transfer of the Foreign Ministry witnessed a modification in attitudes in London: Britain would not, after all, move its Embassy to Jerusalem. Furthermore, the transfer of the Foreign Ministry was met by the imposition of an all-out boycott on official visits to the City. Both decisions were primarily prompted by the perception that to have done otherwise would have adversely affected British interests in the Arab world. Admittedly, the authority of the United Nations was publicly invoked to explain Britain's posture in this regard. But, as has been noted, what appeared to have motivated the Foreign Office in London, what seemed to have dissuaded it from moving the Embassy to Jerusalem and persuaded it to impose a diplomatic boycott on the City, was principally its fear that any other course of action might have incurred the wrath of the Arabs without any compensating benefit. The British diplomats in Israel, having to contend with the practical ramifications of their Government's decisions, did urge the Foreign Office in London to consider the problems created thereof. In consequence, at leats the policy of boycott was

gradually modified to meet the required conditions for Evans, Moore and their colleagues in Tel-Aviv to be able to transact their diplomatic duties in Israel.

What seems to be quite clear is that the stance adopted by the British, both on the question of the transfer of the Embassy to Jerusalem and on the embargo on official visits to the City, was not founded on a *principled* opposition to the Israeli move, but rather on a pragmatic assessment of perceived British interests.

An intriguing question does remain. How would Britain have reacted had Israel proceeded to transfer its Foreign Ministry to Jerusalem immediately after the official announcement that it would do so, and not when it was actually transferred, more than a year later? Considering that there seemed to have prevailed both at the Foreign Office in London and at the British Embassy in Tel-Aviv a wide consensus following the official Israeli announcement of the *intention* to transfer the Foreign Ministry to Jerusalem that Britain would have to follow suit with its own legation, would a prompt Israeli move have induced Britain to do what on further reflection, and a year subsequently, it deemed unable to do?

FOOTNOTES

1. Quoted in Elihu Lauterpacht, Jerusalem and the Holy Places, (Geerings, London, 1968) p.25.

2. Israelis used to refer to this identity of views. Ben-Gurion, for instance, recognised that Israel and Jordan shared a common interest on the question of the status of Jerusalem. Michael Bar-Zohar, *Ben Gurion* p.339. Abba Eban, who served as Israel's Ambassador at the U.N., alluded to a cooperative relationship between the two countries, during 1950-51, to thwart proposals aimed at the internationalisation of Jerusalem. Michael brecher, Decisions in Israel"s Foreign Policy (Oxford University Press, London, 1974) p.10.

3. Israel and the United Nations. Report of a Study Group set up by the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Prepared for the Carnigie Endowment for International Peace (Manahattan Publishing Company, New York, 1956) pp.131-132.

4. Ibid, pp.134-135.

5. FO 371/104738, ER 1018/46, Eytan to Evans, 10 July, 1953.

6. Sharett's address to the Knesset, 17 June 1953, as quoted in Israel and the United Nations pp.131-132.

7. FO 371/104775, ER 1082/8, Furlonge to Ross, 15 July, 1953.

8. FO 371/104775, ER 1082/17, Furlonge to Salisbury, 3 September, 1953. For a more detailed presentation of the strategic-military dimension of Jordan's position, see the paper written by the Head of the Arab Legion, Glubb Pasha, in FO 371/104753, ER 1071/2/G.

9. FO 371/104775, ER 1082/10, Bromley to Ross, 20 July, 1953. In the Minutes, C.A. Thompson remarked: "it is scarcely logical of other Arab States to hope that they [the Jordanians] would [agree to internationalisation], since Arab Policy calls for the elimination of Israel and Jordan is the obvious candidate for the major share of the division of the spoils". "Jordan", suggested Thompson, "presumably takes the line that once she is in full control of Jerusalem she would be ready to consider a special status for parts of the City". 5 August, 1953.

10. FO 371/104753, ER 1071/2/G, Pullar, FO Minute, 7 January, 1953.

11. Regarding the Vatican-Israeli rift over the question of sovereignty and internationalisation, see Yaacov Herzog, A People that Dwells Alone. (Weidenfeld and Nicholson, London, 1975) p.55, p.110. Herzog served as Counsellor on Jerusalem at the Israeli Foreign Ministry 1948-54. See also Moshe Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, Volume I, 10 November, 1953, pp.135-136. Brecher, Decisions, pp.25-26.

12. An official Vatican memorandum outlining Vatican's policy upon the status of Jerusalem can be found in FO 371/111097, VR 1082/5. It is interesting to note in this context that the leadership of the Roman Catholic Church in England opposed, on the whole, the territorial internationalisation of Jerusalem. ISA 39/19, Arnon to Foreign Ministry, 11 August, 1953.

13. In 1950, 30 member states voted in favour of internationalisation, 18 voted against and 9 abstained. In 1952, 28 voted in favour, 20 against and 12 abstained. Figures contained in Israel and the United Nations, p.138.

14. Hansard, H.C., Vol. 474. col. 1138.

15. FO 371/82633, ER 1892/3, Furlonge to Sherringham, 4 December, 1950. Furlonge was to return to this theme a few months later in a letter to A.E. Lambert of the British Embassy in Stockholm. "The future of Jerusalem remains undecided; and we ourselves have not given *de jure* recognition to Israel's occupation of the New City, though we recognise her *de facto* control there". FO 371/91755, ER 1892/26, 18 May 1951.

16. See, for instance, FO 953/1340, PG 1531/1, FO to Washington, 29 May 1952. FO 371/104775, ER 1082/23, Falla, FO Minute, 9 December, 1953, in which the Head of the Eastern Department at the FO stressed that Younger's House of Commons' statement of 27 April, 1950 "is still the position" of the British Government.

17. See Hansard, H.C., Vol 474, col 1138.

18. Quoted in FO 371/98793, ER 10110/59, Bowker to Rapp. 1 December, 1952.

19. FO 371/98793, ER 10110/59, Pullar, FO Minute.

20. FO 371/98739, ER 101101/9, Bowker to Rapp, 1 December, 1952.

21. M.S. Williams of the Legal Department of the FO advanced a similar argument in connection with the 1947 Resolution: "owing to the passage of time and to the change in political conditions the resolution [...] has become largely obsolete". FO 371/104775, ER 1082/23, FO Minute, 10 December, 1953.

22. FO 371/104753, ER 1071/2/G, Pullar, FO Minute, 7 January 1953. The United States referred to the concept of full internationalisation similarly as "impracticable". See FRUS, 5, Acheson to Embassy in Israel, 14 February, 1951, p.580.

23. FO 371/104839, ER 1892/3, Falla, FO Minute, 5th October, 1953.

24. FO 371/98793, ER 10110/51, FO to Washington, 13 October, 1952. The State Department's stance, though less emphatic, was nevertheless on the same lines. See FRUS, 5, Department of State Position Paper, 12 October, 1951, pp.903-904.

25. FO 371/104738, ER 1018/2, Pullar, FO Minute, 21 January, 1953.

26. FO 371/111071, VR 1072/80, FO to Tel Aviv, 10 May, 1954. In reaching the second of its conclusions, Levant Department may have been influenced by a paper written by Glubb Pasha on the military disadvantages that would accrue to Jordan should internalisation be implemented. See FO 371/104753, ER 1071/2/6. More than a year previously, referring to the prospect of Jordan being placed in an indefensible position on the West Bank in case internationalisation were accepted, Pullar had directed the Department to Glubb's Paper as source of reference. FO 371/104738, ER 1018/2, Pullar, FO Minute, 21 June, 1953.

27. Hansard, H.C., Vol 522, col 12, 14 December, 1953.

28. FO 371/104839, ER 1892/3, Falla, FO Minute, 5 October, 1953.

29. Brecher, Decisions, p.33.

30. It may be noted that whilst Israel was positively disposed towards this draft resolution, Jordan was not.

31. FO 371/104775, ER 1082/23, Falla, FO Minute, 10 December, 1953.

32. FO 371/104775, ER 1082/7, Furlonge to Salisbury, 3 September, 1953. Furlonge further conveyed his hope that the idea of functional internationalisation would be pursued in the forthcoming Assembly of the U.N. See also FO 371/104775, ER 1082/8, Furlonge to Ross, 15 July, 1953.

33. FO 371/1110967, VR 1082/5, Tripp, FO Minute, 14 April, 1954.

34. FO 371 104775, ER 1082/5, Roberts to Bowker, 13 June, 1953.

35. FO 371/104775, ER 1082/19, Beeley to Falla, 14 October, 1953.

36. FO 371/104842, ER 1905/5, Moore to Falla, 22 December, 1953. Pullar found this piece of information "encouraging". Ibid, Pullar, FO Minutes.

37. FO 371/111097, VR 1082/2, Brewis, FO Minute, 8 March, 1951. The contacts that the State Department had maintained with Roman Catholic countries did not augur well either. The French, for their part, referred to the stiff stance adopted by Catholic states at the U.N., which, they pointed out, was less marked than the Vatican's.

38. FO 371/111097, VR 1082/5; Ibid, Tripp, FO Minute, 14 April, 1954. Tripp nonetheless recommended that "the intransigence of the Arabs and Israel be emphasised on every possible occasion both to the Holy See and to other Catholic countries in the hope of bringing them to moderate their present opposition to [...] 'functional internationalisation"'.

39. FO 371/104753, ER 1071/216, Pullar, FO Minute, 7 January, 1953.
40. FO 371/104753, ER 1071/9, Rapp to Ross, 21 January, 1953.

41. FO 371/104754, ER 1071/36, Furlonge to Bowker, 26 March, 1953.

42. FO 371/104775, ER 1082/19, Falla to Beeley, 24 December, 1953.

43. FO 371/104775, ER 1082/22, Evans to Falla, 27 October, 1953.

44. FO 371/104775, ER 1082/7, Furlonge to Salisbury, 3 September, 1953.

45. FO 371/104775, ER 1082/19, Falla to Beeley, 24 December, 1953.

46. FO 371/104754, ER 1071/45, FO TENTATIVE LIST OF CONDITIONS FOR AN ARAB-ISRAEL SETTLEMENT.

47. It should be noted that some government departments and public institutions were set up in Jerusalem already in 1948. The Supreme Court, for instance, was among these. The opening session of the Constituent Assembly (subsequently to be known as the Knesset) and the election and investiture of the first President, Dr Weizmann, occurred in Jerusalem in February 1949, almost a year prior to the Knesset decision. Israel and the United Nations, p.127.

48. Brecher, Decisions, pp.32-33. See also, Bar-Zohar, *Ben-Gurion* pp 338-339; Gabriel Sheffer, *"Pitaron kolel mul mitun ha sihsuh ha Israeli-Aravi; Behina mehudeshet shel ha hitnagshut bein Moshe Sharett ve David Ben-Gurion"*, In *Ha tzionut ve ha Sheela ha Aravit*, [Zionism and the Arab question] (The Zalman Shazar Centre, Jerusalem, 1979) p.145.

49. FO 371/82633, ER 1892/4, FO to Washington, 13 January, 1951.

50. FO 371/91755, ER 1892/3, Wardrop, FO Minute, 2 January, 1957.

51. FO 371/91755, ER 1892/7, FO to Washington, 17 January, 1951.

52. FO 371/91755, ER 1892/10, Helm to Furlonge, 11 January, 1951.

53. FO 371/98792, ER 10110/1, Te-Aviv to FO, 6 May 1952. See also, FO 371/98786, ER 1013/6, MONTHLY REPORT ON ISRAEL FOR MAY, 1952.

54. ISA 39/19, Eytan to Israeli Mission in London, 12 May, 1952.

55. FO 371/98792, ER 10110/4, Evans to Bowker, 12 May, 1952.

56. FO 371 98786, ER 1013/8, MONTHLY REPORT ON ISRAEL FOR JULY, 1952. The State Department likewise referred to the intended move as "inopportune". See, FRUS, 9, Department of State Press Release, 28 July, 1953.

57. FO 371/98792, ER 101110/26, Memorandum from A.H. Tange, Assistant Secretary, P.M.'s Dept., Canberra, 25 June, 1952.

58. FO 371/98792, ER 10110/26, Pullar, FO Minute, 25 June, 1952.

59. FO 371/98792, ER 10110/30, Evans to Ross, 15 July, 1952. The United States urged Israel to refrain from moving the Foreign Ministry until after the U.N. General Assembly. FO 371/97793, ER 10110/33, Washington to FO, 21 July, 1952.

60. ISA 39/19, Foreign Ministry to Elath, 7 August, 1952.

61. FO 371/98792, ER 10110/11, Commonwealth Relations Office to High Commissioner in Australia, 5 July, 1952.

62. FO 371/98799, ER 1051/20, Record of Conversation with Gazit, 31 July, 1952. See also ISA 39/19, Israeli Mission in London to M. Comay, 25 July, 1952 for a conversation Gazit held with James Wardrop of the Eastern Department about the protests put forward to Israel. Gazit's impression was that the British had no inclination to exacerbate this matter and that they were merely accomodating themselves to other countries' wishes. Indeed, he believed the initiative for the protests originated in Washington, and not in London. He made a comment, in a similar vein, to Pullar. See FO 371/98799, ER 1051/20, 31 July, 1952.

63. FO 371/104738, ER 1018/17, CRO to High Commissioner in Australia, 23 February, 1953.

64. FO 371/104738, ER 1018/23, Evans to Ross, 28 February, 1952. Eytan remarked that the transfer had universal popular approval in Israel and that it would be politically impossible to cancel it. See FO 371/104738, ER 1018/21, Tel Aviv to FO, 4 March, 1953.

65. FO 371/104738, ER 1018/33, Tel Aviv to FO, 10 July, 1953.

66. FO 371/104739, ER 1018/53, Evans to Ross, 14 July, 1953.

67. FO 371/104258, ER 10345/48, Evans to Salisbury, 4 August, 1953, Evans further defined Israel's actions as "ill considered". The US Secretary of State similarly referred to the "abrupt transfer" of the Ministry. See FRUS, 9, Dulles to Hillel Silver, 13 July, 1953, p.1256.

68. FO 3711/111059, VR 1015/3, Moore to Eden, 19 January, 1954.

69. ISA 40/14A, Arnon to Elath, 22 July, 1953.

70. FO 371/104739, ER 1018/47.

71. ISA 39/19, Arnon to Foreign Ministry, 11 August, 1953.

72. FO 371/104739, ER 1018/66, Amman to FO, 30 July, 1953.

73. FO 371/104739, ER 1018/72, Amman to FO, 8 August, 1953.
74. FO 371/104739, ER 1018/66, Amman to FO, 30 July, 1951.

75. FO 371/92633, ER 1892/4, FO to Washington, 13 January, 1951.

76. FO 371/91755, ER 1892/4, FO Minute, 4 January, 1957.

77. FO 371/91755, ER 1892/8, Helm to Furlonge, 11 January, 1951.

78. FO 371/91755, ER 1892/8, Furlonge, FO Minute, 27 January, 1951.

79. FO 371/91755, ER 1892/8, Bowker, FO Minute, 27 January, 1951.

80. FO 371/98799, ER 1051/3, Evans to Bowker, 14 January, 1952. There is no indication whether Evans conducted his enquiries as a result of instructions he had received or whether it was an initiative of his own.

81. FO 371/98792, ER 10110/4, Evans to Ross, 12 May, 1952.

82. FO 371/98792, ER 10110/5, Ross, FO Memorandum of Discussion, 17 May, 1952.

83. FO 371/98792, ER 10110/5, Ross, FO Memorandum of Discussion, 17 May, 1952.

84. FO 371/98792, ER 10110/5, FO Minutes, 23 May, 1952; 28 May, 1952.

85. FO 371/98792, ER 10110/5, Ross, FO Memorandum, of Discussion, 17 May, 1952.

86. FO 953/1340, PE 1531/1, FO to Washington, 24 May, 1952.

87. FO 953/1340, PE 1531/1, Barclay to Purves, 29 May, 1952. It may be interesting to note that Barclay, of the Information Services Department of the FO, considered the effects of such a move on his own domain. "We do not contemplate a major expansion of information work in Israel, but have envisaged an Information Office, headed by yourself, in the Legation in Jerusalem [...]". See also FO 9531, PE 1531/3, Purves to Barclay, 14 July, 1952 for a further discussion of this particular question.

88. FO 371/98248, ER 10345/30, FO Memorandum of Conversation, 9 June, 1952.

89. FO 371/98793, ER 10110/36, US AIDE MEMOIRE.

90. FO 371/93793, ER 10110/48, Tel Aviv to FO, 23 August, 1952.

91. FO 371/98793, ER 10110/48, Pullar, FO Minute.

92. ISA 40/14A, Arnon to Elath, 23 December, 1952.

93. FO 371/104738, ER 1018/1, Evans to Ross, 17 January, 1953.

94. FO 371/104738, ER 1018/2, Pullar, FO Minute, 26 January, 1953.

95. FO 371/104738, ER 1018/4, FO Minute. Everyone, from the Head of the Department and up to the Minister of State concurred in this policy.

96. FO 371/104738, ER 1018/4, Ross, FO Minute, 2 February, 1953.

97. FO 371/104738, ER 10181/4, Ross, FO Minute, 2 February, 1953. None of Ross' superiors, from the Assistant Under- Secretary to the Minister of State dissented from this recommendation.

98. FO 371/104738, ER 1018/15, Evans to Ross, 19 February, 1953.

99. FO 371/104838, ER 1891/1, Evans to Ross, 13 March, 1953.

100. FO 371/104839, ER 1892/1, Falla, FO Minute, 25 September, 1953. See also FO 371/104775, ER 1082/20, Falla, FO Minute, 23 October, 1953. The State Department seemed to have entertained a similar attitude. See FO 371/104775, ER 1082/19, Beeley to Falla, 14 October, 1953.

101. Hansard, H.C., Vol.520, col.45, 11 November, 1953.

102. FO 371/104838, ER 1891/1, Evans to Ross, 13 March, 1953.

103. FO 371/104738, ER 1018/17, British Note to Israeli Government.

104. ISA 40/14A, Arnon to Elath, 22 July, 1953.

105. ISA 39/19, Arnon to Israeli Embassy in London, 29 July, 1953.

106. ISA 39/19, Arnon to Elath, 21 August, 1953.

107. Personal Interview, Jerusalem, 30 June, 1989.

108. See, for instance, FO 371/82633, ER 1894/1, Helm to Furlonge, 2 May, 1950.

109. FO 371/82633, ER 1894/1, Helm to Furlonge, 2 May, 1950.

110. FO 371/82633, ER 1892/3, Furlonge, FO Minute, 2 December, 1950.

111. FO 371/82633, ER 1892/5, Sheringham to Furlonge, 15 December, 1950.

112. FO 371/917555, ER 1892/6, FO Minute, 8 January, 1951.

113. FO 371/91755, ER 1892/17, FO Memorandum, 7 February, 1951. Concerning the last point, James Wardrop worried that it might be difficult to fully implement it as it would create embarrasing situations. Ibid FO Minute. See also ISRAEL: ANNUAL REVIEW FOR 1951, FO 371/98785, ER 1011/1 27 February, 1952. For the instructions issued by the US Secretary of State to the Embassy in Israel, see FRUS, 5, Acheson to Embassy in Israel, 14 February, 1951, p.580.

114. FO 371/91655, ER 1892/20, Furlonge to Dow, 12 March, 1951.

115. FO 371/98816, ER 1893/4, Evans to Ross, 25 April, 1952.

116. FO 371/98793, ER 10110/60, FO Minute, 4 December, 1952. Evans duly accepted an invitation to the inauguration of President Itzhak Ben-Zvi in Jerusalem on 10 December. FO 371/98793, ER 10110/63, 9 December, 1952.

117. FO 371/104738, ER 1018/41, FO to Washington, 18 July, 1953. The State Department adopted a similar stance as reflected in the interim instructions sent to the United States Ambassador. Ibid. 14 July, 1953. See, also, FRUS, 9, Dulles to Embassy in Israel, 24 July, 1953, p.1260. It should be stressed that based on the evidence available the British position had not been prompted, on this occasion, by the attitudes adopted by the State Department.

The Head of the Eastern Department, Ross, articulated his views before he was apprised of the contents of the telegram from Washington. See FO 371/104738, ER 1018/37, Ross, FO Minute, 15 July, 16 July, 1953: "Since the above minute, I have seen" Washington telegram "which shows that the State Department hold much the same view".

118. FO 371/104739, ER 1018/152, Paris to FO, 22 July, 1953. For precise instructions to French Ambassador, see FO 371/104739, ER 1018/75, Rumbold to Ross, 10 August, 1953.

119. FO 371/104739, ER 1018/54, Rome to FO, 23 July, 1953. Britain's Ambassador in Italy, Sir V. Mallett attributed the attitude of the Italian Government primarily, though not exclusively, to "consideration for the views of the Vatican".

120. Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, Volume I, 11 October, 1953, p.27.

121. Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, Volume I, 7 December, 1953, p.215.

122. FO 371/104838, ER 1892/1, Falla, FO Minute, 25 September, 1953.

123. FO 371/104739, ER 1018/76, Falla, FO Minute, 31 August, 1953. James Bowker did not dissent from the statement advanced by the Head of the Eastern Department.

124. FO 371/111132, VR 1903/48, FO Minute, 15 September, 1954.

125. FO 371/104739, ER 1018/76, Moore to Baker, 11 August, 1953.

126. FO 371/104739, ER 1018/53, Evans to Ross, 11 July, 1953.

127. FO 371/104739, ER 1018/67, Evans to Bowker, 28 July, 1953. The Head of the Eastern Department, Falla, concurred with Evans' interpretation. Ibid, Falla, FO Minute, 7 August, 1953.

128. FO 371/104739, ER 1018/67, Evans to Bowker, 27 July, 1953.
129. FO 371/104739, ER 1018/67, FO Minute, 10 August, 1953.

130. FO 371/104739, ER 1018/67, FO to Washington, 12 August, 1953.

131. FO 371/104739, ER 1018/74, Washington to FO, 13 August, 1953.

132. FO 371/104739, ER 1018/85, Mayall to Falla, 18 September, 1953.

133. FO 371/104739, ER 1018/79, Tel Aviv to FO, 26 August, 1953.

134. FO 371/104839, ER 1892/3, Evans to Bowker, 29 September, 1953.

135. FO 371/104839, ER 1892/1, Falla, FO Minute, 25 September, 1953.

136. FO 371/104839, ER 1892/3, Falla, FO Minute, 5 October, 1953.

137. FO 371/111130, VR 1903/11, Falla, FO Minute, 17 February, 1954.

138. FO 371/111130, VR 1903/11, FO Minute, 23 February, 1954.

139. FO 371/104839, ER 1892/3, Evans to Bowker, 29 September, 1953.

140. FO 371/10839, ER 1892/5, Pullar, FO Minute, 2 December, 1953.

141. FO 371/104842, ER 1905/5, Moore to Falla, 22 December, 1953. The French Ambassador visited Sharett in Jerusalem - though not in the Foreign Ministry - without prior authorisation from Paris. Sharett, *Yoman Ishi.* Volume II, 1 February, 1954, pp.332-333.

142. FO 371/104842, ER 1905/5, Moore to Falla, 22 December, 1953.

143. FO 371/104842, ER 1905/5, Pullar, FO Minute, 7 January, 1954.

144. FO 371/104839, ER 1892/3, Evans to Bowker, 29 September, 1953.

145. Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, Volume II, 11 February, 1954, p.348; 28 February, 1954, p.380; 8 April, 1954, pp.444-445. It may be relevant to note that Evans had met Sharett in Tel Aviv, at Sharett's request, at the end of September, 1953. FO 371/104839, ER 1892/3, Evans to Bowker, 29 September, 1953. It would seem, though, that Sharett enforced his guidelines from December, 1953. See Sharett, *Yoman Ishi*, Volume I, 20 November, 1953, p.173.

146. FO 371/111130, VR 1903/6, Moore to Falla, 2 February, 1954.

147. FO 371/111130, VR 1903/11, Falla, FO Minute, 17 February, 1954.

148. FO 371/111130, VR 1903/18, Falla, FO Minute, 15 April, 1954.

149. FO 371/111130, VR 1903/18, FO Minute, 16 April, 1954.

150. FO 371/111130, VR 1903/20, Washington to FO, 22 April, 1954. Eden's comments, as well as those reflecting the views of the Department and the Minister of State were handwritten on the telegram.

151. FO 371/111130, VR 1903/22, Paris to FO, 24 April, 1954.

152. FO 371/111131, VR 1903/25A, FO Minute, 25 April, 1954.

153. FO 371/111132, VR 1903/65, Moore to Falla, 12 October, 1954.

154. FO 371/111131, VR 1903/39, Tel Aviv to FO, 21 June, 1954.

155. FO 371/111132, VR 1903/48, Nicholls, FO Minute, 15 September, 1954.

156. FO 371/111132, VR 1903/55, Falla, FO Minute, no date provided, though most probably sometime during the last week of September, 1954.

157. FO 371/111132, VR 1903/56, Washington to FO, 7 October, 1954. For precise instructions received by the Embassy in Israel, see FRUS, 9, Dulles to Embassy in Israel, 14 May, 1954, pp.1564-1565.

158. FO 371/111132, VR 1903/61, Paris to FO, 15 October, 1954.

159. FO 371/111132, VR 1903/60, Shuckburgh to Rumbold, 21 October, 1954.

160. FO 371/111132, VR 1903/65, Moore to Falla, 12 October, 1954.

161. FO 371/110880, VR 1019/2, Levant Department Minute, 21 December, 1954.

162. Shuckburgh, Descent to Suez, 18 February, 1955, p.251.

CHAPTER FIVE:

BRITAIN AND THE QUESTION OF AN ARAB-ISRAELI SETTLEMENT

On 29 November 1947 the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted a resolution calling for the partition of the territory of Western Palestine into a Jewish and an Arab state. Whilst the leadership of the Jewish community endorsed the Partition Plan, that of the Palestinian Arabs refused to accept it. Indeed, following the U.N. vote, Jewish centres of population became the target of attacks by Palestinian Arabs. In the wake of the establishment of the State of Israel on 14 May 1948, the surrounding Arab states launched an all-out military onslaught against the newly-proclaimed state, thus precipitating a war which was to leave the Jewish state with more territory than originally allotted to it by the 1947 U.N. Resolution. Most of the territory which according to the Partition Plan should have been included in the Arab state remained under Jordanian and Egyptian control. Jordan annexed Judea and Samaria (the West Bank) in 1950; a move which elicted *de jure* recognition from only two countries, Britain and Pakistan. Egypt, for its part, set up its own administration in - though did not annex - the Gaza Strip. As a result of the war, hundreds of thousands of Arabs who used to reside in the area that was to become the State of Israel became refugees, scattered in the neighbouring countries, most of them in Jordan. More than a hundred thousand Arabs, though, remained within the newly-established Jewish state and became it citizens.

Following the Arab-Israeli War of 1948 armistice agreements were signed between Israel and four of its neighbours: Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon; Iraq was the only Arab country that participated in the war which refused to sign an agreement. Following the Jordan-Israel Armistice Agreement, King Abdallah of Jordan and representatives of the Israeli Government engaged with the

encouragement of Britain in negotiations designed to lead to a peace settlement between the two countries.[1] Then, on 1 and 13 April 1950, the Arab League endorsed two resolutions warning any Arab state that signed a separate peace agreement with Israel that it would be expelled from the League. Whatever the impact of the Resolutions upon the negotiations,[2] by the time of King Abdallah's assassination, in July 1951, the prospects of a Jordanian-Israel accord had receded considerably.[3] Apart from Jordan, no other Arab state had been involved, by mid-1951, in such high-level negotiations with Israel, nor indeed conveyed - at least not in public - a desire to move beyond the arrangements established by the Armistice Agreements. The diplomatic isolation imposed by the Arab world on Israel was further compounded by an all-out economic boycott instituted against the latter by all the Arab States.

Reuben Shiloah, of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, complained that the Western Powers, and Britain in particular, had not done and were not doing as much as they could to moderate the Arabs and prepare the way for peace.[4] Britain's Representative in Israel, Sir Knox Helm, confessed that, "though I should not dream of hinting at it to Shiloah or any other Israeli, I firmly believe that he is right [...]. We have been doing little or nothing by way of trying to create a peace mentality among the Arabs". He added in an apparent tone of disappointment: "here I have gone on preaching the approach to peace and pulling up the Israelis (often quite sharply) when I believed them to be in the wrong. I have seen no sign of general complementary action on the other side even in the face of the most extravagant statements and claims".[5]

Knox Helm's despatch elicited a positive response from the Foreign Office. In a letter to British envoys in all Arab countries, the Assistant Under-Secretary, Sir James Bowker, stressed that "we are anxious to take more positive action than in the past to bring home to the Arabs the unwisdom of their present mentality". It was proposed, in a seemingly pedagogic spirit, to initiate a "*Process of Education...* (my italics) with the Arabs". It was recognised, however, that if such an educational enterprise was to reap any fruits, "a change of attitude on the part of the Israelis is no less necessary".[6]

To be sure, the Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, Sir William Strang, exuded little optimism as regards the prospects of this new approach.

> ... appeals to reason will not, I fear, have much effect in the increasingly inflamed nationalism of Middle Eastern countries. What the Arab States [...] need is a big fright...[7]

Sir Alec Kirkbride, Britain's Representative in Jordan, was similarly pessimistic: "I do not think that appeals to reason or admonition will do much towards achieving our aim".[8]

Britain's Envoy in Lebanon, Edwin Chapman-Andrews, seemed to question the premise behind the proposed "process of education":

> It is the Arabs who have lost most and are suffering most today as a result of the existence of Israel, and the Jews who have gained most.

Therefore, he concluded, much greater pressure should be brought to bear upon Israel rather than the Arabs.[9]

Although in agreement with the Foreign Office as to the necessity to pursue the "process of education", Sir Ralph Stevenson, the British Ambassador in Egypt, warned not to expect results "in the foreseable future". "Time", he added, "is the only healer but I fear it will be a long time".[10]

James Wardrop, of the Eastern Department of the Foreign Office, clarified in response that

> the object of our 'education programme' is not to achieve immediate results (we have no illusions on this), but to dispel any misapprehensions that may have germinated in Arab minds as regards HME's attitude to the Arab Israel problem.[11]

Meanwhile, Derek Riches, Britain's Ambassador in Saudi Arabia, observed that

> there [...] exist in Saudi Arabia as in other Arab states, the usual Arab emotional attitude of nationalist idealism and prejudice against Israel (and Jews) in principle.

His conclusion was therefore that "rational argument tends to be ineffective".[12]

This last point was further elaborated by the British Ambassador in Iraq, Sir John Troutbeck, who contended that the Arabs regarded Israel as evil and the West as supporting evil. The Arabs, he explained, were convinced that they would never get a fair deal from the West or from the United Nations "in any dispute they may

have with the Jews". Furthermore

> The Arabs fear that normal relations with Israel would merely permit Israel to penetrate and eventually strangle the Arab States economically, and I may add spiritually.

Troutbeck admitted he lacked any answers to both these assertions advanced by the Arabs. A peaceful atmosphere was essential for Israel's continued survival, he noted; "that is precisely why the Arabs refuse to take any part in creating a peaceful atmosphere".[13] Nevertheless, Troutbeck proposed "to continue taking any useful opportunity to suggest to Arab leaders that it is to the Arab interest to make peace with Israel". However, in case he should be misunderstood, he emphasised that he did not propose "to create such opportunities but rather to make use of them as they occur".[14]

Almost on the sideline of the "process of education" the British Legation in Israel questioned whether Britain was adopting the most appropriate posture vis-a-vis the Arab States:

> If Her Majesty's Government could make it plain to the Arab States that they regard the Jews as being in the Middle East *as of right* [my italics], they will support Israel so long as she pursues a peaceful policy, that they believe she is pursuing peace and that they cannot accept the Arab attitude to her, is it not possible that they might thus help to persuade the Arabs of the reality of Israel's existence?

Would a realisation of Israel's existence be sufficient to induce the Arab States to sign peace treaties?

> It seems likely that the Arabs will not make peace until they have to, that is, until they see that by not doing so they may endanger their countries. If Israel co-operates with us and is supported with military

> and economic assistance the Arabs might perhaps begin to realise the fact that by perpetuating the uneasy truce they are increasing the danger to themselves.[15]

Although not directly alluding to the internal debate regarding the "process of education", the British diplomats in Tel-Aviv seemed to be arguing that, beyond any diplomatic initiative or pedagogic endeavours, only the tangible reality of a strong Israel, supported both economically and militarily by Britian, could lead the Arabs to conclude that Israel was in the Middle East to stay and that they witheld recognition from it at their own peril. The implication of what they were saying, in the context of the exchanges over the "process of education", was thus as follows: to tutor the Arabs about the political facts-of-life of the Middle East may be less effective than to help shape the latter in a way that would instill fear in their midst. The Arabs would not recognise reality unless they became apprehensive of the consequences of not doing so. And for this to occur, Britain had to act as a friend of Israel and not merely to speak as an honest broker.

A further dose of sceptiscism concerning the utility of the Foreign Office's pedagogic experiment was delivered by Britain's Envoy in Syria, William Montagu-Pollock, who stressed that

> The only process of education about Palestine that is having any effect here is the hatred of the Jews and the irredentism that I am assured are being inculcated into every school child and which I know are being poured out daily to the whole population by means of the press.

His conclusion was unambiguous:

> I have no hope that the sort of gradual education that I am able to bring to bear on the Syrians will be of any effect against the irredentism that we are now faced with.[16]

Indeed, by the end of 1952, this new approach had made no headway whatsoever in Jordan. "The process of 'gradual education'", wrote Geoffrey Furlonge, Britain's Representative in Jordan, "has in sixteen months got precisely nowhere".[17]

Expressing himself in a similar vein, Troutbeck concluded that, so far as Iraq was concerned, the process of education "has been quite ineffective, in fact rather worse. By raising the question of Palestine we merely serve to remind the Iraqis of a grievance". He went on to explain:

> They have it deeply embedded in their minds that we have broken our promises to the Arabs over Palestine and let them down. Preaching only adds insult to injury. The result is that in so far as the educational process has any effect at all, it lessens respect for us and makes the Iraqis more obstinate than ever.

Troutbeck concurred with his United States colleagues in Baghdad who "once described the Arabs as being like fractious children who become defiant when urged to do something that they don't want to do". Hence his recommendation to "give a rest" to this process.[18]

> The Head of the Eastern Department, Archibald Ross, disagreed:
>
> to 'abandon the education process' in the sense of ceasing to point out to Arab leaders <u>in private</u> the advantages of a settlement on less than their maximum terms, is not likely to influence the Arabs in our favour and there is always the risk that they would infer that we were no longer interested in a settlement.[19]

As in Jordan and Iraq, so in Saudi Arabia "the 'gradual process of education'", wrote George Pelham, "seems to have made no progress whatsoever". The British Ambassador further queried, in a manner not dissimilar from Troutbeck's,

> It may of course have its effect in a matter of decades but even of that I am doubtful and can we really afford to wait so long while steadily accumulating the distrust if not enmity which our present attitude brings us?[20]

A further indication of the reservation entertained by British representatives in Arab posts was provided by the Head of the British Middle East Office, Sir Thomas Rapp, who reminded the Foreign Office that, already in November 1952, he had been "unable [...] to agree that the 'gradual process of education' had any further utility as a policy.[21]

Sceptical views were similarly advanced in London, at the Foreign Office. Christopher Gandy, dissatisfied with what he believed to be a one-sided approach, enquired "why not try the 'gradual education' on Israel for a change?"[22] "The answer is", retorted Geoffrey Baker of the Eastern Department, "that the Israelis are much nearer than the Arabs to what we, using rational judgement, consider a reasonable settlement".[23] Thus, as Baker quite succinctly made clear, and notwithstanding Bowker's original statement in this respect, the "process of education" was aimed at the Arabs, was designed to effect a change in their basic attitudes, for the perception entertained by Foreign Office officials in London (with the exception of Christopher Gandy) was that the Arabs, not the Israelis, were the main obstacle to peace, as they demanded that Israel should return to the 1947 lines and agree to repatriate any refugee who would wish to do so; a demand, as

will be seen later on, deemed by the Foreign Office to be totally unrealistic. The refusal of the Arab States to negotiate with Israel, let alone to extend legal recognition to it, only served to reinforce this perception. Gandy, who was better disposed towards the Arab cause than his colleagues at the Foreign Office in London, was, in a sense, conveying a personal, indeed exceptional, opinion in this regard.

The Head of the Eastern Department, apparently exasperated by the adverse comments he had received, observed that "no one has yet suggested, a workable alternative to the 'gradual process of education"'.[24]

So far as Troutbeck was concerned, the futility of the "process of education" derived from a distinctive perception by Arabs that Israel was an alien and aggressive intrusion.

> They have not forgotten that the Christians tried this once, and their hope and belief is that one day [...] the Zionist invasion will meet with the same fate as the Crusades. That is their most sacred wish and they will do nothing willingly to make things easy for Israel.

Beyond the intellectual-emotional dimension, there was a question of self-preservation as well.

> Even if some far-sighted Arab politician were to think differently, he would remember that Moslems have a short way with politicians who take an unpopular line. A Cabinet Minister in Iraq relishes no more than his colleagues in other countries the prospect of having his throat cut.[25]

The premise behind "the process of education" was thus as follows: if progress towards peace was to be achieved, the Arabs had to be persuaded, in a pedagogic more than a diplomatic vein, of the erroneous perceptions guiding their policy in this regard. Being an educational rather than a political endeavour, it was only natural, officials at the Foreign Office in London appeared to argue, that it would take some time until the fruits were reaped. For their part, British representatives in Arab countries harboured serious reservations, depicting Arab attitudes towards Israel as too deep-rooted for the proposed policy to achieve its aim in the foreseeable future, or considering the premise of the intended iniatiative as fundamentally wrong. It would seem, therefore, that most of those upon whom the task of implementing "the process of education" fell were unenthusiastic about it, undertaking their duty in a rather reluctant spirit.

When Anthony Eden returned to the Foreign Office, in October 1951, the "process of education" was merely a few months old. It was hardly surprising, therefore, that his officials should have welcomed him with the news that Britain's representatives in the Arab Countries "are unanimous in their view that no pressure by Western Powers on the Arab States is likely to bring about a settlement of the Israel-Arab dispute".[26] Indeed, the belief prevailing in the Foreign Office in the Autumn of 1951 was that the best policy to pursue was to confine efforts to encourage agreements on individual, local issues.[27]

At the beginning of 1952 there appeared to be indications to the effect that Egypt might be inclined to modify its negative stance on the question of peace. The Foreign Office considered these to be merely unfounded rumours.[28] The

British Embassy in Egypt could only observe, in an apparently despondent manner, that "there still seems no Arab leader of note courageous or strong enough to point to the realities of the situation".[29]

Following the overthrow of the monarchical regime in Egypt, in July 1952, the British Embassy in Cairo became slightly more optimistic: "it seems that the Egyptian Government may be reconsidering their attitude towards the whole of the Palestine question".[30] Less than two months later, though, Hubert Pullar, of the Eastern Department of the Foreign Office, noted that there had been a change for the worse so far as General Neguib's position and statements were concerned.[31]

The Ambassador in Cairo believed "that any improvement in Arab-Israeli relations is more likely to come about as a result of an Anglo-Egyptian settlement" pertaining to the future both of the British base in the Canal zone and of the Sudan.[32] This linkage between a British-Egyptian agreement over the canal base and future defence arrangements and an improvement in Arab-Israeli relations was similarly stressed by Eden, who told President Eisenhower that "if we could reach agreement with Egypt we should be better placed to use our influence for peace with Israel".[33] This point was further emphasised by the Head of the Eastern Department of the Foreign Office who indicated, in less unequivocal language, that an Arab-Israeli settlement "could certainly not be hoped for until we had disposed of our differences with Egypt".[34] British views on this matter seemed to have been reinforced by the Egyptian Foreign Minister, who maintained that his Government could do nothing towards settling the Arab-Israeli dispute until after a British-Egyptian accord had been reached.[35] There was no deviation from this line even

following the signature of the Heads of Agreement by Britain and Egypt, in July 1954, stipulating the evacuation of the British base from the Canal zone. Until after the treaty itself was signed, contended Evelyn Shuckburgh, the Assistant Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, there was precious little Britain could do. Eden himself, he observed, "seemed to accept this".[36]

However, as the deliberations concerning to the "process of education" had shown, the difficulties encountered by British diplomats in devising an effective peace strategy were not due exclusively to unpropitious circumstances. The absence of a British-Egyptian accord, by itself, did not constitute the sole obstacle to the adoption by Britain of an active posture vis-a-vis the question of an Arab-Israeli settlement. The general terms of settlement presented by the Israelis and the Arabs respectively, the peace envisaged by each, with which the British became acquainted, did not appear to render any endeavour aimed at the resolution of the dispute excessively promising. Israel considered the armistice boundaries of 1949 as final. These boundaries included territories captured during the 1948 War in addition to those allotted to the Jews by the 1947 United Nations Partition Plan. Minor territorial adjustments, though, were not excluded. So far as the Arab refugees were concerned, the bulk of them were expected to be resettled in Arab countries. Israel, however, was willing to discuss compensation and, indeed, the return of refugees in the context of a reunion of families policy. Normal neighbourly relations was the ultimate objective; direct negotiations the mode to reach it.[37] The Arab States, for their part, maintained that Israel had to return to the borders envisaged by the 1947 United Nations Partition Plan, agree that any Arab refugee who wished to return to his former home (presently under Israeli sovereignty)

should be allowed to do so, and consent to negotiate on the basis of the boundaries stipulated by the United Nations plan.[38] To be sure, more modest terms were occasionally advanced - by Egypt, for instance.[39] Arab pronouncements, however, were generally devoid of any reference to peace as an immediate goal.[40] Indeed, Israel's destruction was mentioned, even in inter-governmental discussions - and explicitly so - as the real objective of Arab diplomacy.[41] Direct negotiations were discarded as these were deemed to entail recognition of Israel and for fear of the internal repercussions that might ensue in the Arab countries concerned.[42]

So far as the territorial dimension of a future settlement was concerned, the Foreign Office in London adopted, in 1952, a stance closer to what the Israelis espoused than to the most moderate Arab statements. The Assistant Under-Secretary, for instance, indicated that the Foreign Office envisaged a settlement whereby Israel would remain, "with certain small exceptions, within her present boundaries".[43] Indeed, the Foreign Office stressed that the Israelis, as a whole, should be reassured that "we do not regard an Arab-Israel settlement as possible except on the basis of the existing boundaries".[44]

By mid-1952 the Foreign Office had outlined precise terms of settlement that it considered as ideal for a future peace agreement between the Arabs and the Israelis. These were founded on the suggested conditions for such a settlement previously advanced by the Head of the British Middle East Office, Sir Thomas Rapp. He envisaged an accord entailing, among other things, minor frontier adjustments; the creation of a free port in Haifa which, while preserving Israeli sovereignty, would be open for cargo conveyed to and from the Arab States; the

return of 100,000 Arab refugees to territory presently under Israeli sovereignty (a proposal first advanced by Israel in August 1949 and subsequently rejected by the Arabs), normal diplomatic and commercial relations between Israel and its Arab neighbours.[45] Similarly, the Foreign Office's list of conditions for an Arab-Israel settlement envisaged minor territorial modifications; these were to be effected particularly in the Jordan-Israel frontier so as to reunite lands with villages to which they belonged. The borders were to be guaranteed by the United Nations. So far as the Arab refugees were concerned, resettlement in Arab lands, rather than return to presently-held Israeli territory, was the principle proposed to solve their plight. Nevertheless, the refugees should be compensated for loss of all their property, movable as well as immovable. Israel was to establish a free port in Haifa. Israel and Jordan were to establish a free zone and possibly a free port in the Aqaba/Elath area; free transit rights across Israel and Jordan territory to be guaranteed. Israel and the Arab States were to undertake to exchange diplomatic representatives.[46]

The Foreign Office's proposed terms of settlement were subsequently presented to the State Department in Washington for comment. The tentative response tendered by the State Department reflected, in the opinion of Pullar, a "similarity of preliminary views" which he deemed to be "encouraging".[47] There were certain clauses, however, upon which the State Department adopted a different view. On the refugees, for instance, the State Department tended to accept the idea that Israel should offer to absorb 1000,000 Arab refugees. Furthermore, the State Department was not enthusiastic about the suggestion that the United Nations should guarantee the final frontiers.[48] Nevertheless, the Head of the Eastern

Department noted with apparent satisfaction "the extent to which our views coincide with those of the State Department".[49]

The views prevailing within the Foreign Office concerning the territorial dimension of an eventual settlement remained basically unaltered until the end of 1954. Indeed, in September of that year the Head of the Levant Department, Paul Falla, recalled that the 1947 United Nations Partition Plan Resolution had been "violently repudiated by the Arabs", and that therefore it was "unrealistic to expect any substantial modification of the present frontiers which were brought about the fighting of 1948/9". He made it clear that "Although HMG have not recognised the present frontiers de jure, the Tripartite Declaration of 1950 clearly tends in practice to consecrate the status quo as regards frontiers".[50]

By December 1954, a sudden marked change could be perceived, at least so far as the idiom employed was concerned, in the Foreign Office in London in relation to the territorial question. In order to obtain a settlement, argued Evelyn Shuckburgh, the Assistant Under-Secretary, "some *significant* [my italics] territorial concessions by Israel is essential".[51] This was to herald a new phase in British policy, entailing a modified conception of the territorial dimension of a possible settlement, that was to evolve into the Alpha project, jointly devised by Britain and the United States. A discussion of Alpha would be well beyond the province of this chapter. However, it is of singular interest that up until September 1954, the Head of the Eastern Department discarded as "unrealistic" the suggestion that a solution to the conflict could be brought about by "any substantial modification of the present frontiers". Now, three months later, it was deemed "essential" that "some

significant territorial concessions by Israel" should be secured to arrive at a peace agreement. The traditional stance adopted by the Foreign Office in London to the effect that a settlement would have to be based on the territorial status quo, with some minor modifications, seemed to have been substituted, almost at a stroke, by the concept that such a settlement must be founded on significant territorial concessions by Israel.

Among the "ideal" (as they were referred to by the Foreign Office) terms of settlement first drawn up by the Foreign Office in mid-1952, there was included a clause of a particularly controversial nature. It read as follows:

> Israel to offer to buy out, on a generous scale of compensation, Arabs still resident in Israel, and the Arab States to encourage and help them to settle outside Israel, which would thus become homogeneous.[52]

Britain's Ambassador in Iraq unleashed a particularly forthright and acute criticism of this proposal by drawing on historical examples of a seemingly similar nature to question its morality.

> This line of thought never seems to have occured to us when the Iraqis 'encouraged' (a somewhat sinister word) the greater part of their Jewish population to leave Iraq a year or so ago, in order to make Iraq more homogeneous. That was thought to be an act of Barbarism...

He delved into more distant periods of Jewish History to stress his point.

> When I was young, I do not recall having been taught that the Spaniards committed an act of progressive statesmanship when they encouraged their Jewish population to depart some centuries ago.

And, closer to home,

> If I remember rightly, our historians are particularly apologetic when describing how Edward I cleared out the Jews to make a homogeneous England.

Troutbeck protested that "In Palestine we appear to regard as an ideal solution what we regard with repugnance elsewhere". Implying the prevalence of an outmoded way of thinking in the Foreign Office, Troutbeck contended that

> In other parts of the world we are surely getting away from the idea of the homogeneous state being the most desirable form of body politic.[53]

Officials at the Foreign Office were seemingly unimpressed by Troutbeck's arguments. Recalling two historical examples of "agreed exchanges of population", ie, Turkey-Greece and India-Pakistan, Pullar appeared to dismiss the premise behind Troutbeck's despatch, arguing that "segregation to produce homogeneity is too common to call for special attention".[54] Baker, for his part, maintained that the proposal had to be seen as "a possible step towards removing a serious source of friction". Although concurring with Troutbeck that "with the ebb of fervent nationalism among highly developed states, racial homogeneity is an out-moded idea", Baker nevertheless argued that "it naturally has much greater attractions for states which are still in the acutely nationalistic stage - like Arab states and Israel".[55]

Britain's Ambassador in Israel, Sir Francis Evans, made it clear that he would not regard the emigration of Israeli Arabs as an "'ideal' solution". He assumed, anyhow, that the Foreign Office, in referring to this particular provision as "ideal", "was relating it to the circumstances unfortunately obtaining rather to any absolute

standard of merit". Evans foresaw two distinct scenarios, each requiring a different answer. First, normal relations between the Arab States and Israel was established; in which case,

> I believe that the Arabs in this country could become a reasonably contented minority of the population materially better off than the Arabs in the surrounding states.

Second, the Arab States persisted in their inflexibly hostile attitude towards Israel, prompting the Israeli Government to devise a policy of harrassing its Arab citizens so as to cause their exodus from the state.

> In those circumstances, and they are ones with which I fear we must reckon [...] the best, if not ideal, solution would be to encourage the Arabs left in Israel to emigrate.

He favoured, if at all possible, that this be carried out in the context of an agreement between Israel and the Arab States, providing for compensation by the Israeli Government to the Arabs in order to help them in their resettlement. Echoing an argument previously advanced by Baker, Evans predicted that, under his second scenario, "the position of the Arab minority in this country is bound to deteriorate", thus becoming "*a constant source of potential conflict* [my italics] between Israel and her neighbours".[56]

In response, Gandy pointed to an apparent contradiction that emerged from Evans' despatch. Should Evans' second scenario obtain, and the emigration of Israeli Arabs become necessary, would not his hope for an agreement between Israel and the Arab States to this effect postulate "something like the normal

relation which would make a man exodus unnecessary"? In other words, he concluded, "the letter bites its own tail".[57]

In the United States, the State Department observed that the Arabs residing in Israel were reasonably contented, apart from a few white-collar workers, and that, therefore, there was no reason why they should not remain there.[58]

Meanwhile, in London, first signs of hesitation concerning this provision were emerging in the Foreign Office. Baker, for one, admitted he was inclined to drop the proposal for it was "difficult for the Arabs to accept and adds to the money required for compensation".[59] The Head of the Eastern Department argued that, should Israel consent to resettle 100,000 Arab refugees in a predominantly Arab area of the country, thus rendering "a fair degree of homogeneity in the population of those particular districts", the clause in question "might become redundant".[60]

At the end of 1953, the Foreign Office drew up a revised list of terms of settlement in which the clause on Israeli Arabs was conspiciously absent.[61] No indication is available to the effect that the proposal had been definitely discarded. Assuming, however, that it had, there seems to be no evidence as to the reason that might have prompted such a decision. Was it Evans' despatch? Was it Baker's pragmatic arguments concerning the obstacles the provision might encounter? Was it the State Department's disinclination to endorse it? A year subsequently, the first draft of what Shuckburgh defined as "the elements of a settlement", to be discussed with the State Department within the framework of the Alpha project, did not contain any reference to the clause under discussion.

Whether it had been finally dropped or merely frozen, the proposal was not even alluded to.[62]

Thus, in contrast to Troutbeck, officials at the Foreign Office in London did not appear to have regarded the original proposal as immoral. It was not that they advocated a policy of doubtful moral value on account of its seemingly pragmatic strength. The idea was seen, as Pullar indicated, in the context of traditional exchanges of population; the examples of Turkey and Greece, India and Pakistan being at the forefront of Pullar's mind. The difference, of course, between these two historical precedents and the Foreign Office's original idea of 1952 is that the latter entailed no *mutual* exchanges of population - at least not explicitly so, although Jews were being inconvenienced into leaving Arab countries, as Troutbeck alluded to in his despatch in relation to Iraq. Nevertheless, the assumption behind the proposal was that a source of friction would have been removed from the Arab-Israeli dispute; in other words, a more homogeneous Israel was not deemed to be an end in itself, but a means by which relations between Arabs and Jews could be ameliorated. This, in a sense, explains the reasoning prompting Evans' argument: should conditions of peace obtain as between Israel and its Arab neighbours, the need to resort to the transfer of the Arab population of the State of Israel would have been removed.

The views prevailing at the Foreign Office in this regard have to be understood and assessed in the context of the assumptions gaining ascendancy at the time. In contrast to the impression conveyed by Troutbeck - and, to some extent, by Baker - the political scientist, Inis Claude, contends in his book, National

Minorities, published in 1955, that the post World War II period had witnessed "a trend toward international endorsement or acceptance of population transfer - the physical removal of minorities", further adding that "the idea of transfer has become a *dominant* [my italics] element in current thinking about the minority problem".[63] Dwelling on the Arab-Israeli War of 1948, and the mediation efforts on behalf of the United Nations by Count Folke Bernadotte from Sweden, Claude refers to the latter's Progress Report to the Assembly, on 18 September 1948, in which he suggested that a Conciliation Commission might "'lend its good offices, on the invitation of the parties, to any efforts towards exchanges of populations with a view to eliminating troublesome minority problems...'"[64] Thus, even in the particular instance of the Arab-Israel dispute, the idea was apparently less revolutionary then would seem to a student of the period, appraising it with the assumptions prevailing almost forty years subsequently. Nevertheless, Bernadotte's proposal differed from that of the Foreign Office in two respects: first, the former entailed "exchanges of populations", i.e., a *mutual* process, the latter, as already mentioned, did not postulate that - at least not explicitly so; second, the former was dependent "on the invitation of the parties", the latter was a British initiative, demanded by neither Israel nor any of the Arab States. Still, what the two proposals had in common was perhaps not less significant than what separated them: a belief that the transfer of populations was a legitimate means to help solve the Arab-Israel conflict. Indeed both, if Claude's thesis is accepted, were more of a reflection, rather than an exception, of the spirit of the time.

Immediately upon returning to the Foreign Office in 1951, Anthony Eden made it clear that he considered the problem of the Arab refugees as central. In

the House of Commons he declared that

> I have come to the conclusion there is really no problem which, by its solution, would do more to dissolve the internal tension between the Middle Eastern countries than this [that of the Arab refugees].[65]

In private his message was no different. In a meeting with the United Nations Secretary General, Trygve Lie, held on 22 November 1951, Eden stated, as the Record of Conversation reveals, that the problem of the Arab refugees

> was the sharpest cause of conflict between Israel and the Arab States, and until it could be solved there would be no peace in that part of the world.[66]

The Assistant Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office tended to express himself in a similar vein. "The problem of the refugees", argued Bowker, was "both a direct result of the Arab/Israel conflict *and the main obstacle to its settlement* [my italics]".[67] Indeed, so long as the conflict persisted, he believed that "there is no doubt that the refugees continue to be the most crucial aspect of the Arab-Israel problem".[68]

As has already been noted, the Foreign Office espoused the view that the only viable solution to the refugee problem rested in resettlement on Arab soil rather than repatriation.[69] The Foreign Office thus stood closer to the position adopted by the Israeli Government on this question than to the line propounded by the Arab States, which maintained that the refugees themselves should have the right to decide whether they wished to return or to resettle. The Arab States, however, professed to want to cooperate in international schemes of resettlement, presumably

aware of the economic benefits that would accrue from Western participation in such programmes. And yet, the perception prevailing in the Foreign Office was that the Arab States were disinclined to assist in the resettlement of refugees.

> The main reason for this attitude are the desire to retain the refugees as a bargaining counter in the cold war with Israel, and the refugees' own demand for repatriation.[70]

When the Arabs spoke of repatriation, explained Furlonge from Amman, they did not mean that the refugees should return to live in Israel. Rather, their intention was to see the refugees resettled in territory *ceded* by Israel.[71] The Foreign Office interpreted this to mean that Israel should give up the Western Galilee for this purpose. An idea, which, weighing the advantages and disadvantages, appeared to Pullar to be rather impractical, considering Israel's refusal to countenance any significant territorial concession.[72] J. Richmond asserted that if Israel could be persuaded by "peaceful pressure alone" to cede Western Galilee, then "this might well provide the key to the refugee problem". However, should that prove impossible, then "the idea is clearly not worth pursuing".[73] Baker, for his part, did not deem it "practicable politics" for Britain to embrace the proposal that Israel should cede Western Galilee.[74] The Head of the Eastern Department concurred with him.[75] As for the suggestion to pursue the possibility of compelling Israel by force to cede Western Galilee, the Foreign Office, as Pullar indicated, rejected it as "a waste of time".[76]

The idea was revived at the end of 1954. As part of his new approach to the territorial aspect of a settlement Shuckburgh advanced the proposal that Israel

should "surrender to Jordan [...] an area in Galilee, into which refugees might be returned for resettlement". To be sure, he suggested that Israel could be compensated with "some 'desert' territory, perhaps south of Hebron".[77]

Further suggestions involving the redrawing of the map of the area aimed at solving the problem of the Arab refugees had emerged in 1952. On this occasion, though, those presenting them were Palestinian Arabs, not British diplomats.

Leaders of Palestinian Arabs in the West Bank (under Jordanian sovereignty since 1950) approached Stanley Morrison, the Secretary of the Near East Christian Council Committee for Refugee Work, and submitted to him a peace plan comprising two distinct, alternative proposals. The first, entailing the creation of a unitary federal state in the whole of Western Palestine; a state that would be established on the basis of Cantons - three Arab, three Jewish and a Jerusalem Canton ruled by both Arabs and Jews. Alternatively, they proposed that an independent Palestinian Arab state should be set up on the West Bank and Gaza (then under Egyptian control) and some other territory to be ceded by Israel; this entity would be closely linked in an economic union with the State of Israel. This was similar to the United Nations Plan of 1947, except that now, according to the alternative proposal advanced by these Palestinian Arabs, Israel was not expected to withdraw to the lines envisaged for the Jewish state by the United Nations Plan.[78] The scheme, so claimed those who expounded it, was supported by ninety percent of the refugees residing in the West Bank.[79]

So far as the first plan was concerned, James Wardrop, of the Eastern Department, argued that it "ignores two rather important considerations: 1) Jordan's inability (at any rate at present) to give up the West Bank even if she wanted to; 2) Israel's existence".[80]

Britain's Ambassador in Jordan was particularly emphatic in his rejection of this Palestinian Arab peace plan. To him it appeared "so hopelessly impractical both politically and economically, as to merit consideration".[81] Referring to it as "an economic and political nonsense", Furlonge warned that "the inevitable result would, of course, be that it [the Palestinian Arab entity] would find itself absorbed in Israel".[82]

Meanwhile, Morrison had been endeavouring to persuade the British and the Israelis of the merits of this peace plan. His activities were strongly resented by the Jordanian authorities, who subsequently expelled him.[83] The Foreign Office, for its part, similarly disapproved of his actions.[84] Furlonge feared that "Morrison has in fact given impetus to a latent separatist movement which, although I think the Jordan Government can control it, is likely to cause them considerable trouble".[85]

The Head of the British Middle East Office, Sit Thomas Rapp, agreed with Furlonge "that Morrison had given impetus to a latent separatist movement". However, he subscribed to the view, apparently regarded by some in the Foreign Office to be rather novel, that

> Left to themselves in reasonably normal circumstances, the Palestinian Arab and the Jew could probably rub along quite comfortably together.[86]

An official at the Foreign Office underlined this last sentence, adding two question marks on the sideline. Indeed, Wardrop could not believe that the Jew and Palestinian Arab could get along quite well, if left to their own devices.[87]

Prompted by the possible implications of the peace plan under discussion, Rapp, writing in a "personal character", strayed somewhat into a highly contentious field. Asserting that

> it is increasingly borne in upon us that Jordan is an artificial creation dependent on our backing.

The Head of the British Middle East Office suggested that

> *The time seems likely to come therefore (although it has not yet arrived) when we shall have to cultivate an open mind on its future as an independent state* [my italics][88]

Although not rejecting altogether Rapp's statement, James Hunter, of the Foreign Office, maintained that "as long as we need the Arab Legion I don't see how we can let Jordan go". In addition, there was the question of Britain's standing in the region as a whole. For, even "when our need of the Legion becomes less urgent", Hunter believed that "the abandonment of our good ally could destroy our credit in the Middle East at one blow".[89]

Meanwhile, Rapp reported that the Assistant Secretary General of the Arab League, Ahmed Shukeiry, himself a Palestinian Arab, made it clear that whatever territorial settlement was eventually reached with Israel there was no question of an independent Palestinian Arab state.

> Speaking strongly and apparently sincerely he said that the West Bank was an integral part of Jordan and that to suggest its separation was unrealistic and stupid.

Despite his previous comments on the future viability of Jordan as a sovereign state, Rapp added that he found Shukeiry's remarks "reassuring".[90] An official at the Foreign Office considered this "satisfactory" and expressed his hope that "that attitude will be maintained".[91]

The reluctance of the Foreign Office to endorse any move that might lead to the severance of the West Bank from Jordan persisted throughout this period. For instance, when at the end of 1954 Shuckburgh became acquainted with the possibility of direct talks between Israel and representatives of Palestinian Arab refugees, he emphasised that, his support for such discussions notwithstanding, Britain did not wish to encourage "Palestinian separatism".[92] Aware that the Jordanian authorities were opposed to the severance of the West Bank from Jordan, the Foreign Office objected to any scheme entailing the establishment of a Palestinian Arab entity separate from Jordanian rule. Jordan was considered to be a close ally of Britain and its interests had to be safeguarded. And even if Israelis and Palestinian Arabs were able to reach mutual understanding and some form of reconciliation, so far as the Foreign Office was concerned, this was not to be effected at the expense of Jordan.

The Foreign Office stance as regards the territorial aspect of a future settlement prompted Britain's Ambassador in Iraq to write that "the Arabs as a

whole would not be satisfied by such minor adjustments", as the Foreign Office envisaged. Indeed, Troutbeck continued in a seemingly despondent tone, "It may be that nothing would satisfy the Arabs except the total extinction of Israel". He comforted his colleages at the Foreign Office, however, saying that

> I do not think we need despair of getting them to accept a settlement if Israel were to offer up substantial slices of the land which lies outside the frontier as originally determined by the United Nations.

He went on to elaborate thus:

> If some such larger adjustments could be achieved, we might conceivably solve not merely the problem of frontiers but the refugee problem at the same time. Room would be found for a considerable number of the refugees and the Arab Governments might as a result be more inclined to let the remainder settle in their own countries.

A settlement on these lines, Troutbeck argued, would not emerge from "friendly dispassionate negotiation between the two sides". Rather, he stressed, "It will only be done, if at all, by some outside authority 'enforcing' a settlement". This role would have to be assumed primarily by the United States. However, should an enforced settlement be excluded, Britain would have to admit that a resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict was impossible. In such circumstances, "the first thing we have to decide is whether Israel or the Arab world is the more important to British interests". Replying to his own query in an apparently hypothetical vein, Troutbeck asked: "If our decision comes down on the Arab side, is there anything we can usefully do [...]?" First, he suggested that preaching on the necessity of a settlement should be ceased: "the more anxious we and the Israelis show ourselves for an Israeli-Arab agreement, the higher the price the Arabs will demand for it". Second,

if Arab cooperation was deemed essential for Western plans of regional defence in the Middle East, Britain should then display support for the Arab cause, so far as the dispute with Israel was concerned, in the United Nations and elsewhere.[93]

The Eastern Department of the Foreign Office concurred with Troutbeck "that the chances of an agreed settlement have grown if anything less". As for the suggestion of an imposed settlement, the view prevailing in the Department was that "If external pressure were brought to bear on her, Israel seems quite capable, like Samson, of pulling the house down on top of herself".[94] However, Troutbeck's conclusion to the effect that Britain ought to side with the Arabs was rejected. "Other considerations apart, there is unfortunately no reason to think that if we could enforce the Arab will on Israel, our defence problems would be solved".[95]

Aware of the "fanatical strength of Arab feeling on the Palestine question", the Assistant Under-Secretary, for his part, agreed nevertheless that there could not be effected "any radical change in our attitude to the Palestine question".[96]

Britain's Ambassador in Saudi Arabia, George Pelham, concurred with Troutbeck that no settlement would emerge from Arab-Israeli negotiations, unless, of course, it were to be enforced upon the parties; that option having been discarded "the fundamental decision which we must face is whether the friendship of the Arabs or that of the Jews is the more important to us". Should it be decided that the former's was the more important, "then the prime service which we could render in Arab eyes, would be to be sympathetic to them over Palestine".[97]

Although he could countenance some modifications in policy so as to satisfy Arab susceptibilities, Pullar seemed to question the logic of the advice tendered by both Troutbeck and Pelham.

> It would be foolish to pass over to the Arab side to such an extent that they considered us out of the way or their accomplice and could proceed to annihiliate Israel".[98]

Troutbeck's despatch elicited a singularly forceful reply from Britain's Ambassador in Israel. So far as the territorial dimension of a settlement envisaged by the British Envoy in Iraq was concerned, Evans maintained that it was "neither reasonable nor practical to hope that the Israelis could be persuaded to give up susbstantial slices of the land which they now hold without recourse to arms". He went on to elaborate by dwelling upon the historical background to the question.

> The Arabs lost the land to which Troutbeck refers when they refused to accept the frontiers determined by the United Nations in 1947 and proceeded to attack the Jews.

Now, Evans emphasised,

> The circumstances have [...] changed as a result of the military decision which the Arabs provoked and [...] the Arabs have in practice forfeited their claims to this area.

Concerning Troutbeck's question as to whether the Arab world or Israel was the more important, Evans did not dispute "that in view of our present overriding preoccupation with defence our decision must favour the Arabs". The question as such, however, appeared to him to be a simplification of the problem. Beyond the pragmatic reasoning behind Troutbeck's query there was a moral dimension which

must not be ignored. Evans believed that "it would be immoral for us to abandon Israel in this way". Britain, through the Balfour Declaration, he contended, was largely responsible for creating the State of Israel and was thus morally responsible to it. Furthermore, Evans questioned whether an unequivocal pro-Arab policy would not be counter-productive. Might not the Arabs, he asked, perhaps rhetorically, "interpret a withdrawal of our support from Israel as a sign of weakness which they should exploit, rather than as an expression of friendship mereting gratitude?" There was a domestic British angle to the question as well. In the light of Arab public pronouncements acutely critical of Britain, Evans enquired: "would public opinion in the House of Commons and in the country support such a policy [...]?" Troutbeck's scenario entailing a change in policy on the part of the British Government was therefore discarded by Evans who could "see no alternative to our present policy of trying to bring pressure to bear on both sides".[99]

The Foreign Office received Evans' letter with an undisguised sigh of relief. "This is a well-reasoned letter which was badly needed to restore the balance", commented Baker, who agreed with Evans' conclusions.[100] The Head of the Eastern Department, as well as the Assistant Under-Scretary, concurred with Baker's remarks.[101]

Evans dwelt further upon the implications of the adoption of a pro-Arab line in a letter he wrote two weeks later.

> Presumably if our purpose is to gain the goodwill of the Arabs [...] we should have [...] to support proposals that Israel should give up at any rate a substantial part of the extra territory [gained by Israel as a result of the 1948 War] and to exert pressure on her to do so.

the significance of that was not particularly difficult to grasp.

> This would be an abrupt reversal of the policy of impartiality in the Arab-Jewish dispute which we have maintained since 1948 and would place us unequivocally on the Arab side.

Evans feared that such a radical modification in policy would anyhow not achieve its object.

> Where Israel is concerned Arab appetites are I suspect insatiable, and it seems likely that if we and the United States Government force Israel to make major territorial concessions now, the Arabs would rightly treat this as an interim victory, and would later demand the total liquidation of Israel as a price of their support.[102]

Britain's Ambassador in Egypt begged to differ with his colleague in Israel. A more sympathetic attitude towards the Arabs on the territorial dimension of a settlement would, in Stevenson's opinion, reap fruits in the Arab world. And the Arabs, he argued, "would probably be satisfied with a good deal less than 'the enforcing of practically the whole the 1947 resolution'". Indeed, most of the Arab States were beginning to be reconciled to the existence of Israel. "The dispute", therefore, "is whether the basis should be the 1947 resolution or the status quo", objecting to Evans description, he concluded that "To show sympathy for the Arab case on this issue is not to abandon Israel".[103]

John Barnes, Britain's Ambassador in Lebanon, fully agreed with Troutbeck that Britain had to decide whether the Arab world or Israel was the more important. Israel being dependent on the West, the risk of it siding with the Soviet

Union had to be discarded. However,

> The Arabs [...] *by reason of their defects of character which are familiar* [my italics], are only too likely, wittingly or unwittingly, to play the Russian game.

His conclusion, therefore, was "that we should give the Arabs whatever support we can without manifest injustice to Israel". For instance, as far as the territorial question was concerned, Barnes, although doubtful about the feasibility of a return to the lines of the 1947 Partition Plan, believed that "we should try to secure some definite territorial adjustments".[104]

The British Ambassador in Syria was doubtful whether any settlement was possible, and, if it were, whether it would lead to the establishment of normal neighbourly relations between Israelis and Arabs, since the latter would "remain terrified of Jewish economic penetration" and, among other things, would "continue anxiously to watch the rate of Jewish immigration into Israel". The settlement he envisaged entailed the internationalisation of Jerusalem, compensation for the refugees "and some modest frontier changes". Even if both the Arabs and the Israelis should reject a solution on these lines, Britain would "have made a positive proposal which, while not bearing too hard on the Israelis, is demonstrably favourable to the Arabs". Montagu-Pollock indicated that it should be made clear to the Arabs "that if they do not accept our half-way solution they will get no support from us for any modification of the status quo".[105]

In London, at the Foreign Office, Hubert Pullar reacted in a particularly critical manner to Montagu-Pollock's letter. "Montagu-Pollock appears to have trumped Sir John Troutbeck's ace as champion of the Arab cause". He went on the elaborate:

> His letter goes far to meet their maximum demands, and the writer is convinced of the justice of their case. If the recommendations which he favours was put to the Israelis the reactions of the latter might well be that Russian treatment of Israel could scarcely be worse than that of her so-called friends.

Pullar advanced a distinctively critical comment as regards the proposals the Foreign Office had received from their posts in Arab countries:

> In none of the letters is there a suggestion that the sacrifices to be demanded of Israel would produce a normal state of affairs between Israel and the Arab States. The emphasis is mainly on Anglo-Arab Relations and the attempt to improve them at Israel's expense.[106]

Still, Baker interpreted these letters as reflecting support by Britain's envoys to "the slight modification of policy" in favour of the Arabs, which the Foreign Office had been entertaining. He recognised, though, that they recommended more radical "shifts of policy towards the Arab side" than the Foreign Office had countenanced.[107]

Having been apprised of the conclusion reached by the Foreign Office that, apart from certain gestures of sympathy towards the Arabs, a radical change of policy would be unacceptable, Rapp commented in a sympathetic vein that "the political difficulties attendant on any other line are fully apparent and no doubt

insuperable". He maintained that Britain had "something to gain from gestures of sympathy to the Arabs, even if they are not followed by determined action". Rapp advanced a rather revealing explanation as to why such a policy might reap fruits.

> We cannot regard the Arabs as politically adult, however much we may have to talk and act as though they were. They possess, as is known, the obstinancy of children and the same delighted reaction to praise.

Rapp contended that the moral dimension of the question whether the Arab world or Israel was the more important to Britain had to be discarded.

> Where sentiment is concerned we can now take it that Jewish sufferings have been equalled by the sufferings of the Arab refugees.

(a remark that appeared to have astounded an official at the Eastern Department who wrote on the sidelines: "6,000,000 murdered?") Therefore,

> What remains are our vital interests which, generally speaking, lie decisively with the Arabs rather than the Jews.

Although he believed that circumstances were not propitious for a settlement, Rapp argued that Israel would have to make considerable concessions, including territorial, "to gain the peace her throttled economy requires". Israel's dilemma was that, "as at present constituted [Israel] is either too large or too small, too large for peace with her Arab neighbours and too small for self-sufficiency".[108]

In response, Evans told Churchill that he did not "think practical a solution along these lines, which would require the emigration of a large number of Israelis

(wither is is hard to imagine)". Israel would not submit passively to a demand for territorial concessions as envisaged by Rapp. "I believe", predicted Evans, "the Israelis would resist such a partition by force".[109]

These exchanges over Britain's fundamental policy towards the Arab-Israeli dispute witnessed a potent clash between Troutbeck, who advocated adopting a distinctively pro-Arab line, and Evans, who pleaded that Israel should not be abandoned. The argument of the former was based essentially on considerations of a pragmatic nature, on the simple question as to which side could Britain derive most benefit from. The case of the latter was primarily founded on a moral postulate, a request to keep faith with one's own obligations. To a greater or lesser extent, British envoys in Arab countries, Stevenson (Egypt), Barnes (Lebanon), Montagu-Pollock (Syria) and Rapp (Middle East Office), lined up, with differing degrees of enthusiasm, behind Troutbeck whilst the Foreign Office in London came to Evans' defence; Pullar being particularly vehement in his criticism of the suggestion to adopt a distinctly favourable posture vis-a-vis the Arab States. Although, to be sure, the Foreign Office did contemplate displaying some gestures of sympathy towards the Arab States, the argument for a change of policy as envisaged by the British representatives aforementioned was nevertheless not endorsed. Evans, as ever on his guard to prevail upon his colleagues in London the merits of Israel's basic case, in a sense, won the day. But, as the reaction that ensued at the Foreign Office in the wake of Evans' retort to Troutbeck's despatch made clear, officials in London needed scant persuasion to dismiss Troutbeck's line of reasoning; what Evans seemed to have provided was a forcefully presented, coherently articulated, positive line of *attack* against the case advanced by Britain's

Envoy in Iraq : the latter could thus not only be dismissed as unconvincing, but also be rejected as counter-productive and immoral. Whether the Foreign Office in London embraced each and every component of Evans' proposition or not, his response, his appearance on the scene, so to speak, was greeted in a manner clearly indicative of the mood prevailing there; thus, if the stark choice had to be made as between Troutbeck or Evans' case, or, for that matter, as between any of the other envoys concerned or Evans' case, the Foreign Office would opt for the latter's - as it actually did.

The idea of an imposed settlement, raised and discarded by British envoys in Arab countries, emerged again as a central feature of Foreign Office discussions in the latter part of 1953. Incidents at the Jordan-Israel border had intensified and reached their peak with the Israeli retaliatory attack on the Jordanian village of Qybia on the night of 14-15 October. Consequently, Britain's diplomats in London proceeded to weigh up the pros and cons of exerting pressure on both sides to bring about a settlement - now deemed more pressing than previously.

According to John Powell-Jones, of the Eastern Department, there were two distinct scenarios: Forcing the Arabs and Israelis to agree upon a permanent settlement on the basis of Israel's existing frontiers with minor adjustments; or compelling both sides to reach an accord entailing substantial territorial concessions by Israel. Assuming that pressure would bear the form of "threats to withhold supplies and suspend subsidies", Powell-Jones foresaw, among other things, the following likely consequences occurring in the event of the first scenario being implemented: An explosion of anti-Western popular feeling in the Arab States;

Arab Governments were expected to reject any settlement proposed or to be overthrown if they accepted it; the Arab world might adopt a neutral stance, independent of either the Western or Communist Bloc; depriving Iraq and Jordan of weapons might result in the severance of existing defence treaties with Britain; the line of defence, upon which the western strategy would depend in case of a Soviet attack, would have to be redrawn; supplies of oil from the Middle East to the West would be stopped in time of war and rendered less secure in peace. The second scenario would spare the West of the above-mentioned implications "if Israel's territory was to be sufficiently reduced for the Arab Governments to be able to present a forced settlement as an Arab triumph". Powell-Jones was aware though that "such a course of action would never ne acceptable to public opinion in this country or the United States".[110]

A further argument against the application of pressure was advanced by the Head of the Eastern Department, Paul Falla, who contended "that the Arabs at any rate are more governed by emotion than by reason in this matter"; therefore, he foresaw that they "would refuse all the more obstinately to negotiate with Israel". Beyond that, he was concerned by the legal dimension of the question: witholding military and economic assistance to Jordan, Falla noted, would involve Britain in a violation of contractural obligations.[111]

Considering that the United States would have to be involved in implementing a policy of pressure on both sides, the Assistant Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, Richard Allen, predicted grave consequences for Israel. "Israel's economic position is already precarious", he wrote, "and a withdrawal of United States

subsidies might well mean economic collapse". However, concurring with Powell-Jones' list of adverse implications entailed in such a policy, Allen admitted that "from HM Government's point of view the effect on the Arabs is probably an even more serious consideration". On the other hand, "it may be argued that [...] the Middle East is of little use to us strategically while the Arabs and Israel remain at daggers drawn". But, weighing the pros and cons, Allen reached the conclusion that

> our present arrangements with the Arabs at least provide us with some military advantages, including the use of our bases, and the possibility of expanding these arrangements if necessary to meet a Soviet threat".[112]

The Minister of State at the Foreign Office, Selwyn Lloyd, agreed that it would be unwise to apply such pressure at the moment.[113]

Meanwhile, the Foreign Office was apprised of the views prevailing in the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs of the State Department. The fear entertained there was that, since Israel was positively disposed to negotiate with its Arab neighbours at any time, the course of action under consideration might create a situation whereby economic and military aid to Israel was continued while being severed to the Arabs.[114]

Support for the stance adopted at the Foreign Office against a policy of pressure to bring about a settlement came from the Head of the British Middle East Office, Sir John Sterndale-Bennett. "The continuation of the Arab/Israeli impasse, bad as it is," he argued, "may [...] be the lesser of two evils".[115]

Reference to pressure appeared also in the context of Selwyn Lloyd's proposal, advanced at the end of October 1953, that the United States, Britain and France should convene a conference of the Arab States and Israel. The Minister at the Foreign Office recognised the difficulty entailed in trying to elicit a positive Arab response to such a proposal.

> But if no agenda were fixed beforehand it might be possible to get them to come to say, London, and then a supreme effort would have to be made to get a settlement using all possible inducements and pressure.[116]

Acknowledging traditional Arab refusal to participate in inter-governmental discussions with Israel, the Head of the Levant Department, Paul Falla, raised the idea of a "'private conference'", preferably to be held in a place like Lausanne rather than London, "where the associations of the past are not precisely happy where Arab-Jewish Conferences are concerned". Falla was even more emphatic than Selwyn Lloyd on the theme of pressure:

> It is clear that heavy pressure would have to be applied to both sides, both to make them come to the Conference table and to produce any results when they got there.

He recognised, however, that the United States might not welcome such a course of action. Indeed, by that time, the Foreign Office had already been informed, as has been noted above, of the doubts entertained by the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs of the State Department as to the wisdom of applying pressure in this regard. Furthermore, Falla mainatined that a greater degree of pressure would have to be exerted on the Arabs rather than on the Israelis. The first were willing

to negotiate only on the basis of the boundaries envisaged by the 1947 Partition Plan, "which the Arabs themselves tried to overthrow by force of arms in 1948". The latter were ready to negotiate with the Arab States at any time, "clearly on the justifiable assumption that her frontiers will remain substantially unchanged". Therefore, Falla concluded, "it will be a major feat to get the Arabs to the Conference table at all". Beyond that, political and economic pressure would have to be applied principally on the Arabs to accept terms of settlement to be agreed upon by Britain and the United States. In these circumstances, he feared

> that the risks and inconveniences of continuing the present impasse are probably less than those of uttering threats which the Arabs, owing to their hatred of Israel, will very probably disregard.[117]

The question of pressure apart, the Assistant Under-Secretary, Richard Allen, believed the idea of convening a conference had to be assessed against the background of plans for the redeployment of British forces in the area. According to these, Britain would have inadequate forces in the region to fulfill its obligations "if we ever found ourselves compelled to take action". Allen acknowledged "that in a sense this makes a settlement of the Palestine question all the more urgent". He further contended, however, that an agreement with Egypt over the Suez Canal base "might improve the atmosphere in the Arab countries, at least temporarily, and might in some respects facilitate a settlement". His conclusion, therefore, was as follows:

> I am inclined to think that, until we can see our way more clearly both as regards our own redeployment plans and the prospects of an agreement with Egypt, it would be premature to take any initiative in calling a conference.[118]

The Permanent Under Secretary, Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick, agreed.[119]

The inclination within the Foreign Office against the proposal to call a conference remained unaltered by the beginning of 1954. Now, though, additional arguments were being deployed so as to render the idea wholly unattractive. It was assumed, somehow, that such a conference would have to be convened by the United Nations. The enormous publicity which would inevitably accompany such an attempt would encourage both the Arabs and the Israelis "to be more intransigent than ever". The Soviet Bloc and the Asian countries were expected "to make trouble". And, anyhow, the Western Powers would ultimately be "the real agents of any settlement reached". Indeed, if the Western Powers were to embark upon a major effort to produce a settlement and failed, "the situation would be worse than before"; harldy an uplifting prediction considering that "in the present political context it seems as though chances of reaching a settlement are poor".[120]

The reluctance of the Foreign Office to adopt what was described as "a positive policy" to settle the Arab-Israeli dispute appeared to Britain's Ambassador in Israel to be founded on questionable assumptions. So long as Britain remained confident that Israel would not launch an armed attack upon its neighbours, and so long as it continued to maintain that the Arab world possessed assets of vital importance which might be lost if the Arabs were compelled to accept a settlement with Israel - "then I agree that to risk an active policy would be imprudent". He was particularly doubtful, though, about the validity of the first assumption.

There existed in Israel, Evans explained, a sense of frustration over Arab refusal to countenance peace. Israelis feared "that the prospect of peace with the Arab States is receding rather than approaching". Indeed, Israelis saw themselves surrounded by hostile governments, "many of whose leaders openly call for the annihilation of their country". They noted that the Western Powers, on account of their preoccupation with a perceived Soviet threat, were actively wooing the Arab States. In these circumstances, it was not surprising that

> they should conclude that a resumption of the War of 1948 is inevitable, and that as the balance of power is shifting steadily away from Israel, it would be to her advantage to reopen hostilities sooner rather than later.

Admittedly, Israel could be counselled "to exercise patience and restraint in the expectation that the situation will gradually improve", since its very existence was assured by the Tripartite Declaration.[121] And yet, despite many positive a quality which they were endowed with, Israelis "were often only less blind than the Arabs to what appears to us their own best interests".

Evans, however, felt obliged to remind his superiors at the Foreign Office "that Israel is a small and infant State, and that her elongated geography brings large centres of population very close to the frontier". Therefore, he warned that

> So long as there is no peace with the Arabs Israel will never rest, and no assurances or guarantees by the Western Powers will satisfy her.

Evans further warned that the absence of peace might lead to most unwelcome internal developments in Israel:

> It would [...] not be surprising if under the stress of a permanent state of emergency the Israeli people embraced the Fuhrerprinzip.

He wondered whether the Arabs might not consent to conditions of settlement, hitherto regarded as unacceptable, if they were told clearly and uneqivocally that these were the best they could hope for; that the boundaries of such a settlement would be guaranteed; that if the Arabs still refused, the guarantees contained in the Tripartate Declaration would be withdrawn and they would thus be "left face to face with Israel". Evans argued that, through careful presentation, the terms advanced by Britain and the United States could be made to appear as representing substantial concessions on the part of Israel. He hoped that "commonsense and the normal rules of bargaining would lead the Arab States, after suitable manoeuvring to accept". He admitted, however, "that commonsense and normal rules are untrustworthy guides in the quicksands of Middle East politics".[122]

Although he entirely understood the dilemma posed in Evans' letter, Britain's Ambassador in Iraq warned that

> the kind of positive policy he seems to have in mind would lead to results so damaging to our interests that it could harldy be contemplated in the most extreme of circumstances

Troutbeck wondered whether a peace treaty attained in such circumstances would result in the kind of improved relationship apparently intended by Evans. All indications were that, so far as the Iraqis were concerned, peace would be "even more restricted than the present peace between the USA and the Soviet Union". A measure of compulsion, like the one suggested by Evans to the effect that the

Arabs would be threatened with the withdrawal of the guarantees entailed in the Tripartite Declaration, was deemed by Troutbeck as counter-productive: it would merely incur the wrath of the Iraqis; they had, anyhow

> discounted the Tripartite Declaration in advance, believing that it would in fact never be used against Israel on account of the strong Jewish influence in the signatory countries.

The only positive policy that Britain could pursue, Troutbeck suggested, was to force Israel to cede land it presently controlled. He admitted, though, that "the difficulties in doing so are self-evident". Therefore, he concluded, "all we can do at present is to keep quiet".[123]

Britain's Envoy in Syria, Sir John Gardener, did not embrace Evans' initiative with much enthusiasm either. He analysed Syria's attitudes towards Israel, drawing a clear distinction between the political and economic manifestations. "Politically", be explained, "Anti Israeli feeling amounts to hysteria". In the realm of commerce and industry, Syria regarded Israel a potential rival. The port of Haifa, for instance, was prevented by the Arab boycott from becoming a competitor to Syrian ports for Jordanian imports and exports. Israeli cotton was similarly precluded from competing with Syrian cotton in the Arab world. Syrian feelings and interests appeared to Gardener to be so potent that even British sanctions in the form of witholding arms supplies "would merely annoy them and make them less inclined than ever to listen to our advise over Arab-Israeli matters". Echoing a similar argument advanced by Troutbeck in relation to Iraq, he did not think that "we could bribe the Syrians into friendship with Israel". Israel, Gardener argued, should

be persuaded to refrain from adopting "aggressive tactics" and to demonstrate "good neighbourliness".[124]

"The difficulty", Baker remarked in response, "is of course that while Israel is prepared and anxious to reach a peace settlement with the Arabs, she is naturally unwilling give away in advance all her bargaining counters".[125]

Evans' warning as regards the danger of an Israeli provoked war notwithstanding, the conclusion reached by the Foreign Office on his proposal was seemingly cautious:

> we should be sure that the advantages of such action would outweigh the damage to the United Kingdom and the West.[126]

The arguments expounded by his colleagues to the effect that it would be impossible to compel the Arab States to alter their policy towards Israel rendered Evans particularly despondent. "If this be so", he said, "then I am forced to the conclusion that the relations between Israel and the Arab States can probably only be established by the arbitration of force". Assuming, perhaps unwittingly, the role of the prophet of doom, Evans predicted that "sooner or later there will be a resumption of hostilities". He emphasised this point by indicating "that since the Israelis believe the balance of power to be moving against them", the war he foresaw "may well come before very long, say within the next five years, and possibly much sooner".[127]

Britain's Representative in Lebanon, Edwin Chapman-Andrews, disagreed with the Foreign Office that an attempt to bring about a settlement was doomed to failure. In his view, the Foreign Office's objective to confine efforts to moderating the dispute and seeing to it that hostilities did not errupt was counter-productive. He believed that

> it would encourage the Arab moderates to delude themselves [...] that they could safely ignore the very existence of Israel.

He suggested joint British-United States consultations designed to effect an agreement on the terms of settlement they both considered to be fair and politically feasible.

> then [...] we should by dealing at first with each party separately, endeavour by all possible means to persuade or cajole both of them to accept thereof the solution or any agreed modification of it.

He further proposed that a personality of high international repute, such as Lord Mountbatten, should be asked to render his diplomatic services for this task.[128]

The problem with his suggestion, Chapman-Andrews was told in response, was that whilst it would be easy to establish acceptable terms of settlement, an attempt to present them to the parties concerned was

> bound to come up against complete intransigence on the part of the Arabs so long as they refuse to countenance Israel's existence.

Furthermore, it would have to be accompanied by pressure the implication of which would be most detrimental to British interests in the region. Therefore, there was

no prospect of undertaking such course of action "unless and until some rifts appear in the Arab united front, or other unforeseen circumstances arise".[129] So far as his suggestion for employing Lord Mountbatten was concerned, Falla maintained that, when circumstances did permit, instead of him it might be worth considering an Asiatic peronality such as Mr Nehru"[130] Allen, for his part, seemed to discard Lord Mountbatten, though in a rather cynically implied manner, stating that nothing could be done about Chapman-Andrews' proposal for an initiative to settle the Arab-Israeli dispute for "apart from everything else, *it would be difficult to find a suitable personality* [my italics]"[131]

A few months subsequently, and independently of Evans' above-mentioned initiative, the British Consul-General in Jerusalem, William Wilson, warned, similarly to Evans though in less despondent terms, that "the present cold war, if pursued, may well become a hot one". He therefore suggested, "even if it is a vain hope", to endeavour to achieve a settlement to the conflict. To start with, Wilson proposed to remove from the Arab mind the hope that the Jews could be driven to the sea or that Israel would starve as a result of the Arab boycott and Israel's own economic predicament. He believed that Israel might consent to allow the return of Arab refugees who would wish to do so, and to compensate those who would not. The Western Powers, Wilson maintained, would have to finance, through loans, "a truly generous compensation offer". So far as the frontiers were concerned, Wilson advocated what he termed "some rationalisation" of the existing borders. He implied, though, that adjustments might have to be effected on both sides of the border. The Arabs would have to be persuaded "that they will never do better". Indeed, it ought to be conveyed to them "that if they refuse they will get less".[132]

The British Ambassador in Jordan, Charles Duke, concurred with Wilson that the existing situation contained the dangers of war. He argued, however, as did his predecessor the previous year, that the adoption of a positive policy to achieve a settlement was doomed to failure. Indeed, he entertained a rather modest objective, maintaining as he did that it would be "premature to try to do more than prevent war".[133]

Thus, by the beginning of 1954, three British envoys in the Middle East advocated an active peace policy aimed at settling the Arab-Israeli conflict: Evans and Wilson, prompted by their fear of a resumption of war, and Chapman-Andrews, apprehensive that otherwise moderate Arabs would not be encouraged to reconcile themselves with Israel's existance. The remaining British representatives in the region who advanced their opinion were most reluctant to endorse such course of action. The Foreign Office, in London, tended to concur with the latter, maintaining that both Arab intransigence and the repercussions resulting from the application of pressure would render any such attempt entirely futile, if not counter-productive. For the moment, at least, British diplomacy would be confined to "nibbling at the edges", a term widely used by British and United States officials at the period.

Once the comprehensive method of solving the Arab-Israeli dispute appeared to have been discarded, a distinct approach, more gradual in pace, more limited in scope, was suggested by Shuckburgh in the latter part of 1954. His idea was to try

and secure some relaxation of the ban on trade between Israel and the Arab States. He understood that the Arabs would be particularly reluctant to lift their "rigid blockade" as they feared being exposed to economic exploitation by Israelis. He wondered, therefore, whether it would be possible to devise a system

> whereby limited exchanges of goods with Israel could be permitted without at the same time opening the door to purchase of land and property by Israelis, acquisition of control over industry and other forms of economic penetration?[134]

Chapman-Andrews, in Labanon, argued that the premise behind Shuckburgh's proposal was flawed. Although Arab fear of economic exploitation was deep-rooted "in the background", it did not constitute any longer "a major immediate obstacle". The object of the Arab boycott, he contended, was "to strangle Israel's economy and not merely to prevent Jewish economic penetration". So far as the Lebanese were concerned, he believed that it would be "unrealistic" to try to persuade them "to advocate relaxation".[135]

The British Representative in Syria went even further in his recommendation:

> I would advise against raising the matter privately with them [the Syrians] for fear of leakages, *since even an enquiry would be interpreted as pro Israeli action* [my italics][136]

In response, Gardener was told that Eden had "commented on the last sentence of your telegram under reference that we must not be too timid".[137]

Eden's attitude to the question notwithstanding, officials at the Foreign Office did not exude much optimism as regards Shuckburgh's proposal. John Tripp, of the

Levant Department, maintained that it would be unacceptable to the Arabs "since it would imply [...] recognition of the existence of the State of Israel".[138] The Head of the Department concurred.[139]

To be sure, the Israelis had earlier argued for the unfreezing of the commercial thaw with the Arabs as the best possible means by which to effect some progress towards peace. Moshe Sharett, now both Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, proposed, as a first step, a relaxation of the Jordanian trade ban on Israel. Considering the particularly close relationship it enjoyed with Jordan, Britain, Sharett said, could wield its influence on the Jordanians to agree to his proposal. Jordan, more than any other Arab country, had an interest in improved relations with Israel. Should Jordan consent to establishing commercial links with Israel, the Israeli Government would be prepared to offer Jordan free access to Haifa and a free zone in the port.[140] In response to a query by Shuckburgh, the Israeli Ambassador in London added that if Britain could persuade the Jordanians to effect even a modest relaxation of the trade ban with Israel, the Israeli Government would still agree to advance its Haifa offer.[141]

Eden was encouraged. He sounded rather enthusiastic about it. Trade, "even on a small scale", he asserted, "could be immensely helpful". He instructed, in a similar vein, to "try to pursue this if we can, even on a limited scale".[142] Indeed, he authorised his officials to make informal soundings in Amman.[143]

In Amman, however, John Richmond, Britain's Charge-d'Affaires, saw "no prospect of Jordan agreeing to a relaxation, however limited, on the trade ban with

Israel". Similarly to Gardener, he explained that "the point about the Arab boycott is that it is not a qualitative restriction, but a total blockade". Indeed, the boycott was "an all-out effort [...] at strangling Israeli economic life". Being carried out by all Arab States collectively, Jordan could not be expected to pursue an indpendent course of action and step out of line. "Any steps towards lifting trade restrictions with Israel at this stage can only be taken by the Arab States in concert". Again, like Gardener as regards Syria, Richmond was reluctant even to discuss the matter with his hosts. Any approach to the Jordan Government, he stressed, "would succeed only in damaging our position here".[144] How would Britain's position be damaged? He did not elaborate.

The idea of a free port at Haifa preceding a peace settlement had been studied at the Foreign Office two years previously. Pullar believed then that the Jordanians would "almost certainly not accept it". For, although the benefit to Jordan would be "considerable", it would not be "vital".[145] He further indicated that the Jordanians might fear the imposition of economic sanctions by the Arab League against Jordan should it consent to the proposal. However, "if there is good reason to believe Jordan can act independently then I think we should try and encourage such a movement".[146]

When the issue was studied again a year later, the conclusion reached was that so far as Lebanon and Syria were concerned, the proposal would be entirely unattractive since Haifa would merely compete with the ports of Beirut and Latakia.[147] Haifa seemed to have no particular advantage over Beirut for both Iraq and Kuwait. However, Jordan and Israel could derive economic benefit from the creation of a free port at Haifa.[148]

Indeed, when the question was further analysed almost a year subsequently, it was agreed that Jordan had suffered the most among the Arab countries from the boycott which had prevented it from making use of the facilities of the port of Haifa. For instance, it was calculated that Jordan could cut buy half its expenditure currently incurred in port and transit dues in Beirut, if imports could be conveyed through Haifa. Furthermore, the use of Haifa rather than Aqaba for imports from Europe could likewise entail substantial saving as the Suez Canal dues would thus be avoided. And yet, it was recognised that political considerations would outweigh rational economic calculations, eliciting from the Jordanian Government a negative reply to the Israeli offer.[149]

In a further study of the proposal, Henry Dudgeon, of the Foreign Office, maintained that there was some justification for the belief that the Arab boycot was proving more effective in undermining Israel's economy. Considering Jordan's aim of achieving just that, "the Jordan Government would suspect us of acting at Israel's instigation if we advanced the suggestion".[150]

Thus, even as regards the idea of limited economic reconciliation the Foreign Office appeared to be reluctant to pursue the shadow of an active policy. Beyond the seemingly objective assessment as to the prospects of its success, the fear that any diplomatic enquiry would be construed by the Arab country concerned as a pro-Israeli move tended to render British policy in this respect singularly paralysed. An inactive policy founded upon a rational appraisal as to the futility or disadvantages

entailed in the adoption of an otherwise active one may be deemed - depending on one's own point of view - as either wisely prudent or excessively cautious. A decision to eschew even a behind-the-scenes diplomatic enquiry for fear of it being represented as something it is not intended to be may be interpreted as a peculiar manifestation of a self-inflicted diplomatic paralysis. Apprehension of a possible adverse Arab reaction reached in this instance the zenith of theological consistency.

A case where Arab-Israeli reconciliation appeared to assume concrete form emerged in mid-1954, when representatives of the pro-independence Umma Party in Sudan and officials of the Israeli Embassy met in London on several occasions. Sudan was to be recognised as an independent state by Britain and Egypt, which since 1899 had governed the country as a condominium, on 1 January 1956. Meanwhile, since 1953 Sudan had been governed by elected representatives of the National Unity Party (NUP), traditionally of pro-Egyptian tendency. The Umma Party, in contrast, was regarded as friendly towards Britain. Both sides, the representatives of Umma and the officials at the Israeli Embassy, consulted the Foreign Office, prior to meetings as well as subsequently, thus, in a way, taking Britain into their confidence. Views prevailing in the Foreign Office on the wisdom of such talks were not necessarily monolithic. Morris warned that "it would need a degree of courage for a Sudanese Government to act in defiance of the rest of the Arab world". He acknowledged, though, that "the Sudanese are very parochial-minded: the Palestine issue is almost as remote to them as Guatemala". He argued "that the situation was complicated enough in the Sudan without dragging into it the Arab-Israeli problem". Should the question of the Sudan come up at the United Nations, however, "we would hope that Israel's sympathies would be with the

small new state to establish and protect its independence in face of Egyptian pressure".[151]

Two days later, Morris dwelt more particularly upon the prospects of Israeli assistance to the pro-independence cause in the Sudan, concluding that "there is no reason why we should discourage them". Beyond that, however, he stressed that neither the Umma Party nor the Israelis should delude themselves "that we are actively promoting them".[152]

Guy Millar, of the African Department, asserted that this was entirely a matter between the Israelis and the Sudanese. Indeed, he believed that the British stood to gain little from it. Therefore, he urged that Britian "should keep out of it as much as possible".[153]

Tom Bromley, the Head of the African Department, went even further, maintaining that this was not "a wise move from the Umma's point of view". Disputing Morris' argument in favour of Israel's support at the United Nations for the pro-independence principle in Sudan, Bromley argued that "it would be support against Egypt ultimately and therefore likely to carry less weight than really neutral support".[154]

Britain's Trade Commissioner in Khartoum P. Adams, admitted that "I don't like the development very much". He fully agreed "that we should keep out of it as far as we can". Considering that the ruling NUP supported Egypt, Adams feared that "any evidence that we were 'plotting' with the Umma and the Israelis together

would be sharply resented by the present Sudanese Government and its supporters".[155]

Almost two years before, the Head of the Liberal Party in the house of Commons, Clement Davies, suggested to Eden that he, Davies, should arrange informal contacts involving the Israeli representative in London and one or more Arab envoys serving in Britain. Eden replied that, although he was not opposed to the idea in principle, Davies must not reveal that he had even discussed the matter with him.[156] Davies answered, assuring Eden that

> You know nothing about it and I am not sure that I have ever seen you or have ever heard of you![157]

So far as it is known, nothing resulted from this initiative either.

Thus, the underlying assumption prevailing at the Foreign Office in the early nineteen-fifties was that whereas Israel was anxious for peace the Arab States, to say the least, were not. Whatever peaceful scenario the Arab States envisaged, the Foreign Office seemed to believe, it entailed either an expectation incompatible with the notion of peace, i.e., Israel's destruction, or, more optimistically, a condition divorced from reality, i.e., negotiations on the basis of the 1947 United Nations Partition Plan. In constrast, the future of a peaceful Middle East delineated by officials in London included in it the continued existence of the State of Israel within its *status quo* boundaries with some minor modifications (the latter condition was to be modified by Shuckburgh at the end of 1954 when he introduced into the vocabulary of the Foreign Office the phrase "significant territorial concessions by

Israel", which, in his view, would be "essential" in order to obtain an Arab-Israeli settlement). And, although the British Government, and Eden in particular, considered the plight of the Palestinian Arab refugees as central, meriting priority when attempting to resolve the Arab-Israeli dispute, the solution it propounded to this problem was re-settlement in Arab states rather than repatriation to presently-held Israeli territory, as the Arabs pressed for. The settlement thus envisaged by Britain was much closer to the peace terms espoused by Israel than to the most moderate conditions presented by Arab states. Not only were the British more in tune with Israel than with the Arab States in this regard, but the latter, so the Foreign Office in London (perhaps with the exception of Christopher Gandy) argued, had to be tutored upon the flawed premise of their stance; an educational undertaking deemed by certain British envoys serving in Arab posts to be futile, if not counter-productive. Arab hostility towards Israel, these diplomats explained, was not tactical in nature. Deep-rooted and emotional, it sprang out of fear of Israeli economic competition and disdain to what was perceived as a foreign intrusion into Arab land. Any endeavour "to educate" the Arabs in the spirit of reconciliation with Israel was thus either a long-term project of questionable prospects or simply doomed to failure. The risk involved in this pedagogic initiative, indeed the risk involved in actively promoting the cause of peace, was that the Arabs might construe it as a pro-Israeli move. The British Embassy in Tel-Aviv, for its part, contended that the Arabs had to be dissuaded not only by words, but also by deeds, from their belief that the State of Israel was a transitory phenomenon which they could ignore with impunity; by forging closer ties with Israel, by strengthening it, Britain might actually persuade the Arab States that they could continue to withold

recognition from Israel only at their own peril; in such circumstances, peace would be for the Arabs not a luxury to be contemplated about, but an imperative to be acted upon.

Weighing the pros and cons of adopting an active peace policy, of undertaking a diplomatic initiative to bring about an Arab-Israeli settlement, the Foreign Office invariably came to the conclusion, Evans' protestations to the contrary notwithstanding, that the disadvantages entailed far outweighed any possible advantage that might accrue. Considering the divergence of positions prevailing between the sides concerned, a considerable measure of compulsion was believed to be necessary in order for an accord to be reached. Neither the Israelis nor the Arabs were expected to respond submissively to the kind of pressure envisaged. And since Israel was seen as being the more reasonable side in this respect, a greater degree of pressure would have had to be exerted on the Arab States. This, it was feared, would have elicited an adverse reaction by the latter and thus jeopardized British interests in the area, particularly in regard to the question of regional defence cooperation.

Both as regards the comprehensive and the limited approaches to solving the Arab-Israeli dispute, this period was characterised, so far as Britian was concerned, more by policies that were discarded rather than implemented.

Beyond the intriguing query as to whether the Foreign Office was wisely prudent or unnecessarily timid in not adopting a more active peace policy, it could be argued that, insofar as its assessment of Arab and Israeli intentions and the

terms of settlement it favoured were concerned, the Foreign Office espoused, at least up until the latter part of 1954, a notable pro-Israeli line.

FOOTNOTES

1. See Mordechai Gazit, "The Israel-Jordan Peace Negotiations (1949-51) : King Abdallah's Lonely Effort", Journal of Contemporary History, Volume 23, Number 3, July 1988. See also Avi Shlaim, Collusion Across the Jordan: King Abdullah, the Zionist Movement and the Partition of Palestine (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1988) pp. 513-581.

2. Gazit, "The Israel-Jordan Peace Negotiations", p. 409.

3. The British Representative in Jordan, Sir Alec Kirkbride, believed that the disappearance of Abdallah rendered the task of effecting a Jordanian-Israeli rapprochement much more difficult. FO 371/91368, EE 1072/23, Kirkbride to Bowker.

4. FO 371/91368, EE 1072/14, Helm to Bowker, 23 June, 1951.

5. FO 371/91368, EE 1072/14, Helm to Bowker, 23 June, 1951.

6. FO 371/91368, EE 1072, Bowker to H.M. Representatives in All Arab posts, 24 August, 1951.

7. FO 371/91368, EE 1072/21, Strang, FO Minute, 18 August, 1951.

8. FO 371/91368, EE 1072/23, Kirkbride to Bowker.

9. FO 371/91368, EE 1072/24, Chapman-Andrews to FO 5 September, 1951.

10. FO 371/91368, EE 7072/25, Stevenson to Bowker, 14 September, 1951.

11. FO 371/91368, EE 1072/25, Wardrop, FO Minute.

12. FO 371/91368, EE 1072/27, Riches to Bowker, 20 September, 1951.

13. FO 371/91368, EE 1072/28, Troutbeck to Bowker, 5 October, 1951.

14. FO 371/91368, EE 1072/32, Troutbeck to Bowker, 11 October, 1951.

15. FO 371/98257, E 1056/80, Paper by Chancery, UK Legation Tel Aviv, 19 June, 1952.

16. FO 371/104753, ER 1071/1, Montagu-Pollock to Bowker, 26 December, 1952.

17. FO 371/104753, ER 1071/2, Furlonge to Bowker, 24 December, 1952.

18. FO 371/104753, ER 1071/4, Troutbeck to Bowker, 2 January, 1953.

19. FO 371/104753, ER 1071/4, Ross, FO Minute, 9 February, 1953.

20. FO 371/104754, ER 1071/11, Pelham to Bowker, 24 January, 1953.

21. FO 371/104754, ER 1071/31, Rapp to Bowker, 23 March, 1953.

22. FO371/104753, ER 1071/11, Gandy, FO Minute, 12 February, 1953.

23. FO 371/104753, ER 1071/11, Baker, FO Minute, 18 February, 1953.

24. FO 371/104753, ER 1071/11, Ross, FO Minute, 19 February, 1953.

25. FO 371/111069, VR 1072/1, Troutbeck to Eden, 28 December, 1953.

26. FO 371/91200, FO Minute, 29 October, 1951.

27. FO 371/91188, E 1027/14, Bowker, Minute of Anglo-French talks held in Paris on 13 November, 1951.

28. See FO 371/98799, ER 1013/4, Monthly Reports on Israel, February 1951, FO 371/98799, ER 1051/17, Wardrop, FO Minute, 11 March, 1951; FO 371/98799, ER 1051/14, Record of Conversation between Eden and Sharett, 11 March, 1951.

29. FO 371/98262, E 1071/23, Chancery Cairo to FO, 20 March, 1952.

30. FO 371/96998, JE 1261/45, Chancery Cairo to FO, 24 September, 1952.

31. ISA, 39/22A, Gazit to Foreign Ministry, 14 November, 1952. Writing at the beginning of 1953, Britain's Ambassador in Israel, Francis Evans, recalled that "later in the year[1952] it became clear that General Neguib was being compelled to adopt as extreme an attitude on the Palestine issue as his predecessors". FO 371/104733, ER 1011/1, Annual Review of Israel For 1952.

32. FO 371/104753, ER 1071/6, Stevenson to Bowker, 16 January, 1953.

33. FO 371/104190, E 1022/4, Washington to FO, 5 March, 1953.

34. FO 371/104754, ER 1071/42, Ross, FO Minute. Record of Conversation with the Swiss Counsellor in London, 20 April, 1953.

35. FO 371/104789, ER 1091/369, Cairo to FO, 16 October, 1953.

36. Shuckburgh, Descent to Suez, 4 October, 1954, p.237; ; 11 October, 1954, p.238.

37. See FO 371/104770, ER 1078/3, Allen, FO Memorandum, 2 December, 1953; FO 371/104734, ER 1011/1, Monthly Report on Israel, March 1953; FO 371/111075, VR 1072/217, Shuckburgh, FO Minute, 1 October 1954; FO 371/98799, ER 1051/14, Record of Conversation Eden-Sharett, 11 March, 1952.

38. See FO 371/104257, E 10345/16, Furlonge to the Secretary of State, 18 May, 1953; FO 371/104257, E 10345/17, Montagu-Pollock to Churchill, 19 May, 1953; FO 371/104257 , E 10345/26, Chapman-Andrews to Churchill, 26 May, 1953; FO 371/104770, ER 1078/3, Allen, FO Memorandum, 2 December, 1953.

39. FO 371/104753, ER 1071/13, Ross, FO Minute, 11 February, 1953. Egypt's Foreign Minister Mahmoud Fawzi, stated that his country would be willing "to envisage an eventual settlement on the lines of the re-settlement of and compensation for the refugees and some frontier rectifications". However, Sir Ralph Bowker, the Assistant-Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, told his superiors that Fawzi had mentioned the same terms to him, personally, making it clear "that by 'some frontier rectifications' he meant Israel giving up the Negev". FO 371/104753, ER 1071/13, Bowker FO Minute, 12 February, 1953. This demand was further elaborated both by Gamal Abdel Nasser and Fawzi a year and a half subsequently, when they maintained that Israel should relinquish part of the Negev not to Egypt, but to Jordan. As regards the refugees, compensation rather than repatriation was their accepted formula. FO 371/111066, VR 1052/4, Straechey, M.P., to Churchill, 29 September, 1954. A month later, Nasser stressed that the only basis of negotiations between the Arab States and Israel was the United Nations Partition Plan of 1947. The Negev, up to Beersheba, should be ceded by Israel; what was required, he contended, was a smaller Israel. FO 371/111076, VR 1072/242, Garvey to Eden, 26 October, 1954.

40. See, for instance, FO 371/104257, E 10345/26, Chapman-Andrews to Churchill, 26 May, 1953; FO 371/111076, VR 1072/242, Garvey to Eden, 26 October, 1954.

41. FO 800/691, LLOYD'S PRIVATE PAPERS, 21 November, 1953; Abdullah Bakr, Iraq's Foreign Minister, advanced his views quite candidly in a meeting with the Minister of State at the Foreign Office, Selwyn Lloyd, when he explained, as the latter recalled, "that the Arabs' ultimate aim was still to destroy Israel and re-occupy Palestine".

42. FO 371/111074, VR 1072/207, Falla, FO Minute, 22 September, 1954. Paul Falla, the Head of the Levant Department, referred to a meeting he had held with the Arab Envoys in London the previous day, in which "The Arab representatives took the line [...] that direct negotiations with Israel would be suicide for any Arab Government." Eden emphasised this theme, in a conversation with Israel's Ambassador in London, indicating that on several occasions Arabs had repeated to Selwyn Lloyd their fear of direct contacts with Israel. ISA, 22/39B, Elath to Sharett, 22 September, 1954.

43. FO 371/98479, EE 1073/90, Bowker to Rapp, 21 November, 1952.

44. FO 371/1340, PE 1531/5, FO Information Policy For Israel, 4 October, 1952.

45. FO 371/98476, EE 1073/30, Rapp to Ross, 2 June, 1952.

46. FO 371/98258, E 1056/83, Ross to Burrows, 28 July, 1952. The entire list of conditions is enclosed in this letter.

47. FO 371/104754, ER 1071/45, Pullar, FO Minute, 6 May, 1953.

48. FO 371/104754, ER 1071/45, Beeley to Ross, 29 April, 1953. The whole list advanced by the State Department, in the form of a case by case reply, is enclosed in this letter. On the State Department stance regarding the suggestion that Israel could permit the return of 100,000 refugees, see FRUS, Memorandum by Jernegan to the Secretary of State, 10 August, 1953, p.1272. A revised version of the provisions of a future settlement, drawn up in the Foreign Office at the end of 1953, stipulated that the borders to be agreed upon would be guaranteed by the United Nations or by the United States, Britain and France combined. FO 371/104770, ER 1078/3, Allen, FO Minute, 3 December, 1953.

49. FO 371/104754, ER 1071/45, Ross, FO Minute, 14 May, 1953.

50. FO 371/111074, VR 1072/202, Falla, FO Minute, 20 September, 1954. The Tripartate Declaration, signed by the United States, Britain and France on 25 May, 1950, was designed to guarantee the existing borders against any attempt at their *forcible* modification. Indeed, it should be observed that the Declaration did not specifically preclude a *peaceful* alteration of the prevailing boundaries. The precise terms of the Tripartate Declaration could be found in FO 371/98281, E 1194/24 and in FO 371/104770, ER 1078/3.

51. FO 371/111095, VR 1079/106, Shuckburgh, Notes on Arab-Israel Dispute, 21 December, 1954.

52. FO 371/98258, E 1056/83, Ross to Burrows, 29 July, 1952.

53. FO 371/98749, EE 1073/104, Troutbeck to Bowker, 9 December, 1952.

54. FO 371/98749, EE 1073/104, Pullar, FO Minute, 30 December, 1952.

55. FO 371/98749, EE 1073/104, Bowker, FO Minute, 3 January, 1953.

56. FO 371/104753, ER 1071/5, Evans to Bowker, 31 December, 1952.

57. FO 371/104753, ER 1071/5, Gandy, FO Minute, 16 January, 1953.

58. FO 371/104754, ER 1071/45, Beeley to Ross, 29 April, 1953. See Tentative State Department Comments, under clause 3(c), enclosed in this letter.

59. FO 371/104753, ER 1071/27, Baker, FO Minute, 25 March, 1953.

60. FO 371/104753, ER 1071/27, Ross to Beeley, 23 April, 1953.

61. FO 371/104770, ER 1071/3, Allen, FO Minute, 3 December, 1953.

62. FO 371/111095, VR 1079/106, Shuckburgh, FO Minute, 21 December, 1954.

63. Inis Claude, National Minorities (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1955) p.210.

64. Quoted in Ibid., p.179.

65. Hansard, H.C., Volume 494, 20 November, 1951, col.42.

66. FO 800/807, EDEN'S PRIVATE PAPERS, Record of Conversation, 22 November, 1951.

67. FO 371/104464, EE 1825/46, Bowker, FO Minute, 25 March, 1953.

68. FO 371/104477, EE 18213/3, Bowker, FO Minute, 6 March, 1953.

69. See also FO 371/98281, E 1194/24, FO Memorandum 21 February, 1952. FO 98254, E 1056/41, Evans and Knight, FO Memorandum on Palestine Refugees, 6 June, 1952; FO 371/104477, EE 18213/3, Bowker, FO Minute, 6 March, 1953; FO 371/104466, EE 1825/87, Brief For the United Kingdom Delegation to the Bermuda Talks on Palestine Refugees, 29 June, 1953.

70. FO 371/104477, EE 18213/3, Richmond, Brief for the Secretary of State's visit to the United States of America, 25 February, 1953.

71. FO 371/104754, ER 1071/36, Furlonge to Bowker, 26 March, 1953;
FO 371/104754, ER 1071/52, Furlonge to Ross, 12 May, 1953.

72. FO 371/104754, ER 1071/36, Pullar, FO Minute, 14 April, 1953.

73. FO 371/104754, ER 1071/36, Richmond, FO Minute, 13 April, 1953.

74. FO 371/104754, ER 1071/36, Bowker, FO Minute, 1 May, 1953.

75. FO 371/104754, ER 1071/36, Ross, FO Minute, 5 May, 1953.

76. FO 371/104754, ER 1071/52, Pullar, FO Minute, 21 May, 1953.

77. FO 371/11095, VR 1079/106, Shuckburgh, FO Memorandum The Elements of a Settlement, 21 December, 1954.

78. The blueprint of the two schemes are enclosed in FO 371/98477, EE 1073/44.

79. FO 371/98477, EE 1073/48, Morrison Memorandum, 15 August, 1952.

80. FO 371/98476, EE 1073/30, Wardrop, FO Minute, 16 June, 1952.

81. FO 371/98477, EE 1073/42, Furlonge to Ross, 29 July, 1952. An official at the Foreign Office remarked on the sideline : "yes".

82. FO 371/98478, EE 1073/62, Furlonge to Wardrop, 8 September, 1952.

83. FO 371/98477, EE 1073/46, Amman to FO, 25 August, 1952.

84. FO 371/98477, EE 1073/46, FO to Amman, 27 August, 1952.

85. FO 371/98478, EE 1073/53, Amman to FO, 4 September, 1952.

86. FO 371/98478, EE 1073/78, Rapp to Bowker, 27 September, 1952.

87. FO 371/98478, EE 1073/78, Wardrop, FO Minute, 15 October, 1952.

88. FO 371/98478, EE 1073/78, Rapp to Bowker, 27 September, 1952.

89. FO 371/98478, EE 1073/78, Hunter, FO Minute, 9 October, 1952.

90. FO 371/98263, EE 1071/43, BMEO to FO, 4 October, 1952.

91. FO 371/98263. EE 1071/43, [Unclear signature] 8 October, 1952.

92. ISA, 12/2403A, Raphael to Eytan, 6 December, 1954.

93. FO 371/104753, ER 1071/4, Troutbeck to Bowker, 2 January, 1953.

94. A few months previously, Pullar, referring to the drawbacks of an imposed solution, warned that "Israel might [...] threaten to make herself an international nuisance in an area which she knows is vital for the Western Powers by setting alight the four frontiers". He feared that an enforced settlement could drive Israel to make "a first class nuisance of herself". FO 371/98479, EE 1073/90, Pullar, FO Minute, 7 November, 1952.

95. FO 371/104753, ER 1071/4, Ross, FO Minute, 9 February, 1953. Ross introduced his minute by indicating that he was advancing the views of the Eastern Department, presumably implying they were not merely his own.

96. FO 371/104753, ER 1071/4, Bowker to Pelham, 10 February, 1953.

97. FO 371/104753, ER 1071/11, Pelham to Bowker, 24 January, 1953.

98. FO 371/104753, ER 1071/11, Pullar, FO Minute, 12 February, 1953.

99. FO 371/104753, ER 1071/14, Evans to Bowker, 12 February, 1953. A few months previously, Evans had written that "Israel is an intrusion of the Western into the Islamic civilization and for us to assist the Arabs against this Western element (unless provoked) would be, in face of the present Arab opposition to the West, a form of self-mutilation. (From this point of view the Arabs have already gained a point when we try to adopt a neutral attitude in the Arab-Israel struggle)" FO 371/98479, EE 1073/95A, Evans to Bowker, 15 November, 1952.

100. FO 371/104753, ER 1071/14, Baker, FO Minute, 24 February, 1953.

101. FO 371/104753, ER 1071/14, Ross, FO Minute, 9 March, 1953.
FO 371/104753, ER 1071/14, Bowker, FO Minute, 9 march, 1953.
See also FO 371/104753, ER 1071/14, Bowker to Evans, 18 March, 1953.

102. FO 371/104753, ER 1071/20, Evans to Bowker, 26 February, 1953.

103. FO 371/104753, ER 1071/23, Stevenson to Bowker, 11 March, 1953.

104. FO 371/104753, ER 1071/25, Barnes to Bowker, 13 March, 1953.

105. FO 371/104753, ER 1071/27, Montagu-Pollock to Bowker, 12 March, 1953.

106. FO 371/104753, ER 1071/27, Pullar, FO Minute, 23 March, 1953.

107. FO 371/104753, ER 1071/27, Baker, FO Minute, 25 March, 1953. Baker defined the modest change in policy contemplated as one entailing "general gestures of sympathy towards the Arabs".

108. FO 371/104754, ER 1071/31, Rapp to Bowker, 23 March, 1953.

109. FO 371/104780, ER 1091/129, Evans to Churchill, 29 April, 1953.

110. FO 371/104759, ER 1072/49, Powell-Jones, FO Minute, 20 October, 1953.

111. FO 371/104759, ER 1072/49, Falla, FO Minute, 19 October, 1953.

112. FO 371/104759, ER 1072/73, Allen, FO Minute, 28 October, 1953.

113. FO 371/104759, ER 1072/73, Falla, FO Minute, 2 November, 1953.

114. FO 371/104759, ER 1072/68, Washington to FO, 29 october, 1953.

115. FO 371/104760, ER 1072/120, BMEO to FO, 13 November, 1953. Some months subsequently, Sterndale-Bennett expounded his *credo* on this question when he wrote that a solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict would emerge as a result of internal circumstances, and not of external pressure.
FO 371/11100, VR 1091/60, BMEO to FO, 12 April, 1954.

116. FO 371/104759, ER 1072/87, New York to FO, 30 October, 1953.

117. FO 371/104759, ER 1072/72, Falla, FO Minute, 2 Novemeber, 1953.

118. FO 371//104770, ER 1078/3, Allen, FO Minute, 3 December, 1953.

119. FO 371/104770, ER 1078/3, Kirkpatrick, FO Minute, (date not mentioned). It should be noted, in this context, that in October, 1953 the Brazilian Government put forward a proposal to convene an international peace conference to be attended by the Arab States, Israel and all the Christian

countries. Strang, the then Permanent Under-Secretary of the Foreign Office stressed the difficulty entailed in such a proposal as the Arab States "were reluctant to sit down in conference with them [the Israelis] except under the aegis of the United Nations". FO 371/104775, ER 1082/18, Strang, Memorandum of Conversation with the Brazilian Ambassador, 12 October, 1953. See also FO 371/104775, ER 1082/20, Falla, FO Minute, 23 October, 1953. To be sure, Selwyn Lloyd's Conference idea was seemingly distinct in nature, if only on account of the proposed more modest setting.

120. FO 371/111069, VR 1072/16, Tripp, FO Minute, 23 March, 1954.

121. See footnote 50 above on the Tripartite Declaration.

122. FO 371/111066, ER 1071/117, Evans to Eden, 8 December, 1953.

123. FO 371/111069, VR 1072/17, Troutbeck to Eden, 28 December, 1953.

124. FO 3711/111069, VR 1072/6, Gardener to Eden, 7 January 1954.

125. FO 371/111069, VR 1072/6, Baker, FO Minute, 18 January, 1954.

126. FO 371/111069, VR 1072/9, Baker, FO Minute, 18 January, 1954.

127. FO 371/111069, VR 1072/34, Evans to Eden, 30 March, 1954.

128. FO 371/111070, VR 1072/58, Beirut to FO, 14 April, 1954.

129. FO 371/111070, VR 1072/58, Falla to Chapman-Andrews, 7 May, 1954.
Chapman-Andrew's *credo* on the question of Arab-Israeli peace was expounded in a particularly revealing despatch, written some months previously: "Moderate Arabs have often told me that their greatest fear is of the army of Jewish commercial travellers who would invade the area following a peace settlement with Israel. Apprehensions of Jewish economic penetration are understandable but the only practical way for the Arab States to deal with the situation is, *as I never cease to remind them* [my italics] to recognise Israel, to form non-agression pacts with her (with, if possible, frontiers guaranteeed by the Western Powers), to suspend the boycott and to collaborate in economic development schemes of mutual benefit [...] only in this way can the Arabs face up to their responsibilities and learn that they cannot escape from difficulties (which they have largely brought upon themselves) by flinging them back into the lap of the Western Powers." FO 371/104788, ER 1091/359,Chapman-Andrews to Eden, 7 October, 1953.

130. FO 371/111087, VR 1074/105, Falla FO Minute, 20 April, 1954.
A proposal advanced by Troutbeck almost four months previously. See FO 371/111069, VR 1072/3, Troutbeck to Allen, 29 December, 1953.

131. FO 371/111087, VR 1074/105, Allen, FO Minute, 20 April, 1954.

132. FO 371/111073, VR 1072/179, Wilson to Falla, 28 August, 1954.

133. FO 371/111074, VR 1072/189, Duke to Falla, 4 September, 1954.

134. FO 371/111076, VR 1072/252, Bahrain to FO, 8 November, 1954.

135. FO 371/111076, VR 1072/256, Beirut to FO, 11 November 1954.

136. FO 371/111076, VR 1072/262, Damascus to FO, 13 November, 1954.

137. FO 371/111076, VR1072/262, FO to Damascus, 17 November, 1954.

138. FO 371/111076, VR 1072/252, Tripp, FO Minute, 9 November, 1954.

139. FO 371/111076, VR 1072/252, Falla, FO Minute, 9 November, 1954.

140. FO 371/111075, VR 1072/239, Shuckburgh, FO Minute, 20 October, 1954. See also Sharett's interview with the US News and World Report, 17 September, 1954, pp.65-66, in FO 371/111074, VR 1072/195; *Divrey Ha Knesset*, Vol XVII, 16 November, 1954. p.105.

141. FO 371/111075, VR 1072/239, Shuckburgh, FO Minute, 20 October, 1954.

142. FO 371/111075, VR 1072/239, Eden, FO Minute, 20 October, 1954.

143. FO 391/111075, VR 1072/239, Shuckburgh, FO Minute, 29 October 1954; see also Shuchburgh Descent to Suez, 27 October, 1954, p.240.

144. FO 371/111076, VR 1072/258, Richmond to Falla, 1 November, 1954.

145. FO 371/98479, EE 1072/86, Pullar, FO Minute, 28 October, 1952.

146. FO 371/98479, EE 1073/86, Pullar, FO Minute, 29 October, 1952.

147. FO 371/104816, E 11394/1, Belgrave, FO Minute, 12 December, 1958, FO 371/104816, ER 1394/1, Baker, FO Minute, 10 December, 1953.

148. FO 371/104816, ER 1394/1, Belgrave, FO Minute, 12 December, 1953.

149. FO 371/111076, VR 1072/259, FO Minute (undated, probably beginning of November, 1954).

150. FO 371/110799, Dudgeon, FO Minute, 5 July, 1954.

151. FO 371/108361, JE 110353/1, Morris, FO Minute, 5July, 1954.

152. FO 371/108361, JE 110353/1, Morris, FO minute, 7 July, 1954.

153. FO 371/108361, JE 110353, Millard, FO Minute, 8 July, 1954.

154. FO 371/108361, JE 110353/1, Bromley, FO Minute, 22 July, 1954.

155. FO 371/108361, JE 10353/2, Adams to Bromley, 6 August, 1954.

156. FO 371/98479, EE 1073/88, Eden to Davies, M.P., 28 October, 1952.

157. FO 371/98479, EE 1073/88(A), Davies, M.P., to Eden, 31 October, 1952.

CHAPTER SIX:

ISRAEL'S ROLE IN BRITAIN'S DEFENCE STRATEGY IN THE MIDDLE EAST; BRITISH ARMS SALES POLICY TO THE REGION

When the Conservatives were elected back to office in October 1951, Britain was the predominant external military power in the Middle East. The British had a major base on the Suez Canal. They maintained treaties of alliance with Iraq and Jordan. Indeed, the Arab Legion in Jordan was subsidised by the British Government. Britain had Protectorates over the Persian Gulf Sheikhdoms and conducted their foreign affairs through a Political Resident in Bahrain. Nevertheless, when Anthony Eden returned to the Foreign Office after six years of absence, he was told by his officials of the "material weakness of the United Kingdom, particularly in regard to military forces to defend the area", which rendered it imperative to "closely coordinate" regional defence policy with the United States and "so far as possible" with France as well.[1] Almost eight months subsequently, on the occasion of a conference of British diplomatic representatives in the Middle East, held in London to discuss future policy towards the area, the Foreign Office emphasised this point, claiming that it would be impossible for Britain to "ensure the defence of the Middle East in war without substantial aid from powers outside the area."[2]

Every scenario of an outside threat to the Middle East, whether deployed by the Foreign Office or advanced by the British military establishment, entailed the projection of Soviet military might to the area: the Soviet Union was the sole outside factor expected to expand to the region and put in peril Britain's, and indeed the West's, vital interests. The Middle East under Soviet control could serve, according to the Foreign Office, "as a base and bridgehead for attacks against Europe, the Indian Ocean and North Africa". It could also constitute a springboard

"for political and military penetration of the African continent." It would place in jeopardy Britain's air and sea communications to the east, and the oil supplies to Britain and Europe could be halted.[3] Assessed in positive terms, the Chiefs of Staff, for their part, viewed the Middle East, in the context of the East-West dispute, as strategically important, not only because of "its expanding oil resources", but beyond that, considering

> the support of Turkey as the right flank of NATO, its influence on the retention of the Moslem World in the Western orbit, its bomber bases for the strategic air offensive and its place in the containment of traditional Russian Imperialist aims of expansion.[4]

In the light of this perceived Soviet menace, and aware of its limited resources, the British Government sought to pursue its defence interests in the region by endeavouring to devise a common strategy with the United States, France and Turkey, all of which harboured similar suspicion of Soviet designs. Thus, even prior to Eden's return to the Foreign Office, a proposal for a Middle East Command (also known by the term MEDO) was formulated by Britain and the United States and subsequently discussed with France and Turkey, as well as Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. Its object was to create a military organisation to defend the Middle East and to seek the cooperation of countries in the area in the pursuit of that aim. In addition, Britain was interested in "some firmer United States commitment" to render assistance in regional defence and wished, by way of Egyptian participation in MEDO, to settle its dispute with Egypt over the latter's demand to terminate the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian Agreement and evacuate the British troops from the Suez Canal base.[5] Indeed, Egypt was formally

invited to join the organisation as a founder member on an equal footing with the other seven sponsoring states. The Egyptian Government refused, though the invitation was not withdrawn on that account.

One of the principle riddles which the founder members of the new organisation had to solve was how to reconcile association both by the Arab States and Israel with MEDO whilst the former objected to any direct dealings with the latter. An elaborate system was proposed whereby a Middle East Liaison Section would be established at the headquarters of the organisation. Each member state would be represented at the headquarters by a liaison officer or mission and the Middle East Command would likewise have representation in the country concerned. The aim of this diplomatic labyrinth was primarily to bypass Arab refusal to sit round the same table with Israeli officials. The Eastern Department of the Foreign Office, betraying perhaps a slight sense of frustration, made it clear that

> If the Arabs object to even this comparatively tenuous relationship between Israel and the Command, and refuse to be associated with the latter on that account, we shall have to devise some alternative way of securing Israel's military collaboration.[6]

Although sympathetic to the concept of MEDO, the Israeli Government did not conceal from either the British or the United States Government its preference not to be formally associated with the proposed organisation. To begin with, the Israelis were most unwilling to expose information on their armed forces to the Arab States, which they feared they would have to do in case of full membership of MEDO. Beyond that, though, the Israeli Government appeared to have been

particularly motivated in its refusal formally to join MEDO by an acute premonition that such a step would entail grave consequences for the Jewish community in the Soviet Union. Afraid of reprisals against their brethren there, the Israelis conveyed their desire to cooperate with the United States and Britain, but outside the formal confines of a regional organisation.[7]

This Israeli reluctance to be associated with MEDO elicited an apparent sigh of relief at the Foreign Office in London.[8] Indeed, by June 1952, the view prevailing in the Foreign Office was that Israel's

> inclusion in the Defence organisation as a full member, at least for the time being, would destroy any chance of obtaining the co-operation of the Arab States".[9]

Meanwhile, in Washington, the State Department had likewise reached the conclusion that the Arab States would not join a regional defence organisation with which Israel was in any way associated.[10]

The intellectual challenge of forming a viable defence organisation was not necessarily rendered more manageable by virtue of Israel's exclusion from British calculations as regards the setting up of MEDO. Indeed, however absent Israel appeared to be, somehow the Israeli factor tended to emerge as an almost inevitable "divine curse", as, for instance, when the idea was raised of linking MEDO with the Arab League Collective Security Pact. The latter, originally signed on 17 June, 1950 by representatives of all the members of the Arab League with the exception of Jordan and Iraq, which joined subsequently, provided for collective

defence guarantees whereupon any member state attacked would enjoy the assistance of the rest. Perhaps, it was thought, the idea of forging a link between the two might induce the hesitant, if not reluctant, Arab States to consent to cooperate actively in regional defence. James Wardrop, of the Eastern Department, however, entertained serious reservations.

> We cannot lose sight of the fact that to the Arab States Israel is still the principal enemy, and if we were now to lend our support to their collective defence organisation, we should in fact be arming them for a second round of their war against her."[11]

Henry A. Dudgeon, for his part, emphasised this point, arguing that the Arab League Collective Security Pact

> is intended as a means of organising the military effort of the Arab States for the defence against, or possibly a future attack upon, Israel. Arab Leaders have in fact admitted as much.

His conclusion was, therefore, that

> This professed object of the Pact clearly reduces its possibilities as a basis upon which the defence of the Middle East against attack from outside the area can be organised.[12]

The State Department made it known to the British that it would be strongly opposed to employing the Arab League in order to facilitate the establishment of a Middle East Defence Organisation. This was not merely due to any display of sympathy towards Israel or any fear regarding the possible reaction of public

opinion in the United States. Rather, it was deemed inappropriate to make use of a pact among states in the area based on a commonality of race or religion and not upon geography or strategy.[13] The following year, the Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, conveying the views prevailing in the State Department on this issue to United States Representatives in the Middle East, referred to other reasons which made the proposal unappealing. This suggested link, it was feared, would entail an outright military alliance with the Arab States which the United States was not ready to undertake. He further mentioned, among other things, the fact that Israel regarded the Arab League Collective Security Pact as bent on Israel's destruction; the recipients of this despatch, though, were not enlightened as to whether the United States itself shared that view or not. Indeed, Israel's negative appraisal notwithstanding, the State Department suggested nevertheless, as a means of wooing the Arab States, to accept the military Annex of the Arab League Collective Security Pact as a basis for negotiations with the Arab States and, at the same time, to assuage Israeli apprehensions that were expected to ensue.[14]

Two months later, though, the Israelis were told by John Powell-Jones, who dealt with Middle Eastern defence and military matters at the Foreign Office, that Britain was not positively disposed to the idea of basing regional defence upon the Arab League Collective Security Pact.[15] This had been the view entertained by the Foreign Office since the idea was first mooted, early in 1952, despite some queries raised from time to time as to whether the question should not be re-examined.[16] The Ministry of Defence shared the Foreign Office's negative stance, similarly placing emphasis on the fact that the Arab League Collective Security Pact "was directed mainly against Israel".[17]

Thus, whilst the British appeared to object to the idea principally on account of the Israeli dimension of the question, the United States seemed to have relegated the latter to a secondary place in its considerations of this matter. One could speculate as to how the British might have reacted to an initiative by the Arab League offering to set up a Middle East Defence Organisation linked to the Arab League Collective Security Pact. This intellectual exercise, however, would be beyond the province of this chapter. What could be, and indeed has been, established is that in assessing the pros and cons of the proposal under consideration, both the Foreign Office and the Ministry of Defence, in contrast to the State Department, were primarily, though doubtless not exclusively, motivated by its Israeli ramification.

The British soon realised that the question of Middle East defence could not be divorced from the Arab-Israeli dispute. The existence of that conflict could hardly be discarded in assessing the possibilities of organising the area for its protection against external danger. The discussion on the Arab League Collective Security Pact was but a concrete manifestation of that. Still, at least theoretically, it was possible to argue that the above was an option to be carefully studied, its rejection not necessarily invalidating the opportunities afforded by other alternative schemes. The query that emerged in this context, though, was whether the establishment of a regional defence organisation was at all possible while the Arab-Israeli dispute continued.

At the outset of 1953, Eden appeared to have believed that the setting up of MEDO might actually improve the prospects of Arab-Israeli reconciliation.[18]

Indeed, he maintained, as he told President Eisenhower, that there was no hope of achieving peace between the Arab States and Israel prior to an accord being reached on a defence arrangement in the area.[19]

Nevertheless, already at the end of 1952, the Head of the British Middle East Office, Sir Thomas Rapp, confided in his colleagues back in London that he had reached the conclusion "that there can be no effective defence of the Middle East until this sorry Arab/Israel conflict is finally laid".[20] In response, Christopher Gandy contended that Rapp's assertion meant that "in the end we shall have to come off the fence and sit on the Arab side".[21] By September 1953, Britain's Ambassador in Israel, Sir Francis Evans, had concluded, as he wrote to Eden, that "Arab resistance to peace with Israel gravely affects Western strategic plans for the Middle East".[22] A more emphatic opinion was advanced by the Assistant Under-Secretary, Roger Allen, two months later when he wrote that

> It is virtually impossible to organise any coherent system of defence in the Middle East so long as the Arab-Israel dispute continues.[23]

By the beginning of 1954, the view expressed by Allen seemed to have become the almost official Foreign Office line on the question.[24]

In formulating Britain's defence policy in the Middle East in the early nineteen-fifties, Israel's importance, strategically, militarily, and politically, was carefully assessed, its role or lack of it in a formal regional organisation notwithstanding. The Chiefs of Staff and the Ministry of Defence considered Israel,

on account of its geographic position, as strategically very important.[25] Militarily, the Chiefs of Staff believed that the Israelis were potentially the best army in the region.[26] Indeed, already in December 1948, the Chiefs of Staff Committee had conveyed to the Foreign Office its assessment of the Israeli armed forces as being the strongest in the Middle East.[27] This view, in essence, was widely shared among British diplomats. Geoffrey Baker, for one, contended that "By Middle Eastern standards the Israeli army is a formidable machine".[28] Evans, in Tel Aviv, expressed his "belief that, apart from the British-trained and British-led Arab Legion, the Israeli Army is now by far the most efficient and reliable military force in the area".[29] On the political level, Winston Churchill, the Prime Minister, argued that there was no better army in the Middle East than the Israeli Defence Force.[30] Churchill's statement, as it was often the case with him when dealing with Israel, was not only a corollary of an objective appraisal, but also a reflection of an emotional attitude. For, as Israel's Ambassador in London, Eliahu Elath, relates in his memoirs, Churchill, already in September 1949, referred to Israel's Army, in a conversation with him, "with warm words", expressing his respect for it and stressing his long-held belief that the Jews would turn out to be the best soldiers in the Middle East.[31]

As regards the broader political dimension, Israel, at least by 1952, was deemed by the Assistant Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, Sir James Bowker, "the only stable and efficient state in the Middle East, and the only State genuinely anxious to cooperate with us".[32] Perhaps somewhat in contrast to Bowker, the British Legation in Tel-Aviv appeared to have regarded Israel's political development as being still in a fluid state. Nevertheless, it was optimistic that "If

wisely handled Israel may become a stable, friendly and progressive country". Setting their eyes to the future, the British diplomats serving in Israel suggested that the crucial question as to whether the Jews or the Arabs could best serve British interests in the area ought to be posed and discussed. Their assessment was that history had taught the British that, at moments of crisis, such as during the Second World War, the Arabs, with the single exception of the Jordanians, had rendered no assistance to them. The Jews, on the other hand,

> though they have always shown themselves to be ruthless and determined bargainers who give little away, they have often shown themselves to be faithful and reliable once they have made their agreement and given their trust.

Their conclusion was, therefore, that

> The Jew at his best can be a great and valuable friend, as Dr Weizmann himself has shown so clearly.[33]

This argument would doubtless have been embraced by Churchill who believed that the Israelis, a courageous and democratic people, as he called them, were, in his words, a "'reliable ally'" of Britain in the Middle East.[34]

The assumption that Israel could contribute to regional defence emerged in Britain well before the Conservative Party was returned to power in October 1951. Following the invasion of South Korea by North Korean troops on 25 June, 1950, and the subsequent heightened tension that bedevilled East-West relations, a sense of urgency surfaced in Britain to secure the strategically vital area of the Middle East against a possible Soviet attack. Against this background, General Sir Brian

Robertson, Commander-in-Chief of the British Middle East Land Forces, visited Israel in February 1951 to discuss with Israeli officials, among them the Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion, the role Israel could assume in the defence of the area and what kind of assistance could Britain afford it in this respect.

Following this visit, the then Foreign Secretary, Herbert Morrison, sent a message to Ben-Gurion, in April 1951, in which he spoke of establishing "practical co-operation in the military field" between the two countries.[35] In the wake of the Conservative victory at the 1951 general election, Ben-Gurion delivered a letter to Eden welcoming Morrison's statement. He suggested that, in order for Israel to be able to play effectively its role in the defence of the Middle East, it would be necessary to strengthen Israel's industrial base, to develop its transportation networks - i.e., ports, airports, roads, railway -, to improve the training and equipment of the armed forces and to store food and oil in the country. He proposed, therefore, that British and Israeli representatives should meet to discuss concrete plans to that effect.[36] Eden, who, on returning to the Foreign Office, shared his officials' view that in shaping its defence policy in the Middle East Britain would "require" Israel's "military cooperation"[37], replied to Ben-Gurion only at the end of January 1952.

This delay may have been due to the deliberations that took place in Britain, particularly within the military establishment, as to how to reply to Ben-Gurion's letter. At their meeting on 7 January, 1952, the Chiefs of Staff decided that it ought to be proposed to the Government to send a small exploratory military mission to Israel to study the role Israel might play in the event of war and to

ascertain what its requirements for equipment and training to fulfil that role were.[38] Both Churchill and Eden concurred in the Chiefs of Staff's proposal, thus enabling the Foreign Secretary to respond to Ben-Gurion accordingly.

The military mission arrived in Israel only in October, 1952. The discussions held with Israeli military representatives centred on Ben-Gurion's suggestions contained in his letter to Eden. Ben-Gurion's biographer quotes an unamed aide to the Israeli Prime Minister as claiming that the whole idea was a non-starter since "the Foreign Office was opposed to it to begin with".[39] A careful examination of the evidence available could not entirely corroborate that. The Foreign Office, in many respects, adopted a sympathetic stance as regards political and defence cooperation with Israel, at least during 1951 and 1952. Evidence to that effect can be found in the discussions that were held from the second half of 1951 up until the second half of 1952 among the various interested Departments of the British Government pertaining to the idea of placing orders in Israel for British forces in the Middle East.[40] Whereas the Ministry of Supply, the War office and the Treasury considered such orders as clothing, food and paint, to be either uneconomical or administratively complicated, the Foreign Office, though aware of the problems entailed, was the most enthusiastic advocate of displaying, even to the minimum extent possible, some gesture of support to the Israelis, if only for political reasons. Indeed, even the possibility of provoking Arab anger did not seem to perturb some officials at the Foreign Office. James Wardrop, for instance, stressed that he did not think "that we should defer too much to Arab susceptibilities".[41] And yet, it should be noted, the Foreign Office argued that

> care would have to be taken to ensure that if any orders were placed in Israel neither the goods themselves nor their invoices bore any evidence of their origin.[42]

Nevertheless, in its exchanges with the other Departments, the Foreign Office did not attempt to conceal what it deemed to have been the object of this whole exercise. Conveying the views of the Foreign Office, Bowker made it clear that

> We are anxious to cultivate good relations with the Israelis with whom [...] we are shortly to start military discussions, and the local purchase scheme would be a practical way of demonstrating our good intentions. I very much hope, therefore, that it can be put into effect."[43]

Thus, *prior* to the despatch of the military mission to Israel, the Foreign Office was determined to forge closer relations with the latter precisely in the light of the expected military discussions with the Israelis. Indeed, when in March 1952, while on an official visit to Britain, Israel's Foreign Minister, Moshe Sharett, asked to see Rab Butler, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, concerning a request for a loan, it was the Foreign Office that advised that the meeting should be held, considering that

> We are anxious to be as friendly as we can to the Israelis, *particularly* [my italics] in view of the forthcoming visit of the exploratory military mission to their country.[44]

The placing of orders for the British forces in the Middle East would have encouraged the development in Israel of an industry, be it in textile or steel, which, to begin with, would have required raw materials that the Departments concerned

in Britain, particularly the Ministry of Supply, concluded would be difficult to supply. Beyond that, on economic grounds, there was a preference to purchase in Britain, or alternatively in other parts of Europe, rather than in Israel, such items as the British were not able to manufacture themselves. When the question re-emerged in the wake of the visit to Israel by the military mission, the Ministry of Defence argued that "there is now even less need to place orders outside the United Kingdom" than had been the case a year previously. Indeed, instead of "seeking to place orders overseas we ourselves are now looking for overseas orders."[45] Although not the instigator of the negative response, the Foreign Office played on this occasion a passive role.

Beyond the economic motives precluding what the Foreign Office regarded as "minor proposals"[46] for defence cooperation with Israel, there prevailed other obstacles which prevented Britain from forging closer ties with the Israelis. In a memorandum prepared for the Defence Committee of the Cabinet, the Chiefs of Staff, while recognising Israel's importance in regional defence, nevertheless stressed that

> Overt co-operation with Israel would inevitably arouse strong opposition by the Arab States and, if carried beyond a certain point, would rob us of their co-operation in the defence of the area.

Indeed, the Chiefs of Staff maintained that "Arab goodwill" was "more important than that of Israel". Their conclusion was, therefore, that

> Co-operation with Israel must be subordinated to our plans for the defence of the area as a whole, and must be within the limitations imposed by the need to avoid antagonising the Arabs.

In the light of Israel's willingness to play an active role in the defence of the area, so clearly conveyed to the military mission that visited Israel in October 1952, the Chiefs of Staff desisted from recommending no action. Further negotiations with Israel were contemplated, though prior to these they proposed to hold secret talks with the United States "in order to formulate a common policy towards Israel"[47]. The Defence Committee of the Cabinet approved of this line of action and invited the Foreign Office and the Ministry of Defence to commence discussions with the United States Government.[48]

When the Cabinet returned to the topic again, the Lord President, The Marquess of Salisbury, who was substituting for the indisposed Eden, conveyed the views of the Foreign Office to the effect that it would be wiser to defer the approach to the United States. The fear entertained by the Foreign Office was that if the Arab States should be apprised of Britain's intentions, this could prejudice the negotiations then being held between the British and Egyptian Governments regarding the future of Britain's military base in the Suez Canal. In addition, the goodwill of the Arabs might be lost. Salisbury suggested, therefore, to hold up the proposed discussions with the United States "until", so the conclusions recorded, "further progress had been made with the defence negotiations with Egypt." This line was endorsed by the Cabinet, presumably reinforced by the argument advanced by Butler that the Exchequer wanted to avoid any economic or financial commitment to Israel.[49]

More than four months previously, Eden had already reached the conclusion that "*any* [my italics] negotiations" with Israel on a bilateral defence treaty "would ruin our hopes of securing the co-operation of the Arabs in arrangements for the defence of the Middle East."[50]

Thus, whereas in 1951-1952 the British, and in particular the Foreign Office, appeared to have been keen to enlist Israel's active support in regional defence, from at least the beginning of 1953 the Foreign Office and, to a lesser degree, the Chiefs of Staff, wanted to avoid even the *semblance* of co-operation in the realm of defence with the State of Israel. To ascribe this apparent shift exclusively to the Arab factor would not entirely accord with the evidence available. Since, from at least the beginning of 1953, there emerged at the Foreign Office the realisation that there was no need to either court or persuade Israel to join the Western camp. International reality compelled the Israelis to belong *ipso facto* to the anti-Soviet alliance. This was due, so the argument ran, to the increasingly anti-Zionist policy of the Soviet Government. As Baker put it:

> Israel is losing some of the powerful bargaining advantages: the new Soviet anti-Zionist line makes it no longer necessary for the 'west' to woo Israel actively.[51]

Britain's Ambassador in Beirut, John Barnes, similarly concluded that on account of the hostile stance adopted by the Soviet Union towards Zionism, both at home and abroad, "we can discount the possibility of Israel siding with Russia."[52]

So far as Israel was concerned, the Soviet option, as such, was not even

countenanced in the early nineteen-fifties. The alternative of adopting a neutral policy, though, was examined both by the Foreign Ministry and by Ben-Gurion. The first argued that a neutral country must have such a preponderance of power that neither of the warring sides would deem it advantageous to launch an attack against it; the implication presumably being that Israel did not qualify on that account for that status. In any event, the Foreign Ministry recognised that Israel's existence depended on the communication lines and means of transportation of the West. As a matter of fact, it was acknowledged that Israel had already forfeited neutralism by requesting economic and military aid from the United States. Israel's association with the West was, therefore, determined by objective circumstances as much as by any decision.[53] Ben-Gurion, for his part, rejected neutralism for the following three reasons: First, neither of the two blocks would respect Israel's neutrality if it deemed it an obstacle in pursuit of its objective; secondly, the occupation of Israel by the Soviet Union would signify the end of the State and of Zionism; thirdly, even a temporary occupation by Soviet forces would mean the destruction of the State of Israel.[54]

When the question of defence co-operation was further examined at the beginning of 1954, the Foreign Office, aware of Israel's *inevitable* association with the West, reached a conclusion not dissimilar to the one it had arrived at the previous year. Both on account of the economic expenditure entailed, and due to the expected adverse reaction in the Arab world, it was considered "that no progress can be made towards defence co-operation with Israel in the foreseeable future."[55] The Israelis, who did not need to have recourse to secret sources of information to become aware of this, resolved to adopt a passive attitude. At a meeting held on

11 March, 1954, at the Foreign Ministry, Sharett and his officials decided that Israel should desist from advancing any further proposals relating to regional defence.[56]

To be sure, Eden appeared to have entertained some doubts as to whether Britain's refusal to forge close links in the domain of defence with Israel was an axiom that should not be questioned. He queried the by-now well-established assumption that British-Israeli defence co-operation would provoke Arab anger.

> no doubt Egyptians would be indignant, but how do they behave anyway? and even Iraq?
>
> I doubt whether Trucial Sheikhdoms would be so greatly upset to see us *in alliance with Israel* [my italics] and what can they do anyway?

His conclusion betrayed a basic lack of trust in the Arabs:

> I am weary of the fickle friendship of the Arabs.[57]

A few days subsequent to this Minute, his Principal Private Secretary related in his diary a conversation he had held with the Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick, which may have reflected Eden's state of mind on this issue.

> In the Middle East A.E. [Anthony Eden] is uncertain whether he does not want to throw over the Arabs altogether and to rely on Israel and Turkey. This is the P.M.'s strong choice.[58]

And yet, a week later, Eden presented a memorandum to Cabinet in which he

rejected "any idea of basing our Middle East defence policy wholly or mainly on co-operation with Israel". The disadvantages entailed in such a policy, he explained, were as follows:

> (1) It would not serve the purpose in war of holding the North-East frontier of Iraq; (2) it would alienate the Arab States, from whom we shall continue to want facilities and co-operation; this would be detrimental to our interest in those states, including oil, and would increase the danger of their taking up a neutralist position; (3) it would do little to assist us towards the fulfilment of our commitments in peace; (4) it is very unlikely that Israel forces could be used in the Arab countries even in the face of a Soviet attack.[59]

In a further memorandum he submitted to Cabinet almost two weeks later, Eden emphasised this point, arguing that

> We cannot base ourselves entirely on Israel and it is unfortunately true that any substantial co-operation with her would have a disastrous effect on Anglo-Arab relations, which are paramount from the point of view of strategic facilities and of oil.[60]

To his officials he had said some days previously that "we cannot base ourselves on Israel", since

> If we are to have any position in Middle East our authority must be based on close relations with Jordan and Iraq.[61]

Eden seemed to have shifted the question. Whereas previously the query advanced by British officials was how to *integrate* Israel into Britain's defence policy in the Middle East, now Eden, all of a sudden, began to ask whether Israel ought to *replace* the Arab countries as the *principal* factor in British strategy in the area.

In his above-mentioned Minute of Christmas Day 1953, in which he questioned the premise of British policy in this regard, Eden did not even allude to the notion of Israel *replacing* any other state. Only subsequently, commencing with Shuckburgh's Diary's reference, continuing through his two Memoranda to Cabinet, did he alter the formulation of the question to be centred on the proposition that British policy might be *based* on Israel, rather than on the idea of incorporating Israel as an *additional* element in Britain's regional defence strategy.

Furthermore, a revealing remark advanced by Eden to his officials places an intriguing question mark as to the extent to which the Foreign Secretary had genuinely been contemplating a possible "alliance", as he himself put it, with Israel. Explaining why he was unable to support a policy based on Israel, Eden confided to his officials that

> *I have really gone as far as I am prepared to go in support of P.M.'s appeasement of Israel.*[62] [my italics]

Shuckburgh's Diary itself reminds us, as has already been noted, that the proposition to rely on Israel and on Turkey for regional defence was Churchill's "strong choice". Perhaps, then, Eden was merely endeavouring to accommodate himself to the strongly-held views of Churchill in this respect, his doubts, therefore, reflecting a tendency to reconcile his preferences on this matter to the Prime Minister's predilection. This is, to be sure, a conjecture. He may have been sincere when he questioned British assumptions pertaining to Israel's role. He may have been sincere when he re-asserted them. After all, as his official biographer points out, "Eden's moods were always variable."[63]

However the question was formulated, whatever role was envisaged for Israel, the fear of possible prejudicial repercussions in the Arab world transformed Israel, in the eyes of the British, into a *passive potential* ally, to be employed when circumstances warranted it. For, as the Chiefs of Staff explained, so far as Israel was concerned, "co-operation in peace is impracticable", though the hope was expressed that it should be possible "to enlist her support in global war."[64]

Ben-Gurion himself drew a distinction between Israel's political value as opposed to its military value. Whereas politically the Arab States carried much greater weight, militarily Israel was by far more valuable. Military prowess, Ben-Gurion argued, was tested only in battle. Therefore, so long as there was no war or any imminent threat of war, the political, rather than the military, consideration would prevail. However, should there be a real danger of war, the Free World would then resort to Israel for co-operation.[65] A conclusion which, though differently expressed, was similar to the one deployed by the Chiefs of Staff.

The difference between asking whether Israel should substitute other states in the area or become an additional component in Britain's defence policy in the Middle East is of particular importance. For, the assessment being relayed to the Foreign Office throughout this period reflected a less absolute Arab attitude in this regard than would appear from the fears entertained by British officials.

Already in January 1951, as the British were contemplating a separate British-Israeli alliance to complement their treaties with Arab countries, the Egyptians

made clear that they would not object to such an arrangement.[66] Indeed, a year later, the Foreign Office considered that

> There are no grounds for believing that the Egyptians would resent our coming to some arrangement to station forces in Israel. The Egyptians only seem likely to react strongly if we were publicly to abandon military co-operation with the Arab States in favour of co-operation with Israel.[67]

Furthermore, as the British Government was endeavouring to set up a regional defence organisation, the Arab States made clear that they would not object to Israel's association so long as it was established on a *separate* basis from that of the Arab countries.[68] Two years subsequently, the Head of the Arab Legion in Jordan, General Glubb, indicated that the Arabs would not necessarily be outraged by the British enjoying base facilities in Israel.[69]

An assessment in a similar vein was conveyed to the Foreign Office when the question of Israel's possible association with the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (*N.A.T.O*) arose. The idea seemed to have been originally conceived by the Israelis, or at least some of them. Already in early 1951, a number of high-ranking officers in the Israeli Defence Forces argued that forging close military links with the British could open the way to membership of *NATO*, an eventuality which they relished.[70] Israel's Ambassador both to the United States and United Nations, Abba Eban, contended that Middle Eastern countries that "belonged" to the Mediterranean (Israel, Egypt and Lebanon), whose cultural outlook was founded on the Jewish-Helenistic-European tradition, were as much part of Europe, geographically and culturally, as Turkey or Greece. Although Israelis had a duty

to be knowledgeable of the Arab world, since, after all, similarly to Latin American countries in relation to the United States, the Arab States were Israel's neighbours, Eban did not believe that Israel should actually assimilate into it. His conclusion was, therefore, that *NATO*, rather than any local regional organisation, ought to be regarded as a pact which Israelis should aspire to be associated with.[71] Ben Gurion, who by 1953 appeared to have become exasperated with what he perceived to have been a hostile British policy,[72] stressed that Israel had no interest in a regional defence organisation as such. Rather, a bilateral arrangement with the United States or with NATO as a whole was what he was now seeking.[73]

Britain's Minister at Tel Aviv, Anthony Moore, suggested, as a means of assuaging Israel's growing sense of insecurity in the latter part of 1954, to associate Israel with one of the Western regional groupings - particularly

> if, as seems likely, we are forced to develop a Middle Eastern defence system based on the Arab world without Israel.[74]

The Head of the Levant Department of the Foreign Office, Paul Falla, was positively disposed towards the idea. Admittedly, his reasoning had scant bearing on the possible military advantage that could accrue from it. He simply deemed it an appropriate means by which the West could strengthen Sharett's perceived moderate policies.

> What Israel needs, if M. Sharett is to have something to show for his policy of moderation, is rather some additional reassurance in the political field, and this might perhaps be sought by associating Israel directly or indirectly with NATO or the Balkan Pact [involving Yugoslavia, Turkey and Greece.][75]

Falla's favourable attitude notwithstanding, his superiors declined to endorse Moore's recommendation.[76]

Britain's Minister in Amman, John Richmond, deprecated the proposal as it would tend, so he maintained, to distance Israel from the Middle East and thus render its eventual incorporation in it much more difficult. Nevertheless, he acknowledged that Israel's association with a western regional pact would not adversely affect British-Jordanian relations.[77]

In the light of the above, the distinction between Israel being actively integrated in Western defence strategy in peace-time and Israel supplanting the Arab States and becoming the principal factor in Britain's defence policy in the Middle East could hardly be blurred. For, the Arabs appeared to have feared the prospect of the latter and not to have been too preoccupied with the realisation of the former. Even the notion of bases in Israel being at the disposal of the British might not have elicited too unfavourable a response from the Arabs, according to General Glubb. Indeed, if Richmond's assessment was correct, the association of Israel with NATO, which would doubtless have entailed a deeper political and military link with Britain and the United States, would not have adversely affected Britain's interests in Jordan. At least up until 1952 the Egyptians would not have been opposed to a separate British-Israeli alliance and to British bases in Israel. And when attempts were being made to establish MEDO, the Arabs expressed no objection to the forging of separate defence arrangements between the Western Powers and Israel. Other considerations apart, fear might perhaps have rendered

British judgement in this regard less flexible than what reality may have warranted.

Would Israel's membership of the Commonwealth have made it easier for the British to establish a close relationship with Israel in the domain of regional defence? Ben-Gurion first raised the idea of establishing a relationship with Britain on a Commonwealth footing, during General Robertson's visit to Israel in February 1951. Arguing that Israel had more in common with Britain than, for instance, Ceylon did, Ben-Gurion contended that the British and the Israelis could establish a relationship similar to that existing between Britain and New Zealand.[78] Two years later he returned to this theme, stressing that co-operation between Britain and Israel was possible only on the basis of equality and reciprocity as that prevailing between the British and the other member states of the Commonwealth.[79]

Britain's attitude to the idea was not excessively receptive. Following his return to the Foreign Office, Eden confided in Churchill that "it is hard to see how we could place our relations with Israel on a Commonwealth footing".[80] When the question of Israel's membership of the Commonwealth was discussed at the end of 1954, the Foreign Office made clear that

> Apart from the general political differences to which such a proposal would give rise at the present time, it is relevant that the majority of the present population of Israel has never owed allegiance to the British Crown.[81]

Other obstacles notwithstanding, the Commonwealth Relations Office deemed the proposal impractical since

> the admission of a foreign country as a Member of the Commonwealth, which would be an historical decision of the greatest significance, would not be a matter between Israel and the United Kingdom alone, but would be one for consultation between all the existing Members.

> Unless the tension between Israel and the Arab States had been resolved, it is pretty clear that the proposal would encounter emotional objection in at least one Member of the Commonwealth.[82]

Whether Israel's membership of the Commonwealth would have rendered it any less difficult for the British Government to co-operate with Israel must remain an unanswered question. For, the suggestion itself of associating Israel with the Commonwealth did not elicit the kind of positive response that might have made the above question relevant to begin with. Indeed, as the position adopted by the Commonwealth Relations Office made it clear, the existence of the Arab-Israel dispute, which so coloured British decision-making as regards regional defence, seemed to have influenced to a great extent the negative attitude taken concerning Israel's membership of the Commonwealth. In order to have facilitated Israeli participation in Middle East defence, membership of the Commonwealth would have required the absence of the Arab-Israel dispute, which, in turn, might have made Israel's active role in regional defence easier anyhow!

One of the principal means by which the British - and the United States and France - hoped to enhance the strength of the countries in the Middle East to defend the area against a possible Soviet attack was by supplying them with arms. The sale of weapons, to be sure, was not dependent on the formation of a regional defence organisation. It occurred *while* the Western Powers were ascertaining the possibility of establishing it. The two took place in parallel.

The sale of arms by Britain, the United States and France was based upon the Tripartite Declaration, signed by the three Governments on 25 May, 1950. This stipulated that requests for weapons by the Arab States and Israel would be

considered according to the principles of the

> need to maintain a certain level of armed forces for the purposes of assuring their internal security and their legitimate self-defence and *to permit them to play part in the defence of the area as a whole* [my italics][83]

From 1952 onwards, the supply of arms to the area was co-ordinated by the three powers through the Near East Arms Co-ordinating Committee (N.E.A.C.C.). The idea to set up such a tripartite agency was originally put forward by the State Department.[84] Representatives of the three countries concerned were to meet at an agreed location (as it happened, Washington was first selected as such) to discuss requests for arms sales presented by any of the three. According to the Charter of Incorporation of the N.E.A.C.C.,

> Its function will be to advise and to recommend; it will have no authority *to prevent* [my italics] any country from supplying arms to the Middle East. In the event serious disputes should arise, these will be referred to Governments for diplomatic handling.[85]

The existence of the N.E.A.C.C. was to remain secret, though the Israelis appeared to have known about it.[86]

A minute prepared for the Ministry of Defence made clear that the N.E.A.C.C. was set up by Britain, the United States and France

> *In pursuance of their policy of strengthening the Middle East States against possible Soviet Aggression* [my italics] and at the same time preventing an arms race between the Arab States and Israel

there was, though, a further narrower British interest in establishing this co-ordinating agency.

> One reason why we had wanted a committee of this sort was that we hoped that it would help us to keep United States exports to the area from swamping our own, with consequent detriment to our prestige.[87]

Both the Foreign Office and the Military in Britain appeared to have considered the supply of arms to the Middle East primarily, though certainly not exclusively, a means by which to enhance regional defence against the Soviet Union. This motivation tended to be mentioned first among other reasons prompting British sales of weapons to the area. For instance, a paper prepared by the Levant Department at the end of 1953 articulated Britain's policy in this regard thus:

> We wish to be able to supply arms freely to all States in the area in order to increase their power to defend themselves (and us) against Soviet aggression, to reap the political advantage which follows from meeting the requests of individual States, and to develop our export markets for armaments.[88]

Similarly, the Ministry of Defence agreed

> that the allocation of arms to a country should be in accordance with our estimate of that country's probable attitude in the event of war and its capacity to put any arms supplied to use in the common cause.

Nevertheless, it was stressed that

> We must of course *also* [my italics] take into account economic priorities, and political priorities too.[89]

The Israeli Foreign Ministry, recognising that the question of Middle East defence was paramount among decision-makers in the West, resolved in October 1952 to formulate Israel's requests for arms on the basis of Israel's willingness to participate in regional defence.[90] Israel feared that arms supplied to Arab countries to further Western regional interests in the realm of defence would be employed for ends not originally intended by the suppliers. Ben-Gurion, for one, was apprehensive lest military aid conveyed to the Arabs should be used against Israel, even in circumstances, as he put it, perhaps in a somewhat blurred manner, where a world war did not break out or prior to its eruption.[91] Gershon Avner, Counsellor at the Israeli Embassy in London, expressed his government's view when he wrote to the Liberal Leader, Clement Davies, that

> It is appreciated that these arms are given so that the Arab States should take part in Western arrangements for the defence of the region as a whole. But since we know that Arab statesmen have at the back of their mind preparations for a second round against Israel, we are faced with a situation that arms are pouring into all the neighbouring Arab States, whilst they are not prepared to make peace with us.[92]

Conveying Israel's stance in this regard to Western public opinion, Moshe Sharett questioned the premise underlining the policy of arms sales adopted by Britain, the United States and France. He was doubtful as to whether the Arab States could be "relied upon to play an effective part in any war on the side of the Western powers or, for that matter, on the side of anyone." He asserted that the Arab States had "a time-honoured tradition of sitting on the fence". Furthermore, the Arab States possessed "no democratic idealism whatsoever". Therefore, insofar as the aim of defending democracy was concerned, Sharett believed that "the Western powers should be warned against squandering their resources on the arming of Arab states".[93]

Israeli apprehensions were not invariably dismissed by the British. Within the Military, for instance, there was a recognition that

> The Arabs are very anxious to get arms, *really* [my italics] in order to attain superiority over the Israelis.

Indeed, it was further acknowledged that

> if we build up the strength of the Arab Countries [...] we shall be offering them direct incitement to fall upon Israel.[94]

The Head of the Levant Department, Paul Falla, seemed to have displayed some understanding towards Israeli scepticism regarding private assurances received by the British from Arab states supplied with weapons.

> The Israelis *not unreasonably* [my italics] consider that the Arab assurances are belied by their repeated public statements of hostility towards Israel.[95]

Indirectly reinforcing Sharett's above-mentioned views, the British diplomats serving in Tel-Aviv maintained that

> Military aid given to Israel is likely to be much more efficiently and effectively used than in the neighbouring countries, and quite a small quantity of arms, if they were of high quality, would probably go a long way.[96]

Similarly, though rather more bluntly, John Tripp, of the Levant Department, confided in Mordechai Gazit, First Secretary at the Israeli Embassy in London, that supplying the Arab States with weapons was futile as their armies were deemed to be hopeless.[97]

Arms were not only supplied to help the recipient country better to defend the area in the event of a global war but also to serve as an inducement designed to entice the Arab States into cooperating with Britain - and the West - in regional defence. As Christopher Gandy acknowledged,

> If Arab countries are to join the Middle East Defence organisation they will expect more arms from the West.

He therefore realised that, in this respect,

> the supply of arms is one of the political weapons at our disposal in dealing with the Arab States.[98]

Thus, for instance, when the United States and France raised objections to Britain's proposed sale of six meteor night fighter aircrafts to Syria, at the end of 1953, the Air Ministry in London argued, among other things, that

> Syria is in an important strategic position [...] we shall ultimately require bases and facilities there. If we imperil good relations with the Syrian Government by refusing them the aircraft they have asked for we shall be reducing our chances of obtaining the cooperation which the Allies would need if a Middle East defence organisation is set up.[99]

A particularly compelling illustration considering that the Air Staff was of the opinion, as a Foreign Office minute recorded,

> that there was no prospect that the Syrian Air Force would become a useful or effective element in Western defence.[100]

The sale of these Meteors, then, were not intended to assist Syria to take part *directly* in the defence of the area. Rather, its object was to *induce* Syria to allow Britain and its Western allies to make use of facilities in Syrian territory in the event of a Soviet attack.

Although wider regional interests, as well as obvious economic motives, drove British arms sale policy in the Middle East, the existence of the Arab-Israeli dispute constituted an important yardstick by which the supply of weapons to countries in the area was assessed. Divergence of assessments pertaining to the correct ratio to be applied as between Israel and the Arab States emerged not only among the Tripartite Powers concerned, i.e., Britain, the United States and France, but also between the different Ministries involved in Britain itself. For instance, the War Office tended to strike a balance between Israel and each individual Arab state, and in particular Jordan, when examining requests for arms from the Israelis.[101] Within the Foreign Office this formula found scant support. A. Leavett, for one, believed that a war involving Jordan and Israel would be likely to draw in other Arab states.[102] Even though he agreed that the Arab States should be regarded as a "single unit" in assessing arms sales, James Brewis contended that allowance had to be made for the following factors: in the event of war "the Arab command will be divided"; in terms of sheer distance, some Arab armies would require some time until they arrived at the scene of battle, whereas the Israeli forces could mobilise, so far as distances were concerned, with particular speed; the Arabs had, therefore, a crucial disadvantage from which they would suffer in case of war, i.e., more complex, in comparison to the Israelis, lines of communication. The correct formula was, in Brewis opinion, neither Israel versus Jordan or any other individual Arab state, nor, for that matter, Israel versus the Arab States as a whole, but rather

something in between.[103] The Head of the Levant Department agreed with Brewis.[104] The Ministry of Defence, for its part, did not subscribe to the view that a specific formula could be applied to the supply of weapons to the area and therefore advocated deciding each particular request on its merits.[105] A position which Powell-Jones, responsible for defence and arms sales at the Levant Department of the Foreign Office, agreed with.[106]

The above notwithstanding, there was apparently a unanimous appraisal of Israel's qualitative edge over the Arab States which rendered any consideration on the sale of arms not liable to a quantitative, arithmetic equality. Thus, the War Office, for example, considered that, owing to Israel's unity of command and general efficiency, one tank in the hands of the Israelis was equal to two tanks of a similar kind in the hands of the Arabs.[107] When, in November 1954, the Air Ministry was asked to assess the prevailing balance in aircraft as between Israel and the Arab States, it acknowledged that "the Israelis are at the moment much inferior to the combined Arab powers". Whereas Israel was said to possess eleven "effective" Meteor fighters, with seven more on the way, the combined Arab Air Forces had in contrast fifty-five. Nevertheless, the Air Ministry pointed out that the Arabs "are an ill co-ordinated coalition"; beyond that, they were considered to be "technically much less efficient than the Israelis"; and, lastly, they were thought to be "unlikely to fight with so much determination"; which led the Air Staff to consider that, despite the clear numerical imbalance, "the Israelis are now much more than a match for the Arabs".[108] Indeed, when a Cabinet Committee discussed this question, the point was advanced, as the Minutes recorded, that

> Numerical strength was not [...] a true guide to the balance of strength between Israel and the Arab States. Israel had the advantage of a central geographical position. And the efficiency and experience of her air force greatly exceeded that of any of the Arab States.[109]

Furthermore, the British appeared to believe that the higher moral prevailing in the Israeli Defence Forces, as compared with its Arab counterparts, must be taken into account when considering whether to accede to requests tabled by the Israelis.[110]

The United States seemed to have adopted, most notably in the wake of Dwight Eisenhower's assumption of the Presidency, a particularly lukewarm attitude towards Israel in respect of arms supplies. On the eve of his fact-finding trip to the Middle East in May 1953, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, was presented with a State Department paper which asserted that

> Israel's military establishment is believed to be greater than that of any present combination of Arab States.[111]

Almost a year previously, the highest-ranking diplomat dealing with Middle Eastern affairs at the State Department, Henry Byroade, had already stated that

> I am sure in my own mind that we should not build up the Israeli forces. We may have gone too far already.[112]

This stance adopted by the United States was to lead to a divergence of views with Britain as regards the supply of weapons to Israel. Thus, when Israel presented a list of various types of different weapons, in the first half of 1953, which it wished to purchase, the United States expressed its opposition to meeting virtually any of the items requested. The British, although desirous of scaling down substantially the Israeli list, differed from the United States' position, which, as Baker put it, "goes to the other extreme", arguing that it

> Would have a grave effect on Israel's relations with the West and, by forcing her to seek arms elsewhere, would defeat its own ends.[113]

Similarly, a year later the United States conveyed its refusal to condone the sale of any tanks to Israel, considering that as regards tanks, as indeed in the realm of general combat effectiveness, Israel was already capable of defeating any coalition of Arab states. Although the British did not differ from such an assessment, they strongly believed, in the words of Powell-Jones, that

> The almost complete denial of arms to Israel proposed by the United States would have a grave effect on relations between Israel and the Western Powers and would be liable to strain her confidence in them. It would be likely to force the Israelis into other, probably undesirable markets, and would run counter to the policy [...] of keeping a balance in our deliveries as between Israel and the Arab States.[114]

In declining to follow the line espoused by the United States, the British seemed to have been motivated, apart from their preoccupation with maintaining a sense of balance in arms supplies, both by a wider political reason and by a commercial argument. The British may not have thought it possible to incorporate Israel actively into their defence strategy for the region, but they nevertheless wished to preserve a friendly, pro-Western Israel. They may have concluded that Israel would in any event cooperate with the West should the need arise. But they apparently preferred a *willing*, rather than a *reluctant*, pro-Western Israel. Therefore, so they seemed to believe, refusing Israeli requests absolutely could only jeopardize an already fragile relationship in the domain of defence between Britain - and the West - and the State of Israel. This, to be sure, was considered unnecessary even in the light of the prevailing military balance between the Arab

States and Israel. There existed in addition an obvious commercial incentive not to allow, almost by default, the market of arms to be transferred to other countries. For instance, whilst the United States objected to the sale of British Meteor Jet aircraft to Israel, at the end of 1953 - beginning of 1954, reports were arriving in the Foreign Office that the Israelis were about to purchase Swedish Saab 29 Jet Fighters. Anthony Moore, in Tel-Aviv, told officials in London that

> The Israelis are, I understand, hesitating between the technical advantages of sticking to British aircraft and the political attraction of an alternative 'neutral' source of supply.[115]

The risk of losing the market in jets, insofar as Israel was concerned, appeared to be thus a real one.

A year earlier, in a debate in the House of Commons, Selwyn Lloyd endeavoured to justify a proposed sale of aircraft to the region by stressing, among other things, that

> it is extremely important that we should get into these markets if we are to earn our living in the World. From the point of view of a worth-while export, it is very much to the economic advantage of this country to succeed in getting into these markets.[116]

Among the various military equipment requested by Israel and the Arab States in the early nineteen-fifties, the discussions over two particular items, the sale of jet fighters and of tanks, prompted the direct intervention of Churchill and, much more frequently, of Eden. Churchill's input was almost exclusively confined to the question of the supply of jet aircraft to the Middle East in 1952. His intervention was, almost invariably, a powerfully emotional plea on behalf of Israel.

On 17 September, 1952, the Egyptian Government requested the British Government to release sixty-five aircraft which had been ordered already in 1950. The supply of the aircraft in question had been interrupted in 1950 owing to the increased needs of the Western defence forces. The embargo was kept in place on account of the deteriorating relations between Britain and Egypt. Now, following the military coup of July 1952, Britain's Ambassador in Egypt, Sir Ralph Stevenson, considered that the opportunity presented itself to open a new chapter in British-Egyptian relations. He therefore argued that

> to go some way now towards meeting their requests for jet aircraft might have a profound and lasting influence on our future dealings with the regime.[117]

In response, Eden maintained that both Britain and the United States should endeavour to secure some *quid pro quo* from Egypt. He wanted to assuage Israeli fears and to mitigate the possible adverse reaction of British public opinion to the suggested sale to Egypt. He therefore proposed that the Egyptians should consent to terminate the restrictions imposed upon Israeli-bound cargoes through the Suez Canal. Alternatively, he mentioned the idea of a statement issued by the Egyptian leader to the effect that his country intended to sign a peace agreement with Israel. Eden nevertheless made clear that "it is not my present intention to make the offer (if it is made) conditional upon an Egyptian undertaking."[118] Stevenson warned that any such attempt as suggested by Eden would, in his words, "simply throw away any advantage which this gesture would otherwise have given us."[119]

Like Stevenson, the State Department believed that a *quid pro quo* on the

lines proposed by Eden would offset the advantage entailed in the offer to release a number of jet aircraft to Egypt. Indeed, the argument deployed by the State Department in this regard was that it hoped that the new relationship the United States was trying to establish with Egypt would eventually be conducive to a more favourable Egyptian attitude concerning peace with Israel.[120]

This ignited Churchill's anger. "I am dead against giving the jets to Egypt now and probably indefinitely", he wrote to Eden. Dwelling on recent historical illustrations to emphasise his point, he went on to remind his Foreign Secretary that

> Ernest Bevin, being temperamentally anti-Semitic, made the first mistake of backing Egypt against Israel. You will I am sure remember the fight between the Israelite aeroplanes and the Egyptians plus a British squadron which Bevin had thrown in on their side, and how two British pilots were killed. Many people were shocked and astonished at this. They became still more puzzled when it was shown that the Israelite squadron contained three pilots who had fought for us in the battle of Britain.

He then compared Egypt, where he saw "a military dictator of about the feeblest nation alive", and Israel, which had had "a wonderful record in the last few years". He elaborated on the latter thus:

> They [the Israelis] are conquering the Desert to which the once fertile Palestine has been reduced. They have received and are maintaining several hundred thousand refugees from their tortured race in Europe. They beat the well-armed Egyptian invaders at heavy odds with little difficulty.

He concluded his despatch, inviting Eden to subscribe to his own condemnation of Bevin and the State Department.

> I hope indeed and believe that we both equally condemn the Bevinite anti-Semitic policy, and I am sure that in the United States, outside this at present headless and frequently brainless State Department, all the strongest political forces in America would share our view.[121]

Meanwhile, though, the decision had been reached to release five Meteors, out of fifteen offered to Egypt, fourteen Meteors to Israel and Syria each, as well as fourteen Vampire jet aircraft to Iraq and Lebanon.[122] In response, Churchill stressed to Eden that

> *To me the greatest issue in this part of the world is not deserting Israel* [my italics]

He went on to protest at the fact that

> She [Israel] is only getting a quarter of the jets which it is proposed to give to various Arab States apart from the five promised to Egypt.[123]

Three weeks subsequently Churchill argued that

> Considering all these 57 are potentially against Israel with only 14 this seems to me a far reaching and one-sided decision.[124]

His conclusion was that

> Israel should have as many as the whole lot put together. She may not however be able to pay for them. If it is not possible to lay such a principle down immediately, the actual deliveries could be given priority in practice which achieves the purpose, namely equality between the two sides who are still at war, or not at peace.[125]

The Foreign Office disagreed. So far as the second point mentioned by

Churchill was concerned, it believed that it was "too late" to attempt such course of action. Concerning the first point, the Foreign Office argued quite plainly that "it is politically impossible" and, so far as Israel was concerned, financially unattainable to try and impose an equality in numbers of aircraft to Israel and the Arab states concerned put together. The latter argument, to be sure, appeared to have reflected not so much a preoccupation with Israel's economic position as with the *political* implications entailed insofar as Britain's interests in the Arab world were concerned. For, although Israel was deemed unable to purchase as many aircraft as the Arab states in question as a whole, the fear entertained at the Foreign Office was that

> the rate at which jets were obtained by the Arab States would be dictated by the rate of Israel's purchases.

The corollary of this would be that for every four jet aircraft supplied to Israel each Arab state would receive only one. This, it was stressed, would

> destroy the *political* [my italics] usefulness of our decision to supply jets to Middle Eastern countries.[126]

It should be noted that the arguments deployed by the Foreign Office to dissuade Churchill from his suggested proposals contained no reference whatsoever to Israel's perceived qualitative superiority over the Arab States; a line of reasoning widely shared by British officials and yet conspicuously absent in this instance when, as might have been expected, the Foreign Office could have made use of it to justify the disparity in numbers of jet aircraft sold to Israel and Arab states. Perhaps this was but a further manifestation that Britain's arms sales policy was primarily motivated by the *political* benefits that could accrue from it, particularly

in the context of British defence interests in the region; other considerations, however sincerely propounded, being secondary in importance.

Although Churchill did not press this matter further, at least not in the same forceful, explicit vein, his intervention demonstrated yet again that, as regards Israel, his emotions dictated policy preferences in a way which transcended pragmatic calculations. He articulated his appraisal of the question under consideration with a blend of rational argumentation and emotional castigation. His letters to Eden, were more than simple expressions of opinion; rather they often seemed to be admonitions in anticipation of sinful acts about to be committed. Churchill conveyed his sentimental attachment to the Zionist cause unashamedly, the case of the jet aircraft affording yet a further opportunity to do so. Indeed, he appeared to have regarded himself in the guise of the guardian of the Israeli cause within the British Government, its sole protector among potentially apathetic officials.

Throughout this period, Eden also displayed concern lest British arms sales to the region should place Israel in an inferior position vis-a-vis the Arab States. Indeed, although he could not agree with Churchill as to the suggestion of achieving precise numerical parity between Israel and the Arab states to which jets had been offered, Eden nevertheless directed that Israel should be compensated by a tentative offer of further supplies.[127]

At the end of 1953, the British approved the release of six Meteor night fighters and six Meteor day fighters to Syria and seven Meteor day fighters and twenty Mosquitos to Israel. Both France and the United States objected to the proposed sale, expressing particular reservations to the Syrian part of it.

Considering the importance attached to the British connection with the Syrian air force, and to retaining Syrian cooperation for Middle East defence, the Foreign Office suggested a compromise formula: inform Syria that its request for six night fighters will be met; the remaining jets to Syria and the entire offer to Israel would remain "subject to discussion"; in this way, French and United States' objections would be partially satisfied while Britain's interests in Syria would not be prejudiced.[128] However, Eden was utterly opposed to this proposal, and he rebuked his officials in no uncertain terms.

> Dept know perfectly well that we must keep balance [...] therefore they should not submit proposal for six night fighters for Syria and zero for Israel.[129]

In deference to Eden's wishes, the decision was subsequently reached that Israel should be supplied, in parallel with the Syrian offer, with seven Meteor day fighters. Although it decided to drop its objections to the sale of six night fighters to Syria, the United States Government was unwilling to agree to the sale of seven Meteor day fighters to Israel. Nevertheless, the Foreign Office, fully cognisant of Eden's resolute stance on this issue, proposed to go ahead with the intended sale to both Syria and Israel.[130]

Eden remained particularly worried at what he perceived to have been the danger of a growing imbalance in jet aircraft between Israel and the Arab States. Thus, when discussions were held on a proposal to supply Egypt with twenty Meteors and twenty two Vampires, Eden instructed that the Egyptians should be offered either of the two, but not both. He was worried that the Foreign Office was lending support to the sale of too many aircrafts to the Arab States in relation to what Israel could be assured of being offered.[131] Indeed, he further instructed

his officials to be most careful to maintain the balance between Israel and the Arab States in the domain of aircraft,[132] as the prevailing balance was, according to Eden, particularly unfavourable to Israel.

> It is clear that Arab states are already overwhelmingly stronger than Israel in Jets.[133]

Unlike Churchill, Eden did not appear to have been driven by a pro-Zionist emotional instinct in seeking to preserve a balance in jet aircraft between Israel and the Arab States. He wanted, as he confided in his officials, to avoid an arms sale: "I am not prepared", he stressed to them, "to start an arms sale [underlined by Eden]"[134]. Beyond his possibly sincere wish to avoid an arms race, Eden seemed also to have ascribed to such a stance a political importance which he commented upon in a conversation with the Minister of Supply.[135] Indeed, Eden should have been fully aware of the fact that a great many Members of Parliament were most sceptical, if not wholly hostile, to the sale of arms to Arab states, particularly if these were not accompanied by similar supplies to Israel.[136]

Eden's lack of sentimental attachment to Israel's case as regards arms supplies was clearly demonstrated in the discussions that were held on the sale of Centurion tanks to Israel. In 1953 Israel requested twenty Centurion tanks from Britain. Although the release of ten was approved by Ministers, the supply did not materialise on account of United States objections and the advice tendered by the British Ambassador in Amman, warning of the adverse effect that this sale would have upon Britain's relations with Jordan. Since then, though, Israel renewed on several occasions its request for Centurions. Finally, on 27 October, 1954, the Defence Committee of the Cabinet approved the release of ten Centurions to Israel

to compensate for the proposed supply of sixteen Centurions to Egypt. Eden maintained, however, that the number of Centurions suggested for Israel was not sufficient. He contended that Israel should receive twelve and thus render the Egyptian and Israeli offers more equitable than originally proposed.[137] The *political* motivation behind his decision may be gauged from a Foreign Office minute which conveyed his views thus:

> The Secretary of State felt that only 10 for Israel would not maintain the balance which H.M.G. *have publicly stated that they will try to do* [my italics][138]

The absence of an emotional dimension in Eden's stance could paradoxically be found out in the strong line he took against Sir J. Sterndale Bennett, the Head of the British Middle East Office, who maintained that Israel should not be supplied with any of the Centurions proposed.

> This man is always passionately anti-Israel. *He makes me sympathetic to them!* [my italics][139]

It could safely be inferred from the above that Eden was not sympathetic to the Israelis. In advocating a more balanced supply of weapons Eden was motivated by a desire to avoid an arms race and the political consequences that such an eventuality might entail. He was also worried by the political repercussions that might emerge within Britain itself from a perceived unfavourable arms sale policy towards Israel.

An important consideration determining Britain's attitude to the sale of arms

by any of the Tripartite Powers to Israel was the possible use of the weapon concerned against British forces in circumstances in which Britain should find itself at war with Israel in pursuance of its treaty obligations to Jordan. So long as the item to be supplied was not considered to be qualitatively equal, let alone superior, to the arms in possession of British forces in the Middle East, Britain's officials were not unduly preoccupied. If the weapon to be offered was considered to pose a potential threat to Britain's qualitative edge over Israel, British approval of such a deal would then become less likely.

Thus, when France notified Britain and the United States in July 1954 of its intention to sell Mystère II aircraft to Israel, the British objected, among other reasons, an account of the lack of a similar type of aircraft by the R.A.F. in the Middle East. And, as the Assistant Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, Evelyn Shuckburgh, explained:

> when our troops have left the Canal Zone [as stipulated by the Anglo-Egyptian Agreement] our action will be the chief means we possess of carrying out our obligations to defend Jordan against an Israeli attack. If the Israelis have these very powerful fighters our task will be more difficult.[140]

The task would have been more difficult as the R.A.F. in the Middle East were armed with Venoms, which, as Falla indicated, were "a fundamentally earlier type". Therefore,

> in order to carry out their responsibilities in the Middle East H.M.G. would then have to consider re-arming the R.A.F. to the detriment of other more important commitments elsewhere."[141]

British representations were to no avail. France proceeded to sign a contract with Israel in which it undertook to supply twelve Mystères, with a further fifteen likely to follow.[142]

The role accorded to Israel in Britain's defence strategy in the Middle East may be subdivided into two periods: 1951-1952 and 1953-1954. In the former, British officials endeavoured to find a way to integrate Israel as an *additional, active* ally in regional defence. In the latter, Israel was transformed in their policy calculations into a *passive* ally, whose assistance was taken for granted as the increasingly hostile attitude towards Zionism on the part of the Soviet Union rendered the Soviet option unimaginable so far as Israel was concerned. By the end of 1953, the question emerged, in contrast to what had been discussed in 1951-1952, whether Israel should not *replace* the Arab States as Britain's *principal* military ally in the area. Fearing adverse consequences in the Arab world, the British concluded that this was not a viable option. The perception that prevailed in Britain concerning the prejudicial reactions likely to emerge in the Arab States rendered, in the eyes of the British, any defence relations with Israel totally undesirable. The expectation of Arab anger in this regard, though, may have been founded on a somewhat distorted assessment as information relayed to the Foreign Office from 1951 onwards appeared to indicate that what the Arabs may have been apprehensive about was not a British-Israeli link in the realm of defence *per se*, but rather, as a result of such a link, being excluded themselves on that account. There were, to be sure, economic and administrative obstacles which, according to the British, did not facilitate the forging of a defence arrangement with Israel to begin with.

Nevertheless, this conclusion did not result in Israel being equally ostracised in the domain of arms supplies. Although excluded from Britain's defence policy, Israel, through Churchill's deep personal commitment and Eden's political calculations, was able to enjoy a more balanced supply of weapons than would have been the case had it been left in the exclusive hands of the officials in the Foreign Office or War Office, let alone in those of the United States.

The negative stance that the Eisenhower Administration adopted regarding arms supplies to Israel may have been, beyond the corollary of a detached assessment as to Israel's qualitative edge over the Arab States, a reflection of the more even-handed policy it endeavoured to pursue in the region as compared to the seemingly pro-Israel policy of the previous Democratic Administration. This new policy, which emerged in the wake of Dulles' visit to the Middle East, in May 1953, entailed a conscious attempt at distancing the United States somewhat from Israel and taking a more balanced posture vis-a-vis the Arab States and Israel.[142] The refusal by the United States to sanction virtually any item to Israel found scant support in the Foreign Office which feared that an ostracised Israel might seek its required weapons from other, less desirable sources. Furthermore, the principal - though doubtless not the only - aim of Britain's arms sales policy to the region was to help countries in the area to defend themselves against a possible Soviet attack, and/or to induce them to permit Britain to utilise facilities in their territories in the eventuality of such an attack. The offer of weapons was thus intended as a means by which the recipient country could better defend itself and/or as a means by which a favourable response could be received from it in case of need. Although Israel was excluded, as an active actor, from Britain's defence strategy, and although

its positive disposition to the West was - certainly from 1953 onwards - almost taken for granted, its *willing* association with the West was apparently considered to be equally necessary. Commercial and political reasons apart, the sale of arms to Israel was therefore not only aimed at assisting it to defend itself should a Soviet military onslaught occur, but also, it would seem, at maintaining it in the Western camp out of its own volition. In any event, the assessment of the United States concerning the Arab-Israeli ratio in arms was not endorsed by Eden who argued that Israel had been placed in a disadvantageous position, particularly in regard to aircrafts. Indeed, his frequent and resolute interventions assured Israel a supply of weapons which, though not quantitatively equal to what Churchill would have liked, would have been most unlikely had he followed the line of the United States.

FOOTNOTES

1. FO371 91200, Eastern Department Memorandum on Middle East Policy, 29 October, 1951. This Memorandum was specially prepared for the newly appointed Foreign Secretary. The State Department in Washington, while stressing that "the defense of the Middle East is primarily a UK responsibility", similarly assessed that "capabilities available to the British are wholly inadequate to defend the Middle East" FRUS, 9, Memorandum prepared by the Policy Planning Staff, 21 May, 1952, p.233.

2. FO 371 98255, E 1056/43, Christopher Gandy, FO Memorandum, CO-ORDINATION OF BRITISH POLICY IN THE MIDDLE EAST WITH THAT OF OTHER POWERS, 16 June, 1952.

3. FO 371 98253, E 1056/24, Gandy, FO Minute, LONG TERM BRITISH OBJECTIVES IN THE MIDDLE EAST,3 July, 1952.

4. DEFE 11/88, STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF THE MIDDLE EAST, Note by the Chiefs of Staff, 26 November, 1953. The Chiefs of Staff Committee, writing about the dire consequences that would result from the conquest of the Middle East by the Soviet Union, put forward a similar scenario as the one suggested by the Foreign Office. See DEFE 7/796, PEACETIME GARRISON IN THE MIDDLE EAST, 5 November, 1953.

5. FO 371 98278, E1193/10, H.A. Dudgeon, BRIEF FOR SIR ROGER MAKINS' VISIT TO THE PERSIAN GULF AREA AND THE CANAL ZONE, 11 February, 1952. See also FO 371 91732, ER 1196/126, E. Youde, FO Minute, 28 August, 1951, which elaborates on the Egyptian dimension of the question.

6. FO 371 91228, E11921/308, Eastern Department, Brief for the Secretary of State, The Arab States and Middle East Defence, 2 November, 1951.

7. See FRUS, 5, Davis to State Department, 11 November, 1951, p.247; FRUS, 5, Memorandum of Conversation by Edwin A. Platt, 19 November, 1951, p. 937; FRUS, 5, Memorandum of Conversation by the Acting Secretary of State, 30 november, 1951, p.950; FO 371 91716, ER 1053/25, FO Record of Conversation Eden-Sharett held in Paris, 23 November, 1951.

8. FO 371 98278, E 1193/10, Dudgeon, FO BRIEF FOR SIR ROGER MAKINS' VISIT TO THE PERSIAN GULF AREA AND THE CANAL ZONE, 11 February, 1952.

9. FO 371 98279, Gandy, FO Minute, MIDDLE EAST DEFENCE: THE PRESENT POSITION, 13 June, 1952.

10. FRUS, 9, Department of State Minutes of State-Joint Chiefs of Staff Meeting, 18 June, 1952, p.245.

11. FO 371 98278, E 1193/2, Wardrop, FO Minute, 3 January, 1952. Some months subsequently, Wardrop described the idea of such a link " a makeshift oriental" organisation "with its eye on Israel and not on Russia" FO 371 98263, E 1071/50, Wardrop, FO Minute, 27 October, 1952.

12. FO 371 98262, E 1071/1, Dudgeon, FO Minute, THE ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE SECURITY PACT, 15 January, 1952.

13. FO 371 98262, E 1071/11, B.A.B. Burrows to Wardrop, 28 February, 1952.

14. FRUS, 9, Dulles to Certain Diplomatic Missions, AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH TO MIDDLE EAST DEFENSE ARRANGEMENT, 1 May, 1953. pp.364-369.

15. ISA 40/14A, Gazit to Elath, 9 July, 1953.

16. See, for instance, FO 371 98263, E 1071/36, Archibald Ross, FO Minute, 26 September, 1952; Sir James Bowker, FO Minute, 27 September, 1952.

17. FO 371 98278, E 1193/23, Ministry of Defence to G.H.C. Middle East Land Forces, 15 February, 1952.

18. FO 800/808, EDEN'S PRIVATE PAPERS, Record of conversation MEETINGS WITH MR DULLES AND MR STASSEN, 4 February, 1953.

19. FO 800/808, EDEN'S PRIVATE PAPERS, Washington to FO, 5 March, 1953.

20. FO 371 98279, E 1193/71, Rapp to Bowker, 22 December, 1952.

21. FO 371 98279, E 1193/71, Gandy, FO Minute, 6 January, 1953.

22. FO 371 111065, VR 1051/12, Evans to Eden, 30 September, 1953.

23. FO 371 104770, ER 1078/3, Allen, FO Minute, 2 December, 1953.

24. See FO 371 110772, V 1022/10, Record of Conversation between Allen and De Courcel on Middle East Questions, 22 February, 1954, in which Allen was reported to have said to the French representative that "as long as the conflict continued there could be no hope of establishing a defence organisation and the whole of British policy in the Middle East was vitiated by this conflict."

25. CAB 131/13, Cabinet Defence Committee, ISRAEL AND MIDDLE EAST DEFENCE - DISCUSSIONS WITH THE AMERICANS, MEMORANDUM BY THE CHIEFS OF STAFF, 26 march, 1953; DEFE 7/848, Ministry of Defence Minute, SUPPLY OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT TO ISRAEL, [name unclear] 22 March, 1952.

26. PREM 11/489, Sir Nevil Brownjohn (Cabinet Secretariat), Minute for the Prime Minister, 28 April, 1953.

27. Ilan Pappe, British Foreign Policy Towards The Middle East 1948-1951 p.392.

28. FO 371 104801, ER 1201/1, Baker, FO Minute, 2 February, 1953.

29. FO 371 104806, ER 1201/10, Evans to Eden, 17 November, 1953.

30. ISA, 12/2403A, Elath to Lurie, 17 November, 1954.

31. Eliahu Elath, *Mibead-Le-Haraphel-Ha-Yamim* (Yad Itzhak Ben Tzvi, Jerusalem, 1989) p.11.

32. FO 371 98805, ER 1152/19, Bowker, FO Minute, 22 January, 1952.

33. FO 371 98257, 1056/80, Memorandum prepared by Chancery, British Legation, Tel Aviv, 9 June, 1952.

34. ISA, 40/14A, Elath to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 4 March, 1953.

35. Morrison's letter is quoted in PREM 11 489, FO to Tel Aviv, 22 April, 1951.

36. Ben-Gurion's letter is quoted in Michael Bar-Zohar, *Ben-Gurion*, p.346.

37. PREM 11/489, Eden to Churchill, 22 December, 1951.

38. DEFE 7/848, D.W. Bayne (Air Ministry) to Wardrop (FO), 23 January, 1951; DEFE 7/848, Ministry of Defence Minute [name unclear], 7 January, 1952. This Minute stressed that "The work of the mission will be purely exploratory".

39. Bar-Zohar, *Ben-Gurion*, p.347.

40. See FO 371 98807. The whole file relates in the most minute details the deliberations among the different Departments on this matter.

41. FO 371 98807, ER 1193/12, Wardrop, FO Minute, 22 March, 1952.

42. FO 371 98807, ER 1193/12, Bowker to Wheeler (Ministry of Defence), 28 March, 1952.

43. FO 371 98807, ER 1193/12, Bowker to Wheeler, 28 March, 1952.

44. FO 371 98805, ER 1152/26, FO to Ministry of Defence, 18 March, 1952.

45. FO 371 104218, E 1192/116, MINISTRY OF DEFENCE, JOINT WAR PRODUCTION COMMITTEE ARMS WORKING PARTY, 21 March, 1953.

46. FO 371 111121, VR 1201/2, Allen to Evans, 15 April, 1954.

47. CAB 131/13, MEMORANDUM BY THE CHIEFS OF STAFF, ISRAEL AND MIDDLE EAST DEFENCE, DISCUSSIONS WITH THE AMERICANS, 26 March, 1953.

48. CAB 131/13, 6 May, 1953.

49. CAB 128/26, CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the Cabinet held on Monday, 10 August, 1953.

50. FO 800/808, EDEN'S PRIVATE PAPERS, Eden to churchill, 23 March, 1953.

51. FO 371 104753, ER 1071/28, Baker, FO Minute, 31 March, 1953.

52. FO 371 104753, ER 1071/25, Barnes to Bowker, 13 March 1953.

53. ISA, 41/7A, *Israel Ve Haganat Ha-Mizrah Ha Tihon* [Israel and Middle East Defence], Paper written by the Political Planning Staff, no date is given, though the attached letter enclosing it to Israel's Ambassador in Britain is dated, 4 November, 1952. The Paper was read by Sharett who advanced some dissenting comments though not, it should be stressed, concerning this particular section.

54. David Ben-Gurion's Diary, Ben-Gurion's Archive, Boker, Negev, [Hebrew] Diary, 1953, 28 March, 1953, p.54 [Henceforward referred to as Ben-Gurion's Diary]

55. FO 371 111118, VR 1195/15, Falla, FO Minute, 19 February, 1954. The Assistant Under Secretary, Allen, agreed with him. FO 371 111118, VR 1195/16, 19 February, 1954; see also FO 371 111118, V 1195/2G, Falla, FO Minute, 22 March, 1954.

56. ISA, 12/2403A, Ya'akov Herzog, Foreign Ministry Minute, 11 March, 1953.

57. FO 371 111065, VR 1057/1, Eden, FO Minute, 25 December, 1953.

58. Evelyn Shuckburgh, Descent to Suez. 31 December, 1953, p.125.

59. CAB 129/65, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, MIDDLE EAST POLICY, 7 January, 1954.

60. CAB 129/65, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, STATIONING OF BRITISH FORCES IN JORDAN, 20 Jordan, 1954.

61. FO 371 110819, V 1193/8, Eden, FO Minute, 12 January, 1954.

62. FO 371 110819, V 1193/8, Eden, FO Minute, 12 January, 1954.

63. Robert Rhodes James, Anthony Eden, (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1986) p.351.

64. CAB 131/14, Memorandum by the Cheifs of Staff, UNITED KINGDOM DEFENCE POLICY, 23 December, 1954.

65. Ben-Gurion's Diary, 28 March, 1953, p.854.

66. Ilan Pappe, British Foreign Policy Towards the Middle East 1948-1951, p.423.

67. FO 371 96972, JE 1191/11G, D.V. Bendall, FO Minute, 13 March, 1952.

68. See, for instance, FO 371 98257, E 1056/71, Ross, Record of Conversation with the Lebanese Minister in London, 1 July, 1952.

69. FO 371 111118, VR 1195/56, Falla, FO Minute, 10 September, 1954.

70. Bar-Zohar, *Ben-Gurion*, p.344.

71. His views are quoted in ISA, 41/7A, *Israel Ve Haganat Ha-Mizrah Ha-Tihon*, [Israel and Middle East Defence], Paper prepared by the Policy Planning Staff.

72. Ben-Gurion's Diary, 28 March, 1953, p.55.

73. Ben-Gurion's Diary, 28 March, 1953, p.56.

74. FO 371 111075, VR 1072/240, Moore to Eden, 19 October, 1954.

75. FO 371 111075, VR 1072/240, Falla, FO Minute, 13 November, 1954.

76. See FO 371 111075, VR 1072/240, Drew, FO Minute, 13 November, 1954.

77. FO 371 111076, VR 1072/267, Tripp, FO Minute, 24 November, 1954.

78. Bar-Zohar, *Ben-Gurion*, p.344.

79. Ben-Gurion's Diary, 28 March, 1953, p.55.

80. PREM 11/489, Eden to Churchill, 22 December, 1951.

81. FO 371 111136, VR 2211/3, Tripp to R.C. Ormerod (Commonwealth Relations Office), 10 December, 1954. The same argument had been advanced by the Foreign Office some nine months previously. See FO 371 111136; VR 2211/1, Falla to A.A. Heaps (Canada House), 12 March, 1954.

82. FO 371 111136, VR 2211/3, Viscount Swinton to William Aitken, MP., 20 December, 1954. Churchill, as he made it clear at the beginning of 1955 in a conversation with Evelyn Shuckburgh was in favour of Israel joining the Commonwealth. "'Do not put that out of your mind. It would be a wonderful thing. So many people want to leave us; it might be the turning of the tide'". Shuckbrugh, Descent to Suez, 18 February, 1955, p.251.

83. The Tripartite Declaration is quoted in FO 371 98281, E 1194/24.

84. The State Department Memorandum advancing the suggestion can be found in FO 371 98280, E 1194/10G.

85. The Charter of Incorporation of the N.E.A.C.C. is enclosed in FO 371 98281, E 1194/26G.

86. FO 371 110816, V 1192/478, R.W. Bailey to J.F. Brewis, 15 November, 1954. The Israeli Military Attache in Washington, Colonel Salmon, who had previously served in the same capacity in London, approached R.W. Bailey of the British Embassy in Washington and, as the latter recalled, "asked whether it was true that there was a committee consisting of Embassy and Military officials, meeting regularly, to carry out the terms of the Tripartite Declaration."

87. DEFE 7/850, Ministry of Defence Minute [name unclear], 9 June, 1952.

88. FO 371 104770, ER 1078/3, Allen, FO Minute, 3 December, 1953.

89. DEFE7/848, Ministry of Defence Minute [name unclear], 13 January, 1953.

90. ISA 42/13, Foreign Ministry Minute, (Conclusion on the Question of Arms Supplies to Israel and the Arab States), 23 October, 1952.

91. Ben-Gurion's Diary, 28 March, 1953, p.54.

92. The letter is enclosed in FO371 111073, VR 1072 /167.

93. Interview with the U.S. News 2 World Report, 17 September, 1954. p.62. Enclosed in FO371 111074, VR 1072/195.

94. DEFE 11/87, BRITISH DEFENCE CO-ORDINATION COMMITTEE MIDDLE EAST, DEFENCE OF THE MIDDLE EAST, AN ANALYSIS OF FUTURE PROSPECTS, 23 February, 1953.

95. FO 371, VR 1072/208, Falla, FO Minute, 23 September, 1954. Falla went on to quote a few statements made by Arab leaders to reinforce his argument: "in January last King Saud publicly described Israel as a cancer in the body of the Arab world and said that the only cure was to uproot it; and on April 22, the then Jordan Minister of Foreign Affairs said to journalists: 'We will never accept Israel as an accomplished fact under any circumstances'".

96. FO 2371 98257, E1056 /80, Memorandum prepared by Chancery, British Legation, 9 june, 1952.

97. ISA 40/143, Gazit to Elath, 7 December, 1954.

98. FO371 98279, E1193/53, Gandy, FO Minute, MIDDLE EAST DEFENCE: THE PRESENT POSITION, 13 June, 1952.

99. FO 371 104230, E1192/418, P.J. Hudson (Air Ministry) to Miss F.E. Harley (Ministry of Defence), 23 December, 1953.

100. FO 2371 110817, V1192/542, John Powell-Jones, FO Minute, 11 December, 1954. The State Department, it should be noted, had little faith in the Syrian, or any other Arab Air Force, being of much practical use against a Soviet attack, at least for some time to come. See FO371 110807, V1192/38, Bailey to Baker, 19 January, 1954.

101. See FO 371 110811, V1192/195, A. Leavett, FO Minute, 27 April, 1954; FO 371 110811, V1192/251, Powell Jones, 4 June, 1954.

102. FO 371 110810, V1192/195, Leavett, FO Minute, 27 April, 1954.

103. FO 371 11080, V1192/195, Brewis, FO Minute, 5 May, 1954.

104. FO 371 110810, V1192/195, Falla, FO Minute, 4 June, 1954.

105. See FO 371 110811, V1192/251, Powell-Jones, FO Minute, 4 June, 1954.

106. FO 371 110811, V1192/251, Powell-Jones, FO Minute, 4 June, 1954.

107. DEFE7/206, Ministry of Defence Minute, [name unclear], 13 April, 1954.

108. FO 371 110817, V1192/517, P.J. Hudson (Air Ministry) to J.L. Thorne (Ministry of Supply), 11 November, 1954.

109. CAB 130/104, CABINET COMMITTEE ON SUPPLY OF ARMS TO THE MIDDLE EAST, SUPPLY OF ARMS TO THE MIDDLE EAST, 24 November, 1954.

110. ISA 42173, Gazit to Foreign Ministry, 21 September, 1954.

111. FRUS, 9, Department of State Position Papers, 5 May, 1953, p.1189.

112. FRUS, 9, Department of State Minutes of State-Joint Chiefs of Staff Meeting, 18 June, 1952, p.245.

113. FO 371, 104223, E1192/224, Falla to H. Beeley, 19 August, 1953. Although the letter was formally signed by Falla, it was most probably written by Baker, who, in any event, was conveying the view adopted by the British Government.

114. FO 371 110816, V1192/482, Powell-Jones, FO Minute, 18 November, 1954.

115. FO 371 110807 V 1192/21, Tel-Aviv to FO, 16 February, 1954. Moore was warned that "the Swedes will presumably also sell to the Arab States, thereby promoting an unrestricted arms race, in place of the competition which we have so far endeavoured to keep under control." FO 371 110808, V 1192/89, Moore to Falla, 16 February, 1954.

116. Hansard, H.C., Vol 523, col.1081, 17 February, 1953.

117. PREM 11/398, Cairo to FO, 6 October, 1952.

118. PREM 11/398, FO to Washington, 14 October, 1952.

119. PREM 11/398, Cairo to FO, 16 October, 1952.

120. PREM 11/398, Washington to FO, 17 October, 1952.

121. PREM 11/398, Churchill to Eden, 19 October, 1952.

122. The original list can be found in FO371 98285, E1194/96, Powell-Jones, FO Minute, 21 November, 1952.

123. PREM 11/398, Churchill to Eden, 28 October, 1952.

124. FO800/807, EDEN'S PRIVATE PAPERS, Churchill to Eden, 18 November, 1952.

125. FO 371 104215, E1192/4, Churchill to Eden, 31 December, 1952.

126. FO 371 104215, E1192/16, Ross, FO Minute, 14 January, 1953. Ross' superiors, including Eden, advanced no dissenting comment after having read his minute. Indeed, Eden wrote subsequently, replying to Churchill, in a similar vein. See PREM 11/398, FO to New York, 23 January, 1953.

127. FO 371 104215, E1192/10, Ross to A.C.I. Samuel, 23 January, 1953.

128. FO 371 104230, E1192/408, Falla, FO Minute, 22 December, 1953, Allen, FO Minute, 22 December, 1953.

129. FO 371 104230, E1192/408, Eden, FO Minute, 26 December, 1953.

130. FO 371 110807, V1192/18, Falla, FO Minute, 9 January, 1954; Eden, FO Minute, 12 January, 1954; FO371 110807, V1192/41, Powell Jones, FO Minute, 28 January, 1954; Falla, FO Minute, 29 January, 1954.

131. FO 371 110817, V1192/515, J.E. Ward, FO Minute, 8 November, 1954; A. Rumbler, FO Minute, 10 November, 1954.

132. FO 371 110817, V1192/516, Ward, FO Minute, 11 November, 1954.

133. FO 371 110817, V1192/528, Eden, FO Minute, [undated though probably 18 or 19 November, 1954].

134. FO 371 110817, V1192/528, Eden, FO Minute, [undated, though probably 18 or 19 November, 1954].

135. See FO 371 110817, V1192/516, Ward, FO Minute, 11 November, 1954.

136. See, for instance, Hansard, H.C., Vol 523, col. 1071-1142, 17 February, 1953, when a major debate took place in the House of Commons at which many Members from different parties expressed serious reservations, mostly of a pro-Israeli character, at the proposed sale of aircraft to the Middle East.

137. FO 371 110816, V1192/475, Falla, FO Minute, 11 November, 1954; Ward, FO Minute, 11 November, 1954; Ward, FO Minute, 15 November, 1954; FO 371 110816, V1192/485, Falla, FO Minute, 23 November, 1954; Eden, FO Minute, 25 November, 1954.

138. FO 371 110816, V1192/475, Ward, FO Minute, 15 November, 1954.

139. FO 371 110816, V1192/475; Eden wrote his comment on the sideline of the incoming telegram. His remark is undated. The telegram is dated, 17 November, 1954.

140. FO 371 110814, V1192/379, Shuckburgh, FO Minute, 4 September, 1954.

141. FO 371 110815, V1192/409A, Falla, FO Minute, 30 September, 1954.

142. FO 371 110815, V1192/428, RECORD ARMS WORKING PARTY, 5 October, 1954.

143. For a particularly interesting critical analysis of the Eisenhower's Administration's policy towards Israel and the Arab-Israeli dispute, see Margot Singer Difficult Friends: United States Policy Toward Israel and the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1953-1956. (Unpublished M.Phil Thesis, Oxford University, Oxford, 1986).

CONCLUSION

The period under consideration reached its conclusion, in a sense, with the signing of the British-Egyptian agreement of 1954 which stipulated the evacuation of the British eighty thousand strong military base from the Suez Canal zone. In a way, the agreement may be seen as belonging to a subsequent period, constituting an introduction to it rather than a fitting seal to this one. In fact, it could be both: a symbolic full stop to the years in question as well as a springboard to a future epoch. Beyond the question of the blockade of the Suez Canal upon which, as has already been noted in the relevant chapter, the agreement was regarded to have had a direct effect, the signing of this accord sharpened Israeli apprehensions of Egyptian intentions. As Gershon Avner told Paul Falla, once British troops evacuated their base in the Canal zone, the Israelis feared the Egyptians would feel they had a free hand to engage in hostile activities against Israel.[1] For his part, Sharett believed that Israel was "justified to feel apprehensive because [...] the accord as such is bound to strengthen Egypt enormously, both politically and strategically". To be sure, Sharett was at pains to convey to western public opinion that Israel did not want "to stand in the way of the attainment by Egypt of the fulfilment of her legitimate national aspirations, provided", that is, "that consummation does not encourage aggression against us".[2] The British on the other hand were of the opinion, as the Assistant Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office put it,

> that the Agreement with Egypt should reduce tension in the area and increase our influence in regard to a solution of the Arab-Israeli problem.[3]

Thus, both Israeli and British officials perceived this agreement as a watershed insofar as the Arab-Israeli dispute was concerned. For the Israelis it entailed the potential reemergence of the Egyptian military menace; for the British, a distinct opportunity for Arab-Israeli reconciliation.

However the Suez Base Agreement is seen in the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict, there could be little doubt that the expectation for its conclusion shaped British policy towards Israel and the Arab-Israeli dispute in no insignificant measure. Thus, although it objected to the Egyptian blockade of the Suez Canal to shipping *en route* to and from Israel, the British Government, following the return of the Conservative Party to power, subordinated action in this regard to the proceedings in the negotiations with Egypt. Further, when the possibility of undertaking a diplomatic initiative to bring about an Arab-Israeli settlement was discussed, Eden argued that circumstances would be more propitious in the wake of an agreement with the Egyptian Government over the Canal Base: British interests dictated that priority had to be accorded to such an agreement; but it was also assumed that it would render conditions for an Arab-Israeli settlement less intractable. And, when the Cabinet deliberated on a proposal to open discussions with the United States Government about defence cooperation with Israel, it was decided, at the suggestion of the Marquis of Salisbury, to defer action on account of the negotiations then taking place with Egypt over the British base in the Canal zone. Whenever the expectation for an agreement with Egypt wielded its influence on British policy towards Israel and the Arab-Israeli dispute, it did so by rendering the latter inactive: whether British policy is retrospectively deemed to have become on those occasions unnecessarily paralysed or sensibly cautious is a question which, beyond the British-Egyptian negotiations and the particular instances cited above, obtained more widely

in this period. For, notwithstanding the attitude that the Foreign Office in London would adopt as regards the merits of a given case, the ideal line it would espouse in relation to it, British policy would almost invariably be determined, apart from considerations of feasibility, by the expectation of Arab reaction: it was perceived that British interests made it imperative that Arab anger had to be avoided, if at all possible.

Thus, the British Embassy was not transferred to Jerusalem in 1953, and an all-out boycott was instituted on official visits to the City (the latter being one of the few examples where British policy went on the offensive), following the move of the Israeli Foreign Ministry there, principally as it was anticipated that any other course of action might incur the wrath of the Arabs. Indeed, when the Israeli Government first announced its intention to transfer its Foreign Ministry, in May 1952, the tendency at the Foreign Office in London was to follow suit and move the British Legation to Jerusalem. As the months progressed, however, officials in London became apprehensive that such a move would provoke a more adverse effect in the Arab world than originally envisaged; furthermore, that unless Britain took resolute action in response to the Israeli move, Arab displeasure would not be mitigated. There seems to be scant evidence to suggest that Britain's position was based on any principled objection to the Israeli decision. The Foreign Office regarded the area of Jerusalem under Israeli control as belonging to Israel - presently *de facto* and following an Arab-Israeli settlement *de jure*. And, although it appeared to have considered the Israeli move an irritating distraction, the British Government, in contrast to most Roman Catholic and Arab states, did not conceive it as a challenge to the juridical status that *should* prevail in Jerusalem.

Further, although clearly opposed to Israeli reprisals across the Jordanian border, the Foreign Office contended that, however they may have exacerbated the situation along the frontier reprisals were not the *cause* but rather the *corollary* of the problem besetting the border. The *cause* was the absence of peace, a condition brought about primarily by Arab refusal to negotiate and not by any particular action on the part of Israel. Nevertheless, when the question arose, in the wake of the Qibya Raid, as to whether to introduce to the proposed Security Council resolution a reference to the necessity of peace negotiations, the Foreign Office gave primary consideration to possible Arab reactions rather than the simple merits of the issue. Qibya, argued the Foreign Office, was a stain on Israel's image which undoubtedly deserved condemnation. And although Qibya was but a further, if a particularly violent, manifestation of the general problem which required a peace settlement, even an indirect reference to the desirability of an Arab-Israeli settlement was to be avoided, as far as the Foreign Office was concerned, as it was perceived to be a pro-Israeli move that could only incur the anger of the Arabs.

In the realm of defence cooperation the British Government was motivated by similar considerations. Owing to its geographic location, its perceived political attributes and the quality of its armed forces, Israel was seen by the British as an important factor in their defence policy in the Middle East. Initially the British Government reserved for Israel an active role in the context of its regional defence strategy; but as time went by, and due predominantly, though certainly not solely, to its preoccupation with Arab susceptibilities, it came to ascribe to Israel a passive role, to be rendered active only in time of need. In this area of policy, more than in any other, there is evidence which seems to indicate that, whatever the merits of

the policy ultimately adopted, the decision-makers in Britain either ignored or did not fully take account of all the facts at their disposal. For, information had been conveyed to, and subsequently assessed at, the Foreign Office, on more than one occasion during this period, which made clear that what Arab states apparently objected to was, not the forging of defence links between Britain and Israel, but that such a relationship be effected at their expense.

Paradoxically, if the position of the Foreign Office is dissected and, beyond *policies*, its *attitudes* to the merits of each case in question is carefully analysed, it could be concluded that, as regards most of the cases reviewed in the context of this thesis, the Foreign Office tended to entertain a more favourable line towards Israel than could otherwise be inferred from the policies that were ultimately adopted. Thus, for instance, Jordan's - indeed, the Arab States' - refusal to countenance negotiations with, and to extend recognition to, Israel was considered to be the principal obstacle in overcoming the tension besetting the Jordanian-Israeli border. Egypt's case in blockading the Suez Canal to shipping *en route* from and to Israel was rejected with scant hesitation. The territorial *status quo* in Jerusalem was seen as permanent rather than transitory; a peace settlement would merely have to sanction it (a stance which reflected, to be sure, as much support for Jordan's continued presence in its own-held-area of the City but which was rejected by the rest of the Arab countries, which advocated the internationalisation of Jerusalem). Indeed, on the central question of peace Israel was considered to be more reasonable than the Arab States, the terms of settlement it advocated and the nature of neighbourly relations it envisaged much more akin to what was espoused in London.

The line adopted by those directly involved in shaping policy towards Israel and the Arab-Israeli dispute during the years under consideration was certainly not monolithic. On the whole it could be argued that whereas British envoys serving in Arab states tended to press for a favourable policy vis-a-vis the Arab States the diplomats accredited to Israel were inclined to display an understanding, indeed sympathetic, attitude to Israel's basic case. This divergence of views, once it emerged, was most acutely symbolised by Sir John Troutbeck, Britain's Ambassador in Iraq and maybe the most ardent supporter of the Arab cause among British representatives in the Arab world, and Sir Francis Evans, the British Envoy in Israel, who, perhaps unwittingly, served as the conscience of the Foreign Office insofar as Israel was concerned. Officials in London, generally speaking, found themselves more in agreement with the latter than with the former. Although they were reluctant to translate their attitudes on many an occasion to policy (either because of considerations of feasibility or of sensitivity to perceived Arab susceptibilities) they had no intention of currying favour with the Arab States to the extent of adopting a distinctively pro-Arab policy : public opinion in Britain, it was believed, would be strongly opposed to it, and, in any event, there was actually no need to do so. British interests in the Arab world could be secured by refraining from igniting the anger of the Arab States, a condition that could obtain without being particularly antagonistic to Israel.

But, was there also a moral dimension? Did the Foreign Office in London consider a change of policy as advocated by envoys in Arab countries incompatible

with principles it was unwilling to abandon? There is little, if any, doubt that, so far as the British diplomats in Israel, and Evans in particular, were concerned, Britain had a *moral* obligation which compelled it to reject *any* move which would isolate Israel. Furthermore, Israel was there as of right. It was not an artificial entity, transitory in nature, bereft of moral justification; and its fundamental case deserved support. The tone, if not emotional, was distinctly moral. The Foreign Office in London, although not in explicit disagreement, was not inclined to articulate its attitude in a similar vein. It could nevertheless be inferred from the idiom employed by diplomats in London, from the spirit, so to speak, of their stance, that a moral ingredient was not absent.

Could the same be said of Anthony Eden? Was there a moral component, however modest, which precluded him from endorsing a shift of policy in the direction of the Arabs as envisaged by British representatives in Arab states? As has already been noted, Eden appeared to have entertained little sympathy for Israel, though the evidence that he had formed a negative image of the Arabs, of whose "fickle friendship" he was "weary",[4] renders it somewhat questionable that he felt any personal attachment to the Arab States beyond the essentially pragmatic, when circumstances were believed to demand it. On occasion, he proved to be Israel's main advocate within the Foreign Office. It could be argued, for instance, that without Eden, without his persistent endeavour, without his ever watchful eyes, Israel would have received fewer arms than if it had been left in the exclusive hands of the Foreign Office and the War Office's officials. Indeed, he seemed in certain instances to have assumed Churchill's mantle as the guardian of Israel - indicating here that Israel had not been allocated sufficient tanks, castigating his

officials there for ignoring Israel in effecting a compromise formula for selling aircraft to Syria and Israel. Further, he was one of the most enthusiastic supporters of a diplomatic initiative designed to bring about a partial commercial relationship between Israel and the Arab States, a proposal originally advanced by Israel and discarded by some British diplomats in the Arab world in an almost puritanical fashion. And, when his high-ranking officials were warning Israel's Ambassador in London that Britain would not hesitate to come to Jordan's assistance in the eventuality of war, it was Eden who, although in full agreement with the official posture, adopted a cautious line and instructed to keep in constant touch with Eliahu Elath: warning was apparently not enough; dialogue was equally called for.

Eden's interventions on behalf of Israel, or to Israel's advantage, derived apparently almost invariably from political pressure, reflected primarily domestic considerations. Admittedly, on the question of arms sales, he professed to have wanted to avoid an arms race, a moral element of a sort which indirectly benefited, or should have benefited, Israel, since he tended to allude to it whenever he would advocate Israel's case. But, beyond that, there seemed to have loomed large two central factors wielding their influence on Eden's stance: Churchill's protestations to the effect that Israel should be supplied with a greater quantity of arms than originally proposed, and Parliament's unease at the sale of arms to Arab states, particularly when not deemed to be adequately compensated by a similar supply to Israel.

Eden did not appear to have disagreed with his officials whenever they rejected suggestions by British diplomats in Arab countries to adopt a distinctively

pro-Arab line. This cautious conclusion, however, is reached more by inference than by evidence. Very rarely did Eden articulate his own views in this respect. Never, though, did he object to the negative retort of his subordinates. It is therefore more difficult to ascertain whether, in this regard at least, he was motivated, even to a modest degree, by moral considerations. There was, as has already been shown, an instance in which he did express himself in an explicit manner against a proposal of such nature. When the Head of the British Middle East Office, Sir John Sterndale-Bennett, conveyed his reservations to the intended sale of certain Centurion tanks to Israel, Eden, in response, stressed to his officials that Sterndale-Bennett was so anti-Israel that he made him (Eden) sympathetic to the Israelis. More than anything else, though, this seems to reflect Eden's lack of sympathy to Israel rather than to reveal any clue as to whether Eden was actuated by moral considerations of any kind.

No clue would be necessary to discern a moral dimension in Winston Churchill's attitude. Indeed, Churchill did not require a proposal advanced by any British envoy serving in an Arab state in favour of a more pro-Arab line in order to arouse his moral indignation; the policies advocated by the Foreign Office in London were bad enough for him. Churchill was Israel's best friend. And as a friend his attitude was shaped by sentiment as much as by pragmatic considerations. Morality as such could not explain his posture. He was emotionally attached to Israel and to its people, and his stance was a corollary of this. The same could not be said of any of the other British protagonists - politician or diplomat - who were involved in the decision-making process at the time. True, on occasion despatches received at the Foreign Office from Tel-Aviv contained descriptions, assessments,

opinions, into which a certain dose of emotion intruded almost unnoticed. So far as Churchill's minutes relating to Israel were concerned, however, emotion did not intrude, it predominated. Of course, Churchill was motivated by other, more pragmatic considerations. A resolute stance on the blockade of the Suez Canal, for instance, would go down well in Parliament. Indeed, Israel could become a useful ally to be employed to further British interests vis-a-vis Egypt. Moreover, Israel's Armed Forces were, alongside the Turkish Army, the best in the region, and should not be dispensed with when formulating Britain's defence strategy in the Middle East (actually, Churchill might have put it differently: other reasons apart, since Israel's Army is one of the, if not the, best in the Middle East, Britain should *rely* on Israel, as well as on Turkey, in shaping its defence policy in the area). Even so, it was his oft-repeated, self-declared Zionist sympathies, his emotional attachment to the Jewish people and their restored sovereign entity, beyond practical calculations, which permeated his attitude towards Israel and the Arab-Israeli dispute in the period in question.

But, to what extent was Churchill able to mould British policy in line with his own attitudes? Insofar as the question of the Suez Canal was concerned, he deferred most reluctantly to the advice tendered by the Foreign Office to refrain from undertaking any action. However, when, following a tightening of the Egyptian blockade, Israel wanted the matter discussed at the Security Council of the United Nations in 1954, Churchill prevailed upon a hesitant Eden to consent to Israel's request. Although his formula entailing a quantitative parity in arms supplies to Israel and *all* Arab states concerned was not endorsed, his intervention in this regard may well have been an important factor in persuading Eden that Israel

should be offered more weapons than originally proposed by the Foreign Office. His strong preference for a British Middle Eastern strategy founded upon Israel and Turkey, rather than the Arab States, did appeal momentarily to Eden, who nevertheless concluded that Britain could not dispense with the Arab States in shaping its defence policy in the area; ultimately, Israel was excluded from any major or active part in Britain's defence policy.

Could Churchill have done more to see to it that his own views were translated into policy to a greater degree than they actually were? To suggest, in response, that Churchill was too busy with more pressing matters to devote his time to Israel and the Arab-Israel conflict would not seem to accord with the facts. For, Churchill was almost never too busy to intervene on behalf of Israel if he deemed it necessary - for example, if he thought that the Foreign Office might pursue unacceptable policies, or if he feared that Eden might emulate the anti-semitic (as he himself referred to them) policies of Ernest Bevin. After all, as has already been shown, he did seem to have wielded some influence over policy, though certainly to a lesser degree than he might have wished. By 1954 both the Foreign Office and the Exchequer were opposed to military cooperation with Israel - the former on account of political reasons, the latter owing to the expenditure this was feared to entail - and Churchill may have felt, therefore, that he should, albeit reluctantly, defer to them, rather than risk a serious confrontation with the two most important ministries in Government. Both the Foreign Office and the Military were opposed to sending a tanker, escorted by Royal Navy ships, through the Suez Canal to challenge the Egyptian ban and Churchill may have resolved, again with little enthusiasm, that he should await developments as regards the negotiations with

Egypt rather than adopt a course of action about which the Foreign Office and the Military entertained serious reservations. The same applied to the Foreign Office's objections, for quite a long time, to raise the matter even on a diplomatic level; Churchill protested, but to no avail: once he faced strong opposition, Churchill may have hoped, at best, for an acceptable compromise, like that which, whether intentionally or incidentally, emerged in relation to the supply of arms to Israel. Perhaps a younger Churchill would have fared better; would have fought harder; would have deferred less. But then, a younger Churchill might have reacted similarly when confronted by resolute opposition; indeed, he might have come to discard some of his own views as being unreasonable. Nevertheless, to claim, as the prominent political biographer, Patrick Cosgrave, does that "on all matters of foreign policy except relations between the West and the Soviet Union he [Churchill] tended to leave the Foreign Secretary to his own devices"[5] does not necessarily apply in the case of Israel. After all, it was Eden himself who confided in his officials that "I have really gone as far as I am prepared to go in support of P.M.'s appeasement of Israel"[6] - hardly the comment of a Foreign Secretary who had been left to his own devices ...

Throughout the early nineteen-fifties officials at the Foreign Office seemed to believe, quite sincerely, that their stance towards the Arab-Israeli dispute was, on the whole, even-handed. The fact remains, though, that Israel's fundamental case appeared to have enjoyed more considerable support among Foreign Office diplomats than the Arab States'. But, notwithstanding the more favourable *attitude* they adopted towards Israel, the *policy* which ultimately emerged was determined by considerations of feasibility and, primarily, by sensitivity to Arab susceptibilities.

This, however, did not produce a distinctively pro-Arab policy. It did, nonetheless, introduce an element of self-inflicted fear into the decision-making process which, on occasion, either rendered British policy less flexible than what reality may have warranted or simply paralysed it.

FOOTNOTES

1. FO 371 111073, VR 1072/151, Falla, FO Minute, 9 July, 1954.

2. Interview with US News and World Report, 17 September, 1954, pp.62-63, enclosed in FO 371 111074, VR 1072/195.

3. FO 371 111074, VR 1072/207, Falla, FO Minute, 22 September, 1954.

4. FO 371 111065, VR 1057/1, Eden, FO Minute, 25 December, 1953.

5. Patrick Cosgrave, The Lives of Enoch Powell (Pan Books, London, 1990) p.127.

6. FO 371 110819, V 1193/8, Eden, FO Minute, 12 January, 1954.

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Yediot Aharonot

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